

INSPECTION REPORT

Shoeburyness High School

Shoeburyness

LEA area: Southend

Unique Reference Number: 115210

Headteacher: Mr J K W Gardiner

Reporting inspector: Dr Kate Seager
1995

Dates of inspection: 22 - 26 November 1999

Under OFSTED contract number: 708106

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
Type of control:	County
Age range of pupils:	11 to 18
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Caulfield Road Shoeburyness Essex SS3 9LL
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Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr D Dean
Date of previous inspection:	January 1996

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Kate Seager, Rgl	Special educational needs	Attainment and progress Teaching Leadership and management Attitudes, behaviour and personal development Attendance Support, guidance and pupils' welfare Partnership with parents and the community Curriculum Efficiency of the school
Daphne Lott, Lay Inspector		
Ivan Andrew	Religious education	
Roger Freeman Charlotte Goodhill	Mathematics Modern languages Equal opportunities Physical education	Staffing
Heather Housden Deidre Kay Brenda Loydell Michael Miller	Music Geography Art	Accommodation Learning resources Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development
Ian Newton	Science	
Graham Preston	Design and technology Information technology	
Derek Turner Ruth Webb	History English and drama	Assessment

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REPORT CONTENTS

Paragraph

MAIN FINDINGS

What the school does well
Where the school has weaknesses
How the school has improved since the last inspection
Standards in subjects
Quality of teaching
Other aspects of the school
The parents' views of the school

KEY ISSUES FOR ACTION

INTRODUCTION

1 - 4

Characteristics of the school
Key indicators

PART A: ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Educational standards achieved by pupils at the school

5 - 24

Attainment and progress
Attitudes, behaviour and personal development
Attendance

Quality of education provided

25 - 67

Teaching
The curriculum and assessment
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development
Support, guidance and pupils' welfare
Partnership with parents and the community

The management and efficiency of the school

68 - 95

Leadership and management
Staffing, accommodation and learning resources
The efficiency of the school

PART B: CURRICULUM AREAS AND SUBJECTS

English, mathematics and science

96 - 135

Other subjects or courses

136 - 198

PART C: INSPECTION DATA

Summary of inspection evidence

199 - 201

Data and indicators

MAIN FINDINGS

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

- Test and examination results have improved overall and in most subjects, especially in English and in mathematics in Key Stage 3 and mathematics results for higher attainers in Key Stage 4.
- All senior staff, most teachers and curriculum support assistants are hard working and highly committed to the pupils' welfare.
- Success in attaining technology college status is enhancing the school's resources, and in doing so is improving the pupils' education. Additionally it is bringing fresh ideas to teaching and broadening teachers' experience.
- In art, music and drama standards are high and teaching is good. School productions are of high standard.
- Pastoral care is good.
- Pupils with special educational needs are well provided for and well supported.
- Careers guidance is very good.
- The Social and Curriculum Opportunities for Personal Education (SCOPE) programme is good and well taught.
- Pupils receive very good social and moral education.
- Good extra-curricular provision involves high numbers of pupils.
- Very good links have been established with the community, especially with local primary schools and businesses.

WHERE THE SCHOOL HAS WEAKNESSES

I. Staffing difficulties caused by long-term absence followed by problems in recruiting appropriately qualified teachers have, and in some cases are, adversely affecting pupils' progress in modern languages and science especially. Dealing with these staffing difficulties has taken considerable senior management time over the last two years, and the school continues to put considerable effort into recruitment.

II. Senior managers give insufficient time to the systematic monitoring of standards, teaching and learning, in large part as a result of time spent on staffing problems.

III. Too much teaching in modern languages and science is unsatisfactory.

IV. The poor attendance of a significant minority of pupils is hindering their progress.

V. A few health and safety issues were brought to the attention of senior staff and are reported in paragraphs 64, 82 and 85 of the main report.

The strengths outweigh the weaknesses, but most of the weaknesses are affecting the progress of a significant number of pupils. The governors' action plan will set out how the weaknesses identified during the inspection are to be tackled. The plan will be sent to all parents or guardians of pupils at the school.

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE THE LAST INSPECTION

The school has made good progress since the OFSTED report in January 1996. Results in the national tests at the end of Year 9 have improved significantly in English and mathematics. The proportion of pupils gaining five or more GCSE results graded A* to C and five or more graded A* to G as well as the average point score increased significantly in 1999. The school has reduced the difference in performance between boys and girls in English, and in 1999 the boys' overall results at GCSE were marginally better than those of the girls. Attendance has not improved sufficiently, despite the efforts of the school to increase monitoring and to chase up absences. Since the last inspection the school has become a technology college and, as a result, is in the process of considerably improving its accommodation and its resources, especially for information and communication technology. The school has introduced several measures to raise pupils' self esteem. Several pupils report that the introduction of mentoring is helping them to improve their standards. Long-term staff absence delayed progress in improving the school's use of assessment in planning, but the local authority supplied a considerable amount of data, and progress has been significant in recent months. No progress has been made in introducing a daily act of collective worship for all pupils. The time for religious education in the upper school is now adequate. Limited progress has been made in raising pupils' spiritual awareness. Given improved resources the school is well placed to improve further provided that it is able to recruit suitable staff for posts it is advertising.

STANDARDS IN SUBJECTS

The following table shows standards achieved by 14, 16 and 18 year olds in national tests, GCSE and A/AS-level examinations in 1999, grades for 1998 are in brackets:

Performance in:	Compared with all schools	Compared with similar schools		Key
Key Stage 3 test results in English, mathematics and science	D(D)	B(B)	<i>well above average</i> <i>above average</i> <i>average</i>	A B C
GCSE Examinations	D(E)	C(D)	<i>below average</i>	D
A/AS levels	E(E)	N/A	<i>well below average</i>	E

Pupils' attainment when they come to Shoeburyness High School is well below average; about a quarter of the highest attaining pupils in the area attend one of the four local grammar schools. The school's results in national tests at the end of Year 9 are below average compared with all schools but above average when compared with similar schools and well above in English. The school has added considerable value in both English and mathematics. The proportion of pupils gaining five GCSE examination results graded A* to C, whilst below average compared with all schools, has improved significantly to be broadly in line with similar schools. The average point score for A and AS examinations is well below the national average.

QUALITY OF TEACHING

Teaching in	Overall quality	Most effective in:	Least effective in:
Years 7-9	Satisfactory	Art, music and drama	Modern languages and science
Years 10-11	Satisfactory	Art, music and drama	Modern languages and science
Sixth form	Satisfactory	Art, music and drama	
English	Good		
Mathematics	Satisfactory		

Teaching is satisfactory overall. In 239 lessons or part lessons observed, it was satisfactory or better in about 91 per cent, at least good in more than half, and very good or excellent in a little under a fifth.

Teaching was unsatisfactory in about 9 per cent of lessons. The quality of teaching is better in Years 10 to 13 than in Years 7 to 9. About two thirds of teaching was good or better in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form, but just under half at Key Stage 3. Teaching was unsatisfactory or poor in one in ten lessons in Key Stages 3 and 4, but in only one sixth form lesson. Most teaching is good or better in art, drama and

music. About a quarter of the teaching is unsatisfactory in both science and modern languages; a sizeable proportion is due to the fact that the school is unable to recruit appropriately qualified permanent or temporary teachers in these subjects.

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

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
Behaviour	Most pupils are well-behaved in lessons and around the school. In about ten per cent of lessons a number of pupils, mainly boys, behave badly, mostly when teaching is unsatisfactory, and on occasions out of lessons. Several pupils show disrespect for their environment and drop too much litter.
Attendance	As at the time of the last inspection, attendance drops below 90 per cent in several classes. Pupils take too much holiday in school terms. Several pupils arrive late to school but punctuality to lessons is satisfactory.
Ethos*	The school provides a safe and caring environment. Relationships are good. A recent whole-school push to raise standards is having an effect, but is not yet fully beneficial in all subjects.
Leadership and management	Leadership and management contain strengths and weaknesses. Strengths are in the good governor support and guidance; success in planning and achieving good sports facilities and recognition as a technology college; the very good links with the community, and the considerable commitment to the well-being of the pupils. The main weakness is in allocating insufficient time at senior management level to the systematic monitoring of standards, teaching and learning. Dealing with staffing problems, the technology college bid and the building of the sports centre have taken a considerable proportion of time.
Curriculum	A broad curriculum is offered, especially in Key Stage 4 and post-16. The school does not at present meet statutory requirements for information technology in Key Stage 4, but increased computers available should now put this right.
Pupils with special educational needs	Good assessment, specialised teaching and skilled curriculum support enable pupils with special educational needs to make good progress. Most individual education plans would be improved with more specific subject learning targets.
Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Pupils' spiritual development is satisfactory. Their moral and social development is very good, and their cultural development good.
Staffing, resources and accommodation	The qualifications and experience of most permanent teachers and support staff are satisfactory. Staffing in languages and science is not satisfactory. Professional development is sound. Resources are satisfactory and improving. They are used effectively. Most accommodation is adequate and in an acceptable state of repair, but the quality of the demountables is poor. Display is good.
Value for money	The school gives satisfactory value for money.

**Ethos is the climate for learning: attitudes to work, relationships and the commitment to high standards*

THE PARENTS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What most parents like about the school

- VI. The good pastoral system
- VII. Good music and enjoyable well-produced school performances
- VIII. The information provided through newsletters
- IX. The many friendly and helpful teachers
- X. The clubs and homework club
- XI. The good links with the community and local businesses

What some parents are not happy about

- XII. Pupils are given too little homework
- XIII. Insufficient information is given about pupils'
- XIV. Reports are too general and often sent out too

Inspectors agree with the good points. Much appropriate homework was set during the inspection, but pupils' planners and pupils themselves report that homework is not set consistently in all subjects. Inspectors agree that the present reports provide too little precise and personalised information on pupils' standards. The school is in the process of introducing new reports.

KEY ISSUES FOR ACTION

In order to improve the education of its pupils, the senior managers and governors should:

- XV. continue to make vigorous efforts to recruit staff to fill the present vacancies, especially for science and modern languages teachers. (paragraphs 14, 77, 134, 148, 178-179)
- XVI. improve the standards and quality of teaching in modern languages and science. (paragraphs 26, 131, 177)
- XVII. review the allocation of senior management time with a view to re-focusing priorities on the monitoring of teaching and learning. The monitoring should provide evidence to address weaknesses identified in the report and guide where training is needed: for example where teaching is not providing sufficient attention to girls, where there is under-challenge, and unsatisfactory class control. (paragraphs 30, 32, 36, 43, 44, 72, 90, 92, 152, 161, 191)
- XVIII. improve attendance by maintaining the present contact with parents in the case of absence and being more firm about refusing to authorise holiday in excess of ten days' leave from school. (paragraphs 23, 61)
- XIX. address the health and safety issues raised in paragraphs 64, 82 and 85 of the report.

When drawing up the action plan, the school should also aim to improve the following weaknesses.

- XX. Meet statutory requirements for information technology in Key Stage 4 and ensure that an effective system is in place to monitor and record progress in information and communication technology skills. (paragraphs 76, 171)
- XXI. Raise teachers' awareness of the need for equal attention to boys and girls in classes with a majority of boys, and provide them with strategies which have proved successful in encouraging equal participation, such as different seating arrangements, alternative questioning of boys and girls. (paragraphs 32, 106, 108, 189-190)
- XXII. Make learning targets in the individual education plans of pupils with special educational needs more specific. (paragraphs 43 and 99)
- XXIII. Continue to review how to move further towards providing increased opportunities for collective worship. (paragraph 53)
- XXIV. Ensure that parents and pupils do not confuse the school's grading system with national benchmarks. (paragraphs 33 and 48)
- XXV. Update child protection training, where necessary. (paragraph 63)
- XXVI. Aim to improve the pupils' respect of their environment through raising expectations of them and through sanctions, if necessary, in order to reduce mis-use of their toilet facilities and the amount of litter they drop. (paragraphs 20, 83)
- XXVII. Find a more suitable place to supervise and care for sick pupils. (paragraph 64)
- XXVIII. Ensure that governors' future annual reports to parents include all the required information. (paragraphs 65 and 76)

INTRODUCTION

· Characteristics of the school

1. Shoeburyness High School became a technology college in September 1999. It is a large secondary school which draws most of its 1277 pupils from four primary schools. There are more boys than girls. The pupils live in a mixture of owner occupied and local authority housing. The catchment area is one of considerable contrasts, from relatively affluent to pockets of significant social and economic deprivation. The proportion of unemployment (9 per cent), the proportion of children living in unsuitable accommodation (12 per cent) and the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals (22 per cent) are all well above the national average. The percentage of pupils speaking English as an additional language (over 2 per cent) is higher than in many schools. About two thirds of pupils remain in full time education after the age of 16.
2. A very small number of places at the school are filled on the basis of ability, in line with schools which belong to the consortium of selective schools in Essex, and 24 places are available for an aptitude in music. The overall ability on entry is well below average, however, as about a quarter of the most able pupils in the area are selected for one of the four grammar schools in the borough. The percentage of pupils on the register of pupils with special educational needs is broadly average and 14 pupils (1.1 per cent) have a local education authority Statement of Special Educational Need. This percentage is below average. Two thirds of the pupils on the register are boys.
3. Compared with the time of the 1996 OFSTED report, the overall number of pupils has increased, there has been a small drop in the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals, and a similar proportion of pupils remains in full time education after the age of 16. The number of teachers, the ratio of pupils per teacher and the proportion of time teachers spend teaching are broadly similar. The school is in the early stages of benefiting from its technology college status.
4. The school's motto, 'striving for excellence', is supported by its main aim to provide a quality education in a caring, supportive and disciplined environment. It has already begun to improve numeracy and to meet aims in the technology college bid to improve the range and use of information and communication technology, particularly in mathematics, science and technology. Planned improved facilities and resources should facilitate the school's aims for enhanced skills within the school and the community.

4. Key indicators

Attainment at Key Stage 3¹

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year.		Year	Boys	Girls	Total
		1999	124	93	217
4. National Curriculum Test Results		English	Mathematics	Science	
Number of pupils	Boys	77(62)	61(52)	50(45)	
At NC Level 5 or above	Girls	79(75)	58(53)	39(40)	
	Total	156(137)	119(105)	89(85)	
Percentage at NC Level 5 or above	School	72(65)	55(50)	41(40)	
	National	63(65)	62(60)	55(56)	
Percentage at NC Level 6 or above	School	34(30)	30(25)	16(14)	
	National	28(35)	38(36)	23(27)	

The above table does not take absence into account. The percentages of pupils who sat the tests and gained level 5 are 78 for English, 59 for mathematics and 44 for science.

4. Teacher Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Number of pupils	Boys	62(52)	69(59)	67(59)
at NC Level 5 or above	Girls	75(69)	66(59)	53(52)
	Total	137(121)	135(118)	120(111)
Percentage at NC Level 5 or above	School	68(56)	67(57)	60(53)
	National	64(62)	64(64)	60(62)
Percentage at NC Level 6 or above	School	28 (22)	48 (29)	13(24)
	National	31(31)	37(37)	28(31)

.....
¹ Percentages in parentheses refer to the year before the latest reporting year

Attainment at Key Stage 4²

Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year:	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	94	95	189
	(1998)	(106)	(87)	(193)

GCSE Results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A* to G	1 or more grades A* to G
Number of pupils	Boys	30 (20)	82(80)	88(89)
Achieving standard specified	Girls	30(28)	81(67)	87(77)
	Total	60(48)	163(147)	175(166)
Percentage achieving standard specified	School	32(26)	86(76)	93(86)
	National	48(45)	88(90)	94(95)

Number studying for approved vocational pupils	Number	% Success rate
qualifications or units and percentage of such who achieved all those they studied:	School 29(158)	24(41)
	National	N/A

Attainment in the Sixth Form³

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 who were entered	Year	Male	Female	Total
for GCE A/AS examination in the latest reporting year:	1999 (98)	13(16)	15(13)	28(29)

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	7.1(10.5)	13.8(10.5)	11.3(10.5)	3.6(5.3)	1.7(1.6)	3(3)
National	N/A	N/A	(17.6)	N/A	N/A	(2.8)

Number in final year of approved vocational qualifications and percentage of such students who achieved these qualifications:	Number	% Success rate
	School 31(33)	71(79)
	National	N/A(72.5)

.....²

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

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

Attendance

Percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year:	Authorised	School	%
1998-99	Absence	National comparative data	9.4
	Unauthorised	School	7.9
	Absence	National comparative data	1.0
			1.1

3

Exclusions

Number of exclusions of pupils (of statutory school age) during the previous year:	Number
	Fixed period 125
	Permanent 5

3

Quality of teaching

Percentage of teaching observed which is:	%
	Very good or better 18
	Satisfactory or better 91
	Less than satisfactory 9

PART A: ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS AT THE SCHOOL

Attainment and progress

Attainment

1. Standards on entry are well below average in English, mathematics and science. Standardised tests of cognitive ability also place pupils below average. The school receives each year a very small number of pupils who would be eligible for places at selective schools. A quarter of the most able pupils in the area accept places in one of the four local grammar schools. More girls than boys enter with Levels 4 and 5 in English and more boys in mathematics.
2. In 1999 in the national tests in Year 9, the percentage of pupils attaining the expected Level 5 was above the national average and high when compared with similar schools. The school has added considerable value in English, and raised the boys' standards. Standards attained in mathematics were close to the national average and above the average for similar schools. In science, the percentages of pupils gaining both Levels 5 and 6 were below those of other schools, and at Level 6 in science well below. The proportion reaching Level 5 was broadly in line with similar schools.
3. The proportions of pupils gaining five or more GCSE examination grades A* to C and A* to G and the average point score rose significantly in 1999. Whilst the proportion of pupils gaining five grades A* to C is below the national average, it is broadly average when compared with similar schools. The proportion gaining five grades A* to G is in line with the national figure. The 1999 results of pupils in Year 11 entered for a foundation unit of a General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) were poor, particularly in information and communication technology where no pupils completed the required work.
4. The average point score for candidates entered for Advanced (A-level) or Advanced Supplementary (AS) examinations rose a little in 1999, but has been well below national averages over the last four years. The number of successful candidates and the average point score in GNVQ at both advanced and intermediate levels has been close to the national average.
5. In current work, standards are affected by lower than average standards on entry. Standards are broadly average in English, but below national expectations in mathematics and science. In top sets, pupils attain standards in line with expectations, however. Standards in design and technology, history, modern languages and physical education in Key Stages 3 and 4, and in religious education at Key Stage 3 are below average. Standards are broadly average in geography and religious education at Key Stage 4 and in drama in Key Stage 3 and in the sixth form. They are above average in art, music and drama at Key Stage 4, and well above average in music in the sixth form. Poor literacy skills in lower sets affect attainment in subjects which require significant amounts of writing.
6. Standards are generally in line with expectations on courses leading to GNVQ accreditation or units, with some students reaching above average standards, especially in leisure and tourism. Poor attendance of some pupils on foundation courses for health and social care, coupled with poor literacy skills, result in certain pupils reaching standards below those expected for the course. Pupils reach high standards in the child development course.
7. Standards attained on A-level courses vary considerably. Numbers are small, with at times only one student per course. Taking into account the time students have followed the course, current standards are above average in art and music. They are broadly average in biology, drama, economics, in oral appreciation of English literature, in French, mathematics and physical education and sociology. Standards are below average in design and technology, chemistry,

geography, history and physics.

11. *Progress*

8. Overall, pupils make satisfactory progress and pupils with special educational needs make good progress.
9. Progress is good in English in Key Stages 3 and 4 and satisfactory in the sixth form; the boys make especially good progress in Key Stage 3. In mathematics, pupils make good progress in Key Stage 4, and progress is helped by blocked timetabling which permits setting across the full age range. Progress is satisfactory in Key Stage 3 and the sixth form, other than in the GCSE re-sit group. Progress in science in Key Stages 3 and 4 is inconsistent, varying from good to unsatisfactory, and affected by the quality of teaching and the amount taught by specialists. The department is two teachers short, and despite the willingness of the head of department and other teachers to increase their work load to reduce the disruption to learning, in some lessons work is supervised by non-specialists.
10. Progress is very good in music. It is also very good in art in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form, but satisfactory at Key Stage 3. Pupils make satisfactory progress overall in design and technology, but the progress is better in textiles and food than in other elements. The carousel system, where pupils change activities every few weeks, does not help steady progression in learning and acquiring skills. Progress in information and communication technology has been unsatisfactory, but is improving with increased use of computers across the curriculum. Pupils make satisfactory progress in history. In geography progress is satisfactory, but pupils in top and lower sets generally make better progress than those of average ability. In modern languages, the progress of substantial numbers of pupils has been unsatisfactory over recent years, and is still unsatisfactory. Long-term staff absence, including that of the head of department, and difficulties in recruiting both permanent and suitable supply teachers are the major contributory factors to unsatisfactory progress. The inability to recruit German teachers has resulted in a Year 8 class which studied German throughout Year 7 having to change to French. As a result, the pupils' language levels are those expected in Year 7. In physical education, pupils make good progress in the sixth form, satisfactory progress in Key Stage 4 and unsatisfactory progress overall in Key Stage 3, mainly because of the poor attitudes of some pupils and some unsatisfactory teaching. Progress in religious education is at least satisfactory and often good.
11. On vocational courses, progress is closely allied to interest, application and levels of attendance; it varies from good to unsatisfactory, but is mostly satisfactory. Some students began foundation courses with very modest attainment and several in the sixth form are doing well because they are interested and keen to produce good work. All students make gains in knowledge allied to their course - how business, health and caring services and the leisure and tourist industries work. Most pupils on the alternative education programme make good gains in social skills, learn work-related skills in their work placements as well as improving their attendance.
12. Progress in a few classes across a range of subjects is unsatisfactory because of the teachers' poor class control. The progress of a significant minority of individual pupils is too slow because they are frequently absent from school.
13. Well-focused individual support for pupils with special educational needs, timetabled during tutorial time and in some withdrawal lessons, is successful in enabling the vast majority of these pupils to make good progress in meeting the needs identified in individual educational plans or statements. In-class support provided by eleven trained curriculum support staff effectively assists good progress. Much support is directed at Year 7, where more than one assistant is allocated in several classes. No support is allocated to some low-attaining sets in Key Stage 4, where several pupils would benefit from help. Once pupils in Year 7 and support assistants are re-allocated to groups, the provision of additional support in some lowest sets in Key Stage 4 would be beneficial for progress.

17. Attitudes, behaviour and personal development

14. Most pupils have good attitudes to their work. Where the teaching is of a good or better quality they are keen to learn and understand the theories and outcomes behind the various aspects of the subject. They concentrate and listen to instructions well, settle quickly to the task and most work diligently on their own, although they sometimes lack perseverance when the work becomes difficult. They are keen to contribute to question and answer sessions. Many take care in the presentation of their work and are proud of it. Most pupils work well in pairs and in groups and are keen to contribute to the success of their team. Pupils with special educational needs try hard, especially when they have additional support. Where the teaching is just satisfactory or is unsatisfactory, pupils often lack motivation and allow their concentration to wander. Most sixth form students are enthusiastic learners who study well on their own. Many pupils who follow the alternative education programmes value the support they receive. Some who were reintegrating after a fixed period of exclusion were responding well to the efforts of the school to help them.
15. Behaviour is inconsistent but, overall, satisfactory. Where pupils are under firm supervision with high expectations, they behave well, are courteous and respectful in their relationships with their peers and with the teachers, and respect property. In lessons where the quality of teaching is high, pupils behave well, including those with behaviour problems. However, in about ten per cent of lessons, some pupils behave badly, usually where they are not inspired by the teaching, and the expectations of learning and behaviour are not clearly established. They then persist in unnecessary chatter, call out, move around the classroom without permission and lack consideration for their peers who want to learn. Out of the classroom, where pupils are not closely supervised, most move about the corridors sensibly, behave well in the dining hall, show common courtesies to adults and are caring of other pupils. However, a few behave badly and roughly, use foul language and show a lack of respect for others. Some bullying was witnessed, but pupils report that it is not widespread.
16. Several pupils lack respect for the environment and drop far too much litter, despite an ample supply of bins around the school and the grounds. Many pupils show an awareness of the problem within the school and the topic of litter has featured regularly on the agenda for the school council. Some toilet blocks are kept locked as a result of irresponsible behaviour. The school management keeps the buildings free of graffiti but four pupils have been excluded for this in the present term.
17. During the academic year 1998 to 1999 there were 125 fixed term and five permanent exclusions. These figures are well above average. Half were for pupils in Year 9. The rate of exclusions is falling. In the current school term, there have been eleven fixed-term, one permanent and four internal exclusions, indicating a good response to the school's strategies to reduce the number of exclusions.
18. Pupils develop well in the school's environment and many show a good level of confidence and self-esteem, which suggests improvement since the last inspection. They enjoy and support the good range of extra-curricular activities. Pupils work enthusiastically to produce high quality music and drama productions. Most older pupils respond well to the demands of their course work, but the overall number of opportunities for independent learning are limited, other than on some GNVQ courses. Pupils handle responsibility well, enthusiastically and with care. Examples of this are the school council and the new buddy system between Years 8 and 7. Members of the sixth form respond to their considerably increased range of responsibilities maturely and sensitively. Pupils in all years raise funds for charity. The good contribution that most pupils make to the life of the school community outweighs the unsatisfactory behaviour of a minority.

22. Attendance

19. Pupils' attendance has improved each year since the last inspection when it was poor, but it is still

unsatisfactory. Frequent absence has an adverse effect of the attainment and progress of a significant number of pupils. Attendance in the year 1998 to 1999 was under 90 per cent, and the rate of both authorised and unauthorised absence was above average. In the current term, attendance has averaged 90.6 per cent, which is only marginally below the national average. However in Years 8, 10 and 12 the average has been below 90 per cent and falls as low as 86 per cent some weeks. The rate of authorised absence for the same period is broadly average, but the rate of unauthorised absence at 1.5 per cent is above the national average. Several pupils have a high number of absences marked for sickness; it is known that some parents condone absence. During the 1998 to 1999 academic year 65 pupils, and so far in the current term 16 pupils, have taken more than the permitted ten days for holiday during term time. A high number of other pupils have also taken days off school for holidays.

20. Most pupils are punctual to school but large numbers are late, some persistently so. In some cases, the late arrival of buses is the cause. Most lessons start at an appropriate time given the dispersed nature of the school. There are, however, a few stragglers who prevent a prompt start to some of the lessons and twelve pupils are marked as having played truant in the term of the inspection.

24. **QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED**

24. **Teaching**

21. Teaching is satisfactory overall. In 239 lessons or part lessons observed, it was satisfactory or better in about 91 per cent, at least good in more than half, and very good or excellent in a little under a fifth. Teaching was unsatisfactory in about 9 per cent of lessons. The quality of teaching is better in Years 10 to 13 than in Years 7 to 9. About two thirds of teaching was good or better in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form, but just under half at Key Stage 3. Teaching was unsatisfactory or poor in one in ten lessons in Key Stages 3 and 4, but in only one sixth form lesson.
22. Teaching is good overall and often very good or excellent in art, drama, music and child development. Almost all teaching is at least satisfactory with about half judged good in English, mathematics, geography and religious education. Teaching is mostly satisfactory in history and in information and communication technology, where non-specialist teachers are very well supported by a specialist teacher and technicians. The quality of teaching is inconsistent in modern languages, physical education and science. On balance, it is satisfactory but varies from very good to poor. Too much unsatisfactory teaching was observed in modern languages and science with a significant proportion associated with temporary and non-specialist teaching. Teaching in about a quarter of physical education lessons in Key Stage 3 was unsatisfactory. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed in art, child development, drama, economics, music, personal and social education (SCOPE), religious education or sociology.
23. Teaching was always at least satisfactory and often good or very good on courses leading to a foundation level GNVQ unit or a foundation and intermediate qualification in Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. Teaching in advanced GNVQ classes observed was mostly satisfactory. Most pupils benefit from teachers offering increased opportunities for independent learning in these courses.
24. The vast majority of teachers, curriculum support and administrative staff are hardworking and know the pupils well. Many teachers give, and have given, generously of their time and support to try to ensure suitable learning for the pupils as the school has struggled with staff shortages and many long-term absences over the past two years.
25. Subject knowledge is satisfactory overall. It is good in art, mathematics and music, but inconsistent in science and modern languages. In modern languages, for example, linguistic competence ranges from native speaker level to O-level proficiency.

26. Teachers' expectation of pupils in lessons are high in art, music and drama and high for those in top sets in mathematics, especially in Key Stage 4. Generally, expectations are satisfactory, but could be higher for the most able pupils in geography. Several tasks are insufficiently challenging for pupils of a range of ability in modern languages, for example there is too much copying. The setting system helps many teachers to challenge pupils appropriately and the lowest attaining pupils are usually adequately challenged. Specialist, well-paced teaching of English in the lowest sets in Year 7, accompanied by good assistance from support staff, ensures that pupils in these classes make good progress. Curriculum support assistants are trained to modify materials to meet the needs of pupils with learning needs and assist teachers in setting appropriate challenge for these pupils. Occasionally, a desire to boost the confidence of pupils with poor attendance and motivation results in teachers setting some insufficiently challenging tasks, such as cutting and pasting in Key Stage 4.
27. Behavioural management is inconsistent. It is mostly satisfactory or good. Many teachers handle pupils skilfully and well, including classes with high proportions of pupils with emotional and behavioural problems. They have good strategies to hold pupils' attention. In a significant minority of lessons, however, the teachers do not manage behaviour well enough and, as a result, all pupils in the class make insufficient progress.
28. Boys outnumber girls in several teaching groups. Not all teachers provide sufficient encouragement to girls or involve them enough in some lessons; in consequence, the girls in these classes are not making the progress of which they are capable. Inadequate attention to girls was observed in some lessons in physical education in Key Stage 3, in modern languages, in some Year 8 English and drama groups and in GNVQ intermediate leisure and tourism. Teachers give too much attention to the boys or spend too much time trying to control the behaviour of a few. When drawn to the attention of the teachers, several were unaware of this habit.
29. Lesson planning is satisfactory overall, with good examples across a wide range of subjects. Tasks are usually varied and include opportunities for group work to maintain the pupils' interests. There is good use of praise and oral feedback in many lessons. Marking mostly accurately indicates errors, often also includes encouraging comment, but relatively rarely shows how pupils could improve the standard of their work. Few pupils are aware of how their work relates to National Curriculum levels or GCSE grades, as the school's gradings are not equated to these national benchmarks. Few teachers require the systematic corrections of frequently made errors.
30. Homework in the inspection week suitably extended or reinforced learning, and this pattern was evident from scrutiny of books in several subjects. Evidence from planners and pupils' and parents' comments indicated that homework was not set according to the school plan in all subjects. A few books showed insufficiently extending work, for example too much colouring of pictures in modern languages.

34. **The curriculum and assessment**

34. *Curriculum*

31. The school's curriculum has been carefully constructed in accordance with the mission statement. It is particularly broad at Key Stage 4 and post-16, where vocational courses have been well selected to meet local needs. The governors' committee, which oversees the curriculum, is supportive and acts as a critical friend when discussing developments. Governors are attached to departments and are more involved in curriculum decisions than at the time of the previous inspection. The school week has been increased to an above-average 26 hours to give more attention to numeracy and provide sufficient time for Social and Curriculum Opportunities for Personal Education (SCOPE). The additional time given to numeracy is already paying dividends.

32. SCOPE has recently replaced personal and social education. An excellently planned programme is accompanied by detailed schemes of work. Health education, including sex and drugs education, is planned for all year groups. Well-planned lessons help to ensure consistency. A good resource bank is being developed to support the wide variety of activities and tasks in the programme. A specialist team of experienced teachers gives the subject high status. High-quality teaching observed in SCOPE lessons is reflected in the response of pupils and the progress made. In-service training for staff will be required in specialist topics. Good use is made of external agencies and visitors to add value to the course, keeping it up to date and relevant. No time is available for the co-ordinator to monitor teaching. Pupils are positive about the new course and value helpful explanations and opportunities for discussion.
33. The curriculum at Key Stage 3 is satisfactory. All the subjects of the National Curriculum, religious education, numeracy and SCOPE are in place. Information technology is developing quickly as a result of the award of technology college status. A fortnightly lesson of drama enriches the curriculum. Modern foreign languages are unsatisfactory. Staffing difficulties have resulted in one Year 8 having to abandon German and begin French, and the decision to abandon teaching German in Year 7. The time allocation for French, whilst broadly average over the key stage, is well below the national average in Year 7.
34. The curriculum at Key Stage 4 is good. Pupils on the 'blue' course study the prescribed National Curriculum subjects, religious education, SCOPE and two subjects which offer them a broad and balanced curriculum, giving a possibility of nine full GCSE subjects and one short course. The breadth of the option choice is enriched by the addition of child development, drama, photography, dance and sociology. Pupils choosing options which lead to an imbalanced curriculum are sensibly interviewed, a development since the last inspection. Information and communication technology does not meet statutory requirements but this is being addressed as new facilities arrive. Religious education now meets the statutory requirements, having developed a good short course in Key Stage 4 since the last inspection.
35. The school rightly recognises that for some pupils a smaller number of examination subjects is more appropriate. A careful system of teacher recommendation and pupil and parent interviews ensures that the choice of the 'yellow' course is correct. Last year's results indicate that pupils on the yellow course achieved higher than predicted grades in the subjects they took. The addition of GNVQ foundation level health and social care has recently added an important new dimension to the course. Further courses with accepted vocational accreditation would add further enrichment and choice. All pupils on the yellow course have been officially disapplied from studying a foreign language. It would be appropriate to review this decision when the staffing of languages improves.
36. The school has responded positively to pupils who are disaffected with school by the end of Year 10, and those with poor attendance records, by providing an alternative education course based on two days' work experience and three half days in school. Most of those on the course have considerable social and/or educational problems. In school time pupils work on a unit for foundation level health and social care. This arrangement has led to improved attendance by these pupils. The aim, 'to change failure into success', is beginning to work. Pupils learn about topics, such as stress, which affect their own and other people. Literacy and numeracy training is incorporated in health and social care topics. Some find concentrating on listening and writing difficult and many have poor literacy skills. A review of the use of the three half days in school would be appropriate so that the whole of the course is genuinely alternative and possibly more practical.
37. A wide range of courses leading to A-level and GNVQ is offered in the sixth form. Sociology and music technology have been added to give wider choice and respond to the needs of the students. Student numbers are low in some subjects leading to students in Years 12 and 13 being taught together on some occasions, with mixed results. Joint teaching is successful in music, but

less so in history. A few students are ungraded in A/AS examinations or are predicted low grades, an indication that more realistic guidance is needed at the recruitment stage, a sentiment expressed by some students (paragraph 59). The school is rightly taking the opportunity provided by the changes in sixth form courses to review its provision.

38. All pupils have equal access to the curriculum apart from those who have been disappplied from modern foreign languages at Key Stage 4. The grouping of pupils into sets based on subject attainment has a beneficial effect on progress. Careful records are kept and analysed so that changes in the groups can occur when necessary. The setting of mathematics across the whole year group at Key Stage 4 has led to improvements in attainment and progress.
39. All pupils on the appropriate stages of the register of those with special educational needs have individual education plans in place. Pupils' progress and individual education plan are reviewed termly. All staff are invited to contribute to the reviews and pupils' individual plans by using a well-conceived form which seeks judgement on each pupil's literacy and number skills as well as dexterity, effort, behaviour and attendance. The individual plans are reviewed and adjusted in the light of subject comments. Pupils can be moved up or down the recommended level of support following the review and discussion with parents and the pupil. Individual plans have helpful organisational and behaviour targets and give sound advice for teachers, parents and curriculum support assistants. A few have specific organisational targets which should help to raise standards, for example 'practise cutting and drawing skills', 'self correct first paragraph of work', but many are weak on setting precise learning targets against which to measure success or to guide teachers and parents on small steps to success. Heads of department or subject teachers are expected to set specific targets for subject lessons which should be monitored by the head of department. There is no formal recording or monitoring of success in meeting the targets.
40. The planning for pupils to progress smoothly from primary school through to work, further education or higher education is good. Good curriculum links exist and the successful technology college bid includes partnership agreements with several feeder schools. Teachers liaise closely to make the transition from primary to secondary as smooth as possible for the pupils, and especially for pupils with special educational needs. Parents appreciated a numeracy Summer school to help Year 6 pupils about to join the school. Planning for pupils as they move through the school is good in most subject areas but weak in design and technology and information and communication technology. Departmental monitoring and evaluation of the work is generally satisfactory but informal, with little monitoring by senior staff to ensure that all the curriculum-related policies are applied consistently across and within departments.
41. The provision of extra-curricular activities is good. A wide range of opportunities is available especially in art, music, sport and drama. Many educational and social visits, including residential experience in Britain and abroad, extend and enrich the curriculum. Most subjects offer good opportunities for revision or homework support and a number of subjects run lunch time or after school clubs which are valued by the pupils. Figures provided by the school indicate that there have been over 2000 pupil involvements in about 40 activities in this calendar year, showing the success and importance of this provision. The involvement of staff alongside pupils in some music groups is very positive.
42. Provision for careers education and guidance is very good. It receives strong support from senior management. A good partnership agreement between the school and service provider clearly indicates what is on offer. Evaluation of the programme is thoroughly completed before a new agreement is drawn up. A well-planned careers education and guidance programme is delivered to all year groups through SCOPE. Pupil evaluation of a recent careers module was positive. The Careers Officer is closely involved in the school and makes good contributions to SCOPE, the Alternative Education course, GNVQ courses, and careers clinics held in tutorial time, as well as giving individual interviews to all who request them. The school and the service rightly believe that pupils and students must receive independent advice allowing them to make well-informed

choices. Students in Years 12 and 13 are provided with relevant information on the possible routes open to them. Good use has been made of the Careers Library initiative to provide up-to-date resources. Appropriate computer programs are available. Work experience is well planned and administered. Pupils in Year 11 and in the sixth form believe that the support and guidance they receive are good.

46. *Assessment*

43. The school has improved the quality of its assessment since the last inspection. Progress has been uneven and slowed by the long-term absence of staff with co-ordinating responsibility. In the last few months the pace of progress has quickened under the leadership of a senior teacher newly appointed to the post. A good, up-to-date policy has been agreed with due consultation and is in the process of being fully implemented. Overall, the quality of assessment across the school is sound, but has considerable potential for improvement as the new policy takes full effect and is further developed.
44. The procedures for assessing pupils are generally effective in all subjects; good in some subjects and in the sixth form. The school uses a variety of tests to determine pupils' prior attainment on entry. Regular termly tests are systematically recorded by departments. The school analyses performance in public examinations and makes use of data provided by the local education authority to analyse performance at school and departmental level. The standard system of marking routine work for achievement, effort and attainment is consistently applied across the curriculum. As pupils approach national tests or examinations, the marking grades A to D do not equate with GCSE grades nor to test levels and could confuse by giving insufficient information to pupils about their performance in relation to appropriate national benchmarks. Most subjects now include an element of pupil self-assessment, and target setting has been adopted by most for pupils in Year 10 following staff training on this topic.
45. Sound use is made of assessment data to inform curricular planning, and good use in some areas, notably mathematics and humanities. Pupils' progress, both individually and by groups, can be tracked through successive years and linked to the data provided from outside the school. This is done well using the Cognitive Ability Tests (CAT) scores for pupils in Key Stage 3 as evidence for dividing pupils into groups by ability. Some departments are using a range of assessment data to review their curricular and teaching provision.
46. Assessment of pupils with special educational needs is good. Assessment of pupils about to join Year 7 with special educational needs is enhanced by good and early liaison with feeder primary schools. The special needs co-ordinator attends annual reviews in Year 6 in the primary schools. Additionally, curriculum support staff spend a day in each feeder school to have a better understanding of each pupil's individual needs. Many of the eleven classroom assistants have appropriate qualifications and meet regularly to discuss the support they should give with the special needs co-ordinator. The borough provides helpful written guidance on identifying specific difficulties.
47. By the autumn half term, a register of those needing support is circulated to all staff and all Year 7 pupils on the register have had a comprehension test and standardised tests for reading, number and general cognitive ability. Lists of the reading ages of all Year 7 pupils highlight those who are significantly above or below their chronological age. The results of the tests are used to plan individual education plans and to set targets.

51. **Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development**

48. Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.
49. Provision for pupils' spiritual development has improved since the last inspection, and is now

satisfactory overall. The school develops pupils' self-esteem and self-worth successfully through increasing their expectations, through treating them with respect and through valuing their work in displays. Pupils on the School Council appreciate being treated as adults by using business environments for their training days. Many lessons give opportunities for pupils to explore their feelings, values and beliefs, and they learn to respect each other's views. They have good opportunities to reflect in areas of the curriculum such as music and drama, where pupils grow in self-confidence through improving performance. The school provides very good opportunities for pupils to reflect together on spiritual themes on special occasions, such as Remembrance Day. Opportunities for pupils to develop spiritual awareness have been improved by the extension of the religious education curriculum. However, the role of assemblies is still underdeveloped, as pupils attend only once a week and the content is not always spiritual. During the inspection week the quality of the assembly provided to each year was good.

50. Provision for pupils' moral education is very good. Pupils have ownership of school rules through being involved in putting them into their own language. They know that the school takes bullying seriously. Staff set good role models, treating pupils as individuals and with respect, even when they are in trouble. Teachers discuss moral issues in a wide variety of subjects, for instance when looking at environmental issues in religious education, debating genetic engineering in English and exploring issues of power in drama. The programme for personal, social and health education (SCOPE) includes discussions of human rights, drugs, sexuality and feelings for others. Pupils are made aware of the personal costs of crime through the effective involvement of the local police.
51. Provision for social education is very good. The school has a clear vision of the role that it can play in the local community, and pupils identify with this vision. They helped raise support in the community for the bid to become a technology college, have helped to paint a subway to reduce graffiti, raise considerable sums for charity and help with open evenings for prospective parents. They develop social skills through group work in a wide variety of lessons, ranging from mathematics to drama, and work together extensively in musical, dramatic and sporting activities. They grow substantially in confidence, responsibility and collaborative skills. Pupils take care of each other, and sixth form pupils all give a period a week to helping other pupils or school activities. The school council has sensible discussions on a wide range of school issues ranging from bullying to how teachers write reports, and their voice is heard. Members receive quality training in a professional environment and there is very good communication between the council and pupils' forms. The Head Boy and Girl represent the school regularly at events outside the school and prefects play an important part in day-to-day routines.
52. Provision for pupils' cultural education is good. Pupils take part in a wide variety of dramatic and musical activities, and in performances of high quality. Two hundred take part in a local festival and pupils have recently won all their classes. A large number of them receive instrumental tuition and perform in musical ensembles. All pupils have an opportunity to attend a professional theatre appropriate to them each year.
53. Provision for multi-cultural education is underdeveloped though there is good provision in some subjects. Pupils learn to respect individual differences. In drama they learn to empathise with those whose life experiences are very different, such as refugees. Text books across a range of subjects allow reflections on cultural differences. Pupils compare music typical of different cultures. English teachers discuss black American women writers, and pupils discuss the black people of Europe and America in history. A wide variety of relevant issues is discussed in religious studies.
57. **Support, guidance and pupils' welfare**
54. The school provides a welcoming, caring and supportive atmosphere for all pupils. All staff, teaching and non-teaching, know them well and work very hard to give them the necessary

support for their individual circumstances. Pupils feel safe and secure and confident that there will always be someone with whom they can share problems. The police, the education welfare officer and the social services representative are regularly in school to support staff and to provide guidance for pupils. They have a high respect for the efforts of the school, with which they have good relationships. Sixth form students are given a wide range of responsibilities and social experiences which are good preparation for their future life.

55. A comprehensive induction programme ensures that pupils are well prepared for their secondary school and have the support of the Year 8 pupils and sixth form students when they arrive. Pupils find SCOPE helpful and informative, and appreciate opportunities to discuss a broad range of topics, including sex and drugs education. Circle time is a good medium to encourage pupils to discuss topics, but the name does not give it the image it deserves due to its links with primary school education. The guidance for GCSE is good with targeted mentoring at strategic times of the year. Guidance for the sixth form is also good but pupils would value less marketing of subjects and more realistic guidance on their expected grades, the expectations of the courses and their chances of success in the sixth form. Careers education and guidance are very good and helpful, with dedicated support from the careers advisory service.
56. Since the last inspection the school has worked hard to put in place a comprehensive approach to monitoring pupils' academic progress and personal development, with departments and tutors fully involved. The pupils' planners form a central part in recording progress and achievements, with every effort made by the year teams to encourage parental involvement in monitoring their child's work. Tutorials help to provide students with the support they need. Planned individual help with curriculum support assistants in tutorial time for pupils with special educational needs helps them improve basic skills.
57. The school's promotion of good attendance has improved since the last inspection but is still not sufficiently effective. The electronic marking system for class registers is a good tool to monitor pupils' attendance. Administrative staff phone home when pupils are absent. High numbers of pupils are being authorised to take more than the permitted number of days for holiday during term time.
58. The school's behaviour policy and the well-publicised rules are the foundation on which the school practice is based. Rules are reinforced in most lessons. A few teachers tolerate poor behaviour. The lack of clear guidance for movement in the corridors does not help orderly movement to and from lessons. Pupils like the system of rewards and most pupils respond to the sanctions which, when given, are applied fairly. Pupils with known behaviour problems are given targeted and effective support to help them to improve their behaviour. The method of monitoring behaviour is sound and effective. It is recognised that bullying exists, but is not widespread, and it is well dealt with in the SCOPE programme. Incidents of bullying are monitored carefully and reported to be speedily and effectively dealt with. The school is working hard to reduce the above average number of exclusions. Internal exclusions have been introduced and are proving effective. Very good and helpful support for pupils during exclusions and help for them to reintegrate afterwards are further examples of the considerable care the school provides for pupils. Exclusions are carefully recorded.
59. The school is attentive to child protection matters and has its own procedures to support the local authority's guidelines. Training is part of the induction procedures for new teaching staff but this does not extend to non-teaching staff and there has been no recent training. Satisfactory records are kept.
60. A few matters of health and safety were brought to the attention of the school. Locking some of the blocks of toilets leaves a lower than recommended number of toilets available for use. Some rooms in the music department and a teaching room for economics lack ventilation, which inhibits teaching and pupils' ability to learn. Corrosive chemicals are stored in the swimming pool boiler

room. Pupils who do not feel well are looked after with care, but there are insufficient qualified first aiders to administer the treatment and no person with overall responsibility for first aid in the school. The medical room is too small and not well-sited or equipped to meet the needs of the number of pupils in the school. It is not appropriate that many who feel unwell sit in the corridor outside the headteacher's room. More signs to fire exit routes in the newer areas of the school would be helpful.

64. Partnership with parents and the community

61. The school recognises the need for a good partnership with parents and works hard to achieve it. Most parents are supportive of their child and the school, but few actively support the school. Functions such as the annual school production and the sixtieth anniversary celebrations are well supported, but attendance at a parents' information evening following the drugs road show was not good. The Friends of Shoeburyness struggle to obtain sufficient support for the dedicated teachers who endeavour to lead the organisation of social and fund-raising events. Parents are kept well informed of what is going on in the school through a fortnightly newsletter. The prospectuses and the governors' annual report are attractively presented and informative; the governors' report has insufficient information on the education of pupils with special educational needs. About ten per cent of parents who responded to the questionnaire do not feel well enough informed about their child's standard of work and progress. Attendance at parents' consultation evenings and annual reports to parents are satisfactory, but parents would like the school to review the timing of them. The format for the annual reports to parents is under review and members of the school council have been involved in the discussions. The present reports include targets and suggestions for improvement, although in some subjects the targets are not sufficiently precise. The key stage results sent to parents do not have the local or national comparative figures. Both pupils and parents dislike the use of the bank of statements, which results in impersonal reports. Very good pupil planners provide parents with every opportunity to have some idea of their child's work and progress, but not all parents sign the planner or use it to send messages.
62. Parents of pupils with special educational needs are regularly informed of their children's progress. They receive a copy of individual education plans and are offered opportunities to discuss them. They are welcome to attend annual reviews. The school has good links with all the appropriate local authority and health services. Southend Borough provides the school with good guidance on identifying and supporting the pupils. The school's special needs co-ordinator meets the co-ordinators of feeder schools half-termly, and curriculum support staff spend a day in each feeder school in the summer term to get to know pupils with special educational needs about to join the school.
63. The school has very good and growing links with the community. Several organisations use the school's facilities and the number is likely to grow as the school's status and facilities as a technology college become established. Fund raising for charities, both local and national, is a regular feature of school life. Pupils participate in local competitions and in joint projects such as dance workshops. As part of the technology college bid the school has signed contracts with local primary and secondary schools and has good links with them, particularly the primary schools. These include departmental links in several subjects and some of the primary schools use the school's swimming pool on a regular basis. There are also good links with some colleges of further education and universities. Links with employers are strong, and the school receives considerable support in kind and financially from several businesses. Some of these companies were instrumental in assisting the successful bid for technology status. Pupils and staff benefit from visits to some of the companies to use their facilities or to see them in operation. The three-week work experience programme in Year 10 is well organised and pupils derive considerable benefit from the experience, as do those on the alternative education programme work placements.

67. THE MANAGEMENT AND EFFICIENCY OF THE SCHOOL

67. Leadership and management

64. The leadership and management of the school have strengths and weaknesses and are satisfactory overall.
65. The governance is good. Governors have a broad range of relevant expertise and provide generous support and good financial and general guidance. Many give considerable time and expertise, are committed to the school and are good critical friends.
66. The headteacher, senior managers and governors have shown vision and commitment to improving the school's resources by obtaining good sports facilities for the pupils and a large number of local sponsors to enable the successful bid for technology college status. They have worked hard to forge the present very good links with the community, local primary schools and businesses. These are significant successes which benefit the school and its pupils.
67. The headteacher is respected for his integrity. He is well supported by the senior management team. The team of three deputy headteachers and three senior teachers is larger than would usually be found in a school of similar size. The school does not have long-term strategic plans for its staffing structure, but promotes according to perceived need and staff performance. At present, the staffing budget is lower than average, but in the longer term, planning may need more careful attention. All senior staff are prepared to work long hours for the good of the school. Pastoral management is good. The headteacher and senior staff react quickly to requests to see and speak with parents. Members of the senior team have put in effort and time to set up relevant vocational courses for pupils who find large numbers of GCSE courses daunting and for those with lack of motivation and poor attendance records. These courses have been effective in improving attendance and motivation.
68. Over the last two years, considerable senior management time has been given to preparing the technology bid and addressing staffing difficulties. The responsibility of one of the deputy headteachers for financial and site management requires a daily time commitment. Dealing with non-academic issues and routine tasks has proved too time consuming and insufficient senior management time has been made available for monitoring teaching and learning (paragraphs 36, 43, 44). Teaching and learning have no section in the school development plan, although they are stated as important to all aspects of the plan. Recent changes of allocations of responsibility, accompanied by a recent focus on ways of raising achievement, are beginning to reap benefits, as seen in the improved test and examination results. Now that technology status is achieved, the senior team needs to review how time is spent and to focus priorities on teaching and learning, for example on how new resourcing will need to change patterns of teaching and learning. It is also appropriate to consider whether some of the site management and more financial responsibilities can be delegated to administrative staff.
69. Curriculum leadership varies from good to unsatisfactory, and is good overall. It is good in art, English, curriculum support, design and technology, drama, mathematics, music and science. Line management is effective. The head of humanities provides good co-ordination, support and leadership to history, geography and religious education. The leadership of the sixth form and of vocational subjects is sound. The co-ordinator of information and communication technology has become much more involved and effective at helping staff across the curriculum areas and setting up systems. Physical education is sensitively led. The leadership of modern languages has been ineffective for a long period, but is improving since the involvement of a senior teacher.
70. The strengths of curriculum leadership are good relationships, team work and support for colleagues. Schemes of work are mostly sound or good, as in mathematics, where they establish high expectations, and in English, where good ethos and target setting maintain higher standards

than in the other core subjects. Subject development plans are mostly sound or good. Some informal monitoring of teaching and work takes place, but it is not consistent or regular. This is the area which needs developing most.

71. The school has good aims and values. Relationships are good throughout the school. The development plan is well presented but not costed. Development planning moved forward significantly in the well thought-through and successful technology college bid which includes some sharp self-evaluation. The changes and improved resources resulting from the school's new status are broadening teachers' experience and bringing new teaching ideas.
72. The school does not at present meet statutory requirements for information and communication technology at Key Stage 4, but this situation is rapidly changing as the new computer facilities can be used. The school has made no progress since the last inspection in meeting the legal requirement for a daily act of collective worship. There is no hall large enough for the whole school and the introduction of a 'thought for the day' was not successful. The governors' report to parents lacks required detail on the education of pupils with special educational needs. A few breaches of health and safety requirements need attention. They were brought to the attention of the senior managers and are reported in sections 64, 82 and 86 of this report.

76. **Staffing, accommodation and learning resources**

76. *Staffing*

73. In most subjects, except science, technology and modern foreign languages, the school has sufficient numbers of teachers with appropriate qualifications to meet the demands of the curriculum. Two vacancies in science, one due to recruiting difficulties and the other to a late resignation, result in unsatisfactory progress in some lessons. Long-term absences in modern foreign languages, one being the head of department, and the inability to recruit suitably qualified permanent and supply teachers seriously impact on pupils' work and progress. Additional curriculum support assistants effectively cover a vacant teaching post in curriculum support. A higher than average number of supply staff cover for vacancies, for staff sickness or for part-time secondment. The situation is less favourable than at the time of the last inspection.
74. The number of suitably qualified educational support staff is high. Good use is made of them, and the quality of support which pupils receive is very good. A weekly meeting between them and the special educational needs co-ordinator provides good training and guidance on how to support pupils in class. The number of technicians provided in practical subjects is satisfactory. Good support is provided in science and information and communication technology, but lack of technical support in music makes inefficient use of teachers' time.
75. The arrangements for professional development of staff are satisfactory. Improvements since the last inspection include: an improved system for the evaluation of in-service training of teachers; a formal programme of lesson observation which meets with appraisal requirements; a structured, effective course for newly-qualified teachers and newly-appointed teachers; and an improved system to record staff development. Weaknesses lie in the formalising of appraisal targets and in linking appraisal with job descriptions. Funding for in-service training of staff was cut back considerably in 1998 resulting in more focused in-house training, use of local inspectors, and visits to other schools to observe good practice. Considerable investment in training has flowed from technology college status in areas such as science and technology. The impact of training on subjects of the curriculum is satisfactory, a good example being that of a drama teacher who set up a sixth form course as a direct result of attending an excellent training session.

Accommodation

76. Accommodation is mainly satisfactory, adequate for the delivery of the curriculum and in an

acceptable state of repair. However, the quality and state of repair of the demountable classrooms, toilet facilities for the pupils and large amounts of litter about the school are unsatisfactory. Spending on the maintenance of school grounds and accommodation is forecast as being very high for the current financial year, at nearly four times the national average. However, most of this spending is accounted for by technology college development-related expenditure.

77. The school was originally built in 1939 and has been added to at various times since. The complex arrangements of buildings adds to the cost of maintenance. Major repairs to the roofs have recently been completed. A programme of minor repairs and redecoration is carried out in-house by the caretaking staff.
78. The leisure centre provides a good resource and is helping to raise standards in physical education. It is jointly managed by the school and the local authority. The storage of corrosive chemicals for the swimming pool in the boiler room is a health and safety hazard. It has been brought to the attention of the local authority by the school.
79. The number of toilet facilities available for pupils is inadequate. Some which are not easily supervised are kept closed because a few pupils behave irresponsibly. In consequence, the available units are over-stretched and maintenance for basic hygiene is an on-going problem. Caretakers and cleaners work hard to provide a clean environment. Litter is a significant problem around the school and particularly in the girls' toilets. Two caretakers spend a considerable amount of time every day picking up litter; this use of time is both costly and unsatisfactory.
80. Ten deteriorating and disintegrating demountable classrooms provide poor quality accommodation. The classrooms are barely adequate for learning in wet and cold weather. Their isolation from main departmental suites makes teaching difficult to monitor and presents significant problems for teachers in the transport of resources. In one modern foreign languages lesson less than appropriate tasks were set for pupils when the planned resources were forgotten.
81. The general classroom accommodation in other areas is adequate, appropriate and used effectively. Problems of acoustics in the humanities area result in noise carried between rooms. This was an issue at the last inspection. The main hall currently lacks effective black-out facilities for drama work. The economics room and music rooms are inadequately ventilated. The last inspection report highlighted the problems of movement around the school, particularly along narrow corridors and stairwells. This is now monitored by duty staff, but a narrow door in the science area continues to cause some problems.
82. Whilst there is no display policy, or member of staff responsible for its co-ordination, the quality of display in public areas of the school is often excellent, particularly for English and art. The quality of display in classrooms is also mainly good in other subjects. The quality of historical models is very high. The school caretaker supports attractive display of pupils' work by producing large-scale dioramas of, for example Viking, Roman or battle scenes. Pupils respect the material on display.

Learning resources

83. The range of learning resources is adequate to support the curriculum in all subjects. The use of resources is effective in the majority of subjects. Since the last inspection more efficient systems have been put in place to monitor the use of resources by all departments except for music. Departments make annual bids for the provision of resources. These are scrutinised and prioritised by a staff committee with representatives from newly-qualified teachers to senior management. Parents expressed concern about restricted access to computers. The school has recently made significant improvements to its facilities and more are planned once building work is complete. The ratio of pupils to computers is now near the national average and improving.

Teachers and pupils are starting to make good use of the new facilities, including Internet access.

84. The school's library/resource centre was not operational during the inspection week as it had been cleared and mainly boxed up due to impending building and refurbishment works. Discussion with teachers, pupils and the librarian indicates that it is normally well used. A scrutiny of the computerised catalogue indicates a satisfactory range of books and other resources. The librarian is also involved in class and group work support when the area is used for research work, runs book clubs for the pupils and holds an annual book fair. The role of the resource centre in the life of the school is to be reviewed once the refurbishment has been completed. The school has appropriately retained a selection of reading books accessible to all to allow regular reading to continue during the library closure.
85. The school enriches educational provision and widens pupils' horizons through theatre and concert visits and visits to France. Some local businesses provide valuable work experience and training for pupils and staff, and good use is made of local facilities, especially on GNVQ courses.

89. The efficiency of the school

86. The school receives above-average funding. It plans to keep expenditure within income, leaving underspend from previous years and new money resulting from increased pupil numbers as a contingency fund. The chair of the governors' finance committee is rightly proud of the fact that the school has always been able to balance its budget. Funds have been used well to improve conditions in the buildings. The budget cycle appropriately begins with a review of the previous year's spending, though it could be more thorough. A sound scheme for discussing and giving priority to proposed developments, linked to the school development plan, involves staff and governors' committees. The plan is not costed in sufficient detail. The governors' finance committee thoroughly reviews the proposed budget. Allocations of money to departments is equitably managed by a staff committee which judges applications and needs. There is no monitoring and evaluation of the use of the budget to improve standards. The strategic overview of the budget is sometimes lost among the many day-to-day tasks. The exciting opportunities which could result from technology college status augur well for the future. Clear management procedures and practices of the highest standard are required to ensure the success of the venture. The school needs to consider whether routine budget and premises management is the most effective and efficient use of the time of a very senior manager at the expense of strategic planning, monitoring and evaluation.
87. Resources available in the school are well used. Effective use is made of the accommodation. The sports hall has greatly increased sporting provision but management and financing issues between the school and local authority leisure services still need to be resolved. The match of teaching staff to the needs of the school is unsatisfactory in some areas, particularly in modern languages and science. Use of support staff is good.
88. The school is proud of the sixth form. It is not financially viable but provides opportunities for students to thrive in a known environment. Generous staffing allows a wide range of courses to be offered, but recruitment on some A-level courses may not have been appropriate (paragraphs 41 and 178). A full breakdown of costing showing the effect of the sixth form on school finances was not available. Governors require this information in order to make fully informed decisions.
89. Day-to-day financial control is good. The financial systems and procedures are carried out meticulously. Record keeping is simple and effective. Careful monthly reconciliation with the figures supplied by the borough highlight any areas which need review. The move to a unitary authority caused some delays in reconciliation being agreed but these teething troubles are easing. The school has begun to address the February 1999 audit report, but a number of the issues are still on-going and need to be resolved.
90. The school uses the funding for pupils with special educational needs well. It adds to the budget

in order to employ extra learning support assistants. Plans for the use of the technology college funds are appropriate, hence the acceptance of the bid.

91. Pupils enter the school well below the expected level of attainment. They make very good progress in English and good progress compared with similar schools in Key Stage 3. They make at least satisfactory progress in Key Stage 4, where their attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 is in line with similar schools nationally. Attitudes and personal development are good and the overall quality of teaching is satisfactory. The cost per pupil is above average and expenditure broadly average. The school gives satisfactory value for money.

95. **PART B: CURRICULUM AREAS AND SUBJECTS**

95. **ENGLISH, MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCE**

95. **English**

92. Attainment at the ends of both key stages and in the sixth form is, overall, in line with national averages. Pupils' attainment on entry to Year 7 is well below average but, by the time pupils take the National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9, their attainment has risen markedly. In 1998, the percentage of pupils achieving Level 5 and above in the national tests was in line with the national average and, in 1999, it was eight per cent higher. In comparison with similar schools, these results are well above average. In Key Stage 3, in the lower sets, the level of attainment is below average - and in one observed set it was well-below - but in the upper sets it is in line with national averages; in the observed Year 7 and 9 top sets it was above average. This pattern is reflected in Key Stage 4. In the sixth form, attainment in all lessons and work examined was in line with the national average.
93. The percentage of GCSE A* to C grades has fluctuated for the last three years, but in 1997 and 1999 it was in line with the national average for similar schools. Boys' GCSE grades have improved by 15 per cent in the last three years. A slightly smaller than national average percentage of the school cohort is entered for GCSE English. At A-Level, the percentage of A and B grades has been close to or above the national average for similar schools. In the last three years, 100 per cent of the entry obtained passes at grades A to E in 1997, grades A to C in 1998 and grades A to D in 1999, which is higher than the national average for all schools.
94. In observed lessons, attainment was best in those classes in which a crisp pace was set and maintained, and short time-limits were given for a variety of activities. Pupils were actively engaged in speaking, listening, reading and, to a limited degree, writing. Above-average levels were achieved in a Year 7 top set working at first on homophones such as 'there', 'their' and 'they're', and then reading and talking about Greek myths. A top set Year 9 read animatedly, when encouraged by their teacher, contrasting scenes illustrative of persuasive language, and then wrote their own scenes to show what they had learnt. In both these top sets, pupils and teachers shared the reading aloud of texts, were actively engaged in short and well-focused question-and-answer sessions and, in the Year 9 class, pupils were encouraged to write in a quiet or silent atmosphere for short periods to aid their concentration. Top set Year 11 pupils revealed empathy and imagination in their dramatic presentations of First World War poetry, after working in a highly focused way in groups for a short period. In some lower-attaining classes, pupils were insufficiently engaged in reading aloud, and worked for over-long periods on discussion and writing activities. All teachers need now to apply the techniques they use successfully with upper sets to their teaching of lower sets to raise their attainment. Many pupils read aloud well and write with a fair degree of accuracy but are in need of more advice and guidance on extending their active vocabulary and range of expression, in both oral and written work.
95. Boys have made especially good progress in National Curriculum tests and GCSE English in the last three years. Progress of all pupils in all lessons seen was at least satisfactory and, in almost half, it was good. Progress was best in Year 7, Key Stage 4 and Year 12 GCSE and A-Level lessons. Pupils make very good progress from their well-below average attainment on entry in Year 7 to their average to above-average attainment at the end of Key Stage 3. Progress is less marked in Key Stage 4. By maintaining high expectations of all sets, setting a crisp pace, providing a number of short time-limited activities and marking selected pieces more intensively, some teachers enhance the rate of progress of pupils in lower sets. Target-setting with a small number of pupils each week in each class would ensure that individuals know how to make progress in specific aspects of their work. The target-setting arrangements for pupils with special educational needs are unusual, because the onus for identifying targets is borne by the class teachers. Targets are not precise enough and less rapid progress is made by pupils in some of

the lower sets in both key stages.

96. Pupils' response in lessons is invariably at least satisfactory and, in half the lessons observed, it was at least good and often very good. In almost all classes, pupils show high levels of interest in and enthusiasm for their work. The cohort entered for GCSE English increased by 10 per cent - from 80 to 90 per cent - from 1997 to 1999, so that in 1999 it was very close to the national average. Sixth form groups have also increased in size. In all but a very small number of classes, pupils sustain concentration well and willingly work individually, in pairs and groups. They undertake personal study and private reading when encouraged by their teachers. In almost all classes, pupils behave well; in only one class was unsatisfactory behaviour seen. The vast majority of pupils are courteous and trustworthy, showing considerable respect for their teachers, their books and the high-quality displays in classrooms. Relationships between and amongst pupils and teachers are generally very good and mutually supportive. Pupils can and do work collaboratively, and do so most effectively when specific tasks are set for short time limits. The topics studied, including the GCSE syllabus, require that pupils show respect for other people's feelings, values and beliefs. Pupils readily take classroom responsibilities for giving out and collecting books and folders, and for chairing and taking notes in group discussions.
97. Almost all the teaching observed was at least satisfactory and over half was good or very good. Teachers' knowledge is generally good and imaginatively imparted. The best teachers adapt their techniques to different ages and sets but all the time maintain high expectations, treating all pupils - regardless of their prior attainment - as if they are in top sets. The best teaching observed was of top sets in Years 7 and 10 and in the Year 12 A-Level class, but other top and second sets in Key Stage 3, both top and bottom sets in Key Stage 4, and Year 12 GCSE classes were taught well. In these lessons, activities were well planned and teachers' class management was friendly but firm. Nevertheless, closer attention to giving pupils shorter time limits for activities was needed to maintain the crisp pace that the teachers set at the beginnings of their lessons. In a top set Year 10 class, the teacher showed pupils the examination board's video for teachers of pupils' oral work presentations, in order to enable the class to identify and evaluate good presentation skills, and to indicate to pupils the high standards towards which they should aim. The best teaching incorporates pupils' self-assessment - which encourages self-discipline and a sense of self-worth - and makes active use of base-line assessments.
98. The department is a very well led, committed team of hard-working teachers, many of whom maintain high standards in their own work and encourage pupils to do likewise. Teachers have achieved considerable success in enabling pupils to make good progress. Since the last inspection, National Curriculum test, GCSE and A-Level results have improved and teachers have raised boys' attainment. The department has added good value to learning. Specific assessment units are now used across year-groups; these inform setting arrangements, and enable teachers to moderate between classes and set appropriate standards.
102. *Literacy across the curriculum*
99. Pupils have limited skills in speaking and listening when they arrive in the school. Through the teachers' effective use of question-and-answer sessions - especially in English, mathematics, science, religious education and drama - pupils develop confidence and competence in using technical language, although they rarely use formal language readily. Pupils listen well in most modern languages lessons, but their ability to speak other languages is limited, and they lack fluency and willingness to speak at length in history. Pupils give similarly short oral responses in music, but they are articulate, and capable of brief but constructive criticism at sixth form level. Classroom assistants help pupils with special educational needs to gain confidence in oral work. Most pupils need more help with clarity and audibility when speaking to the class.
100. In some English lessons, especially those in top sets, pupils are encouraged to read aloud with fluency, good intonation and varied expression. Reading for pleasure is also encouraged,

especially in Key Stage 3. Pupils have experience of reading aloud in geography and religious education lessons, but otherwise get little practice. Pupils receiving special needs support, especially boys, are hesitant readers; they gain confidence through paired reading. Regular practice of reading aloud, across the curriculum, with support given to the more hesitant pupils, is needed to enhance pupils' confidence and competence.

101. Most pupils take care over presentation and achieve acceptable standards in writing in English, science, design and technology, religious education, music in Key Stage 3 and physical education at A-Level. Pupils produce insufficient extended pieces in modern languages, although pupils in Key Stage 3 do produce some creative work. Pupils need more help to improve their range of vocabulary and expression, their spelling and punctuation in all subjects.

105. *Drama*

102. Attainment in drama is always at least in line with national expectations and, in Key Stage 4 and GCSE, it is above average. In 1997 to 1999, the percentage of A* to C grades was between 11 and 23 per cent higher than the national average for all schools. A larger than average numbers of boys entered and achieved A* to C grades. Pupils achieve particularly high levels of attainment in improvisation, mime and dialogues, working to freeze-frame within appropriate periods of time without any prompting from the teacher. Solo work is markedly well-focused and well-sustained. Pupils achieved especially well in this aspect of their work in a Year 10 lesson, in which pupils moved from silent solo to pair-work with dialogue, on the theme of abuse of power. They explored the plight of hostages and the emotional impact of their powerlessness, attaining above average standards and commitment to role-fidelity. Similarly high levels of commitment and role-fidelity were apparent in Year 9 work on the predicament of refugees, in which pupils engaged in solo, pair and group work, using the whole drama space, including the gallery and raked seating. The preponderance of boys in Year 8 has a somewhat inhibiting effect on the overall attainment in that year; nevertheless, the attainment is in line with the national expectation. Pupils with special educational needs have opportunities to achieve high standards, as do pupils of low prior attainment, and they take those opportunities and make good use of them.

103. Progress was good in over half the lessons seen; it was particularly good at the end of Key Stage 3 and in the work of pupils in Key Stage 4. Pupils make observable progress within lessons, from the warm-up sessions that establish good concentration and focus at the beginnings to the pair and ensemble-work that reveals growth in understanding of topics by the end of lessons. Regardless of prior attainment in other subjects, all pupils acquire and consolidate knowledge and understanding of the skills and techniques that characterize convincing and engaging performance. Pupils with special educational needs and those who have low prior attainment in other areas of the curriculum progress at least as well as their peers, working with pupils of different race, gender and academic achievement. Pupils who lack confidence, or experience difficulties at other times in their school day, make good progress, acquiring knowledge, understanding and self-esteem through their drama work.

104. In both key stages and the sixth form, pupils respond very well in drama lessons. Behaviour is generally very good indeed; only a few Year 8 boys demonstrated difficulties in concentrating during lessons. Otherwise, pupils paid full attention and collaborated well in all lessons. The texts and themes studied encourage pupils to show understanding and respect for the experiences, feelings, values and beliefs of others. Pupils take responsibility within solo, pair and ensemble work for the success of the enterprise, and take a pride in their deserved success. The department's motto, 'Nothing succeeds like success' is evidenced in every lesson, and the teacher's judicious use of merits and praise adds to pupils' enthusiasm and sense of personal and group achievement.

105. The teaching of drama is one of the school's strengths. All teaching is at least good and very often it is very good. The drama specialist teaches to a very high standard at all times. Her

knowledge is very good and subtly imparted to pupils of all levels of attainment, regardless of age, gender or race. She has high expectations of pupils' attentiveness, application and attainment, and conveys them most effectively, with an emphasis on praise and humour. Planning is detailed and carefully thought through. Methods are varied according to age-group, and strategies are adapted to result in success. The teacher's class management is subtle and extremely effective, so that pupils develop high levels of self-discipline very quickly. Time is used most efficiently, especially considering that lessons in Key Stage 3 occur fortnightly. The structure of the drama space, with stepped-seating and a three-sided gallery, provides an excellent resource. The teacher has a well-considered assessment system and makes very effective use of positive, informal, oral assessment combined with use of merits and certificates. Pupils' self-assessment and peer-evaluation is a valuable part of the assessment system, and informs the planning of lessons and the carefully structured curriculum.

106. Since the last inspection, standards in public examinations as well as in day-to-day lessons have improved. Resources support work-units well, and there is now good sound-proofing between the drama hall and the music practice rooms.

110. **Mathematics**

107. Pupils' attainment on entry is well below the national average. Pupils' overall performance in 1999 Key Stage 3 tests was close to the national averages for Levels 5 and 6. Attainment is above average when compared with pupils in similar schools; the school is adding good value. There is no significant difference between attainment of boys and girls. Attainment in mathematics is usually above that for science but below English.

108. GCSE results have improved since the previous inspection. In 1999, 35 per cent of pupils attained grades A* to C, which is above that achieved nationally and locally by pupils attending similar schools. The proportion gaining A* to G grades has also improved as a result of the fall in those absenting themselves from examinations.

109. As the numbers studying A-level remain below ten, it is not possible to make statistically valid comparisons with national or local data. In the last two years, all the sixteen students, ten boys and six girls, entered have gained pass grades and in 1999 two students out of seven attained grades A and B.

110. Pupils' attainment at Key Stage 3 is generally below national expectations, although higher-attaining Year 9 pupils exceed these standards. They successfully substitute values into quadratic and cubic algebraic expressions when generating numerical sequences. Lower-attaining pupils use computer facilities beneficially to solve symmetry problems and to improve their mental arithmetic. Across the key stage, some pupils have difficulty in interpreting written questions and also have a tendency to write just the answers to problems.

111. At Key Stage 4 attainment is below national expectations, although higher-attaining Year 11 pupils have reached higher than anticipated standards, having already taken the Intermediate GCSE examination in November 1999. These pupils are preparing for the higher GCSE examination and some for GCSE statistics in Summer 2000. In lessons, they understand why they apply the sine rule to find the size of angles and lengths of sides in non-right angled triangles. In statistics, they use the box and whisker technique to display numerical information. Lower-attaining pupils are working purposefully towards GCSE pass grades or a certificate of achievement through a graduated assessment scheme. In most classes, pupils find difficulty with algebraic manipulation and some still have poor presentational skills.

112. Attainment in the sixth form is usually in line with course expectations with the exception of the remaining re-sit GCSE students where it is below. Year 12 A-level students gain further insight into integration when using a computer program that generates the necessary curves. GNVQ

Advanced Leisure and Tourism students have a single lesson of application of number each week which, whilst not fully integrated into the main course, enables them to develop the necessary skills and understanding to apply to their assignments. On other GNVQ courses, numeracy is appropriately integrated into assignments.

113. Progress is generally satisfactory at Key Stage 3. Over a quarter of the classes make good progress, whilst progress for almost one class in six is unsatisfactory. Number awareness has improved through the introduction of additional numeracy lessons. This has improved pupils' ability to be successful in the areas of algebra, data handling, and space and shape. Unsatisfactory progress occurs when too much time is spent on oral activities that result in prolonged periods of pupil inactivity. The proportion of classes making good progress is higher in Key Stage 4 than in Key Stage 3. Detailed schemes of work and strong teacher commitment contribute to the good progress, as well as pupils' motivation in higher-attaining Year 11 classes. Careful setting arrangements across the whole-year group in Years 9 to 11, together with monitoring procedures and teachers' knowledge of pupils, also facilitate progress. Progress in the sixth form is usually good, due to the small classes and the quality of the teaching. Pupils with special educational needs usually benefit from being taught in smaller groups and from the additional support they receive in the lower school. Good team work between classroom assistants and teachers ensures good progress of pupils with special educational needs.
114. Pupils' behaviour is usually good and occasionally very good. The majority are keen to learn and participate. Concentration is usually sustained throughout the lesson during which pupils listen well to the teacher and their peers. They are prepared to ask questions to gain further understanding and accept with maturity the responsibility for regularly marking their own work. Pupils benefit from opportunities to work together as a team.
115. More than half of the teaching promotes good educational standards. One lesson in twelve has some shortcomings. There is a higher proportion of good teaching at Key Stage 4 than at Key Stage 3. Teachers have good subject knowledge and usually convey their enthusiasm for mathematics. Better lessons are carefully constructed and anticipate the difficulties that pupils are likely to meet. Most teachers are adjusting well to the demands of the new teaching programme that is part of a university project. Homework is an important component of learning and pupils are encouraged, and are usually willing participants, to take their place at the whiteboard, like a teacher, to explain their work. This has a positive result, increasing pupil involvement and a greater sharing of mathematical ideas. Whilst teachers usually share the lesson's objectives, they do not always conduct a review session at the end. Effective question and answer techniques establish levels of understanding and develop the lesson. Shortcomings in teaching relate to insufficient consideration of how pupils will respond to work presented to them. Good supportive individual attention is given to pupils, enabling teachers to know pupils' strengths and weaknesses, as well as furthering good relationships. Teachers' control of pupils is usually very good and praise is effective in encouraging pupils to learn. They also demonstrate patience and humour when teaching some groups of pupils.
116. The head of department leads and involves his team with a clear sense of purpose to ensure that expectations are raised and achieved and that pupils enjoy mathematics. Thoughtful, shared departmental planning includes the implications for adopting new strategies. The achievement of technology college status has presented the department with a range of new opportunities; some are already having a positive effect upon teaching and learning strategies. Assessment procedures are thorough and future plans will enable progress of individual pupils, classes and strengths and weaknesses of teaching and learning to be even more closely identified. Further evidence of the department's strong commitment to pupils is the provision of revision programmes, additional lessons, individual tutorial sessions for each advanced level student, the two-week summer school for 30 primary pupils who were about to join the school, and training courses attended for the development of the new courses and the use of information and communication technology. All make a positive contribution to the raising of standards and involvement of pupils.

117. The department has recently benefited from the donation of 15 computers to enhance mathematics teaching and is already using them and the new facilities in the main school with the maths club beginning to explore the mathematical opportunities on the internet.

118. The close proximity of the seven mathematics rooms assists teamwork. The temporary base for numeracy lessons poses a number of problems in addition to the very poor acoustics within the room. Its use has an adverse affect upon both teaching and learning, despite the best efforts of the teacher and the pupils. The current distribution of lessons for Year 11 classes is not appropriate for a core subject.

122. *Numeracy across the curriculum*

119. The school recently extended its day to introduce additional numeracy lessons, two in Year 7 and one in Year 8. Parents attended a meeting to hear the reason and content of numeracy lessons, and recognised the need. A thorough numeracy programme has been established with the production of pupil module workbooks. These contain a suitable range of materials and pupils benefit from the variety of approaches adopted by their teachers during the lessons. Progress of pupils and the suitability of the materials are being monitored. Plans are under consideration for integrating the programme into mathematics and other subjects. Once staff have been trained and the software has been installed, pupils will have the opportunity to further enhance their numeracy skills when interacting with the computer. Pupils recall number facts, sometimes slowly but accurately, when scaling up images whilst doing packaging or graphics projects. Similarly, they are successful when doing the necessary calculations, usually involving whole numbers, in science and geography. The use of calculators is usually appropriate. Pupils plot graphs quickly in science, geography and on GNVQ courses where they interpret with understanding the tables, charts and diagrams presented to them.

123. **Science**

120. Pupils begin Year 7 with science results at the end of primary school well below average. Results in the 1999 results in the National Curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 3 improved on those of previous years, but the proportions of pupils gaining both the expected level and the higher levels were below average. However, in 1999 the school obtained its first results at Level 8, two levels higher than that expected. The school's results are comparable with those obtained in schools with a similar intake, both at the expected and higher levels. Since the last inspection only the results of the most able pupils have improved. In 1998 the results of teacher assessment were significantly lower than the results of national tests. In recent years there have been no consistent differences between boys and girls.

121. Attainment in lessons and work observed during the inspection is below expectations at this stage in Year 9. Although pupils show a satisfactory knowledge of facts, they find it difficult to make predictions based on their knowledge, or to explain experimental results. For example, in Year 9, pupils know the patterns in chemical behaviour when studying alkali metals, but cannot reason out what happens when heating a mixture of copper oxide and iron from the fact that a pink colour is seen.

122. At the end of Key Stage 4, in 1999, nearly nine tenths of the pupils were entered for the double award co-ordinated science, which is about the national average for similar schools, and a higher proportion than in 1998. The proportion of pupils gaining grades A* to C was significantly lower than the national average, but was broadly average for similar schools. There are no consistent differences between the results of girls and boys, and there has been no consistent change in the results over the past few years. The results for the much smaller number of pupils taking single award co-ordinated science in 1999 were a little less good than in 1998. No pupils gained grades

A* to C; a poorer result than that of similar schools nationally. Almost all pupils gained at least grade G, which was similar to the proportion nationally.

123. Attainment in the lessons and work seen at this stage of Year 11 is below national expectations. The most able pupils in Year 11 have a good understanding of biological processes, such as the flow of energy in a food chain, but other pupils find abstract concepts such as catalysis difficult. Some able pupils do not fully understand how to analyse data correctly, and take time to identify the significance of rogue results. Lower ability pupils understand word equations but cannot produce balanced equations.
124. Progress is satisfactory overall. However, although progress is good in nearly half the lessons, it is unsatisfactory in about a quarter. The most able pupils make particularly good progress in Key Stage 3, achieving results well beyond those expected of pupils at the end of Year 9. Pupils with special educational needs make sound progress, especially at the beginning of Year 7, where they learn improved work habits quickly. Pupils make good progress when ideas are built up carefully a step at a time, through careful questioning and demonstration. When progress is unsatisfactory, there are too many ideas in one lesson, the lesson ends without full discussion of what has been learned, or pupils are allowed to chatter or to work too slowly.
125. In 1999 only a small number of pupils were entered for A-level examinations and statistical comparisons are therefore unreliable. Over the past two years results in biology have been comparable to the national average for similar schools and pupils have made satisfactory progress. The results in chemistry and physics have been well below average for comparable schools and in these subjects progress is less good. In the small number of lessons it was possible to observe, pupils showed the expected level of attainment in biology but lower levels of attainment in the other subjects.
126. Pupils' attitudes are satisfactory; in many lessons they are good but they are unsatisfactory when teachers do not set clear standards and maintain them. Pupils of all levels of ability are keen and interested, playing an active part in question and answer sessions and thinking carefully when the question put to them is difficult. In most lessons pupils listen carefully, both to the teacher and to each other. However, in a minority of lessons they chatter and call out. They work well together in their practical work. Written work is generally neat and carefully done and pupils enjoy information research tasks and present their findings carefully.
127. Teaching is inconsistent. Half of it is good, of which about a fifth is very good or excellent. However, too high a proportion, about a quarter, is unsatisfactory. When teaching is good, ideas and questions are well sequenced to make pupils think about difficult issues. Expectations are high for pupils of all levels of ability and teachers manage behaviour well. Work is of an appropriate standard and teachers use time and resources well. In some unsatisfactory lessons the teacher fails to set and achieve high standards of behaviour, often lacking a clear strategy to do so. In others, the teacher introduces too many ideas or activities and confuses pupils, or fails to communicate clear objectives to the class. Teachers mark work regularly and use the common marking codes consistently. However, they frequently fail to give help to show how completed work might be further improved and fail to follow up their complaints about unfinished work. All teachers have good subject knowledge.
128. The curriculum places an appropriate emphasis on investigational and practical work. Lessons are made relevant to pupils, for example by linking their knowledge of energy to a discussion of a musical mug. However, the reduced curriculum for less able pupils does not produce good results. A good quality scheme of work provides effective support for day-to-day teaching and guidance for support and extension materials for many lessons. The school has created good links with its feeder schools. Teachers make limited use of computers, but this is an area currently being developed. Science makes an appropriate contribution to pupils' personal and social education, for example when they study drugs.

129. Good assessment arrangements include an assessed investigation in each module as well as an end-of-module test. Centrally stored results are used to monitor and predict pupils' progress. The department makes satisfactory use of information from assessment to review its schemes of work and other planning.
130. The technology college bid includes a clear sense of direction for science. Teachers receive good support but lack of time means that the monitoring of teaching is underdeveloped and in-service training is not linked clearly to agreed needs for each member of staff. The department is two teachers short. Despite most staff undertaking additional teaching, some pupils do not have a science teacher for each lesson. This situation impedes pupils' progress. Teachers are well supported by well-qualified laboratory technicians who organise teaching resources very well.
131. Since the last inspection, the school has developed pupils' practical skills through more focused teaching. New developments in computer facilities are in hand and assessment procedures have been considerably improved. Recent Key Stage 3 results have improved for the most able pupils. However, pupils continue to find it difficult to apply their knowledge to unfamiliar situations; teachers continue to ask pupils to improve written work and fail to follow it up. Overall, the department has made satisfactory progress but there are still key issues to be addressed.

135. **OTHER SUBJECTS OR COURSES**

135. **Art**

132. GCSE results for grades A* to C have improved significantly since the last inspection. In 1998, at nearly 82 per cent, they were significantly above the national average when compared with all schools and similar schools. In 1998, both boys and girls averaged approximately a grade higher in art than in other subjects. The department was even more successful in 1999 when the average was nearly a grade and a half higher than in other subjects. However, overall results fell slightly in 1999, largely as a result of staffing problems and resulting breaks in continuity for the pupils. In spite of this, nearly three-quarters of the pupils entered gained an A* to C pass. The percentage gaining A*/A grades has nearly doubled since the last inspection. In 1999, a quarter of the pupils entered gained a higher grade pass.
133. A-Level results have been inconsistent since the last inspection. Whilst in 1998 results were some 15 per cent below the national average for grades A and B there have been years when standards have been much higher. In 1997 results were some 20 per cent above the national average. In 1999, half the pupils entered gained an A or B grade. Current sixth form pupils continue to show significant strengths.
134. Attainment in Year 9, at the end of Key Stage 3, is at least in line with and mainly above expectations. Attainment in Year 11, at the end of Key Stage 4, is mainly above average and sometimes well above. Attainment in the sixth form is mainly above average and often well above. At Key Stage 3, pupils are developing a good grounding in both 2-dimensional and 3-dimensional work. The quality of observational work is good and pupils have a well-developed sense of colour. For example, they can describe the key elements of a Pop Art image and apply that understanding to their own development work on colour and pattern. Pupils develop a good appreciation of the influence of art from other cultures, for example the way in which African art influenced Picasso. Pupils' critical approaches are being well developed and they have a positive appreciation of their personal strengths and weaknesses. This foundation work pays significant dividends at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form where key skills are secure. There are often significant elements of individuality and creative imagination in the pupils' work at all key stages. Pupils' good eye for an image is reflected across the range of art, photography and computer generated work.

135. Progress of pupils in Key Stage 3 is at least satisfactory, mainly good and sometimes very good. Progress in Key Stage 4 is mainly good and often very good. Progress in the sixth form is mainly very good. Pupils with special educational needs, at all levels of attainment, make good progress. At Key Stage 3, pupils increasingly gain confidence in their approach to critical, analytical work. By Key Stage 4, the development of key skills enables them to approach both new media and styles in creative and imaginative ways. Secondary source material and the work of major artists being studied are properly used to inform and influence, rather than dictate, their approach. This is evident in the individuality of some Year 10 claywork when the pupils were creating low relief tiles in a cubist / futurist style. In Year 12, students showed great confidence when experimenting with oil paints for the first time in observational painting work. Particularly at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form, the quality and breadth of preparation material enable pupils to be particularly strong and clear about their concepts for final pieces, as in the work leading up to their mock examinations. Pupils learn well from their mistakes, for example when undertaking test strip work in photography.
136. Response at Key Stages 3 and 4 is at least satisfactory, mainly good and sometimes very good in Key Stage 3, and often very good in Key Stage 4. In the sixth form it is mainly very good. At all key stages, pupils sustain concentration well, exhibit careful, considered approaches to the subject and are self-motivated. They pay good attention to their teachers and build well on the help and expert advice they are given. They are willing to experiment and learn from their experiences. At Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form pupils are well-focused on examination targets. Their capacity for personal study is good and shown in the quality of preparation and research work. Pupils are positive in the value they place on their own and others' artwork. Very good working relationships are developed between staff and pupils who regularly show significant reluctance to leave art rooms at the end of lessons!
137. Teaching is good overall. At Key Stages 3 and 4 it is always at least satisfactory, mainly good and sometimes excellent. Teaching in the sixth form is mainly very good and sometimes excellent. Teachers trust and have high expectations of the pupils and know them well. Teachers are respected by pupils for their skills, expertise and knowledge of the subject. The monitoring of class groups and individuals, and the positive, critical approach adopted by the teaching is very good and well focused on enabling progress. The teachers are sensitive; they know when to intervene and when to give pupils free rein in their work. Planning is properly developmental. Lessons are well paced, resources always prepared, demonstrations are of good quality and exemplar material used well to illustrate teaching points. Homework is relevant and regularly set. There is a clear focus on examination requirements for GCSE and A-Level. Pupils are left under no illusions as to exactly what is required of them.
138. The department is a very successful one and a strength of the school. It achieves high standards in both teaching and learning in spite of restrictions on curriculum time. Whilst maximum use is made of the time available for art, at Key Stage 3 and in the sixth form it is significantly below the national average. At Key Stage 4, whilst pupils get more than the nationally recommended time, this is mainly cancelled out as all lessons are taught in single periods. Time is inevitably lost in setting up and clearing away activities. A further imbalance in the distribution of 55 and 60 minute periods can be significant over a two year examination course. Curriculum coverage is being maintained through the hard work of the teachers and the lunchtime and after school art club which enable pupils to undertake additional work in their own time.
142. **Design and technology**
139. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is below national expectations though with varying strengths in the different strands of design and technology. Pupils show an understanding of materials and processes in food and textiles, use tools and equipment with some accuracy and can evaluate their products against their original intentions. Graphics skills are mostly sound, though pupils show a limited capacity to produce detailed plans. Construction in resistant materials is largely

restricted to a narrow range of materials such as wood. Across most of the different areas, understanding of a design process is limited with, for example, little awareness of the needs and preferences of a user.

140. Overall progress in Key Stage 3 is satisfactory, if uneven in particular aspects of pupils' knowledge and skills. In most areas, pupils develop confidence in the use of tools and equipment, particularly in food and textiles. Graphical skills also show steady improvement, reflected in work in folders, particularly that of the higher-attaining pupils. The development of design knowledge and skills is slower, though with greater progress in product evaluation as part of the process. Systems and control are significantly underdeveloped, reflected, for example, in the limited understanding of electronics in a simple circuit assembly in Year 9. Progress over time is adversely affected by a carousel system that results in long gaps between pupils practising skills in specific areas. The balance between the time spent by pupils in different strands of the subject also slows progress, though this is now being addressed. Pupils with special educational needs are rarely supported by classroom assistants, but are able to cope effectively within the main learning programmes.
141. At the end of Key Stage 4, standards are below national averages, with 37 per cent of pupils gaining grades A* to C in 1999, compared with 47 per cent nationally. However, these results are in line with those of schools with similar intakes and there are particular strengths in some courses. Pupils reach higher standards in textiles and food technology where results are in line with or better than all schools nationally. Results for GCSE resistant materials are consistently well below average. Current attainment reflects these results. In textiles, pupils have a firmer understanding of an industrial context, are able to apply a range of techniques and use machines with accuracy. They carry out research to test their design ideas with users and produce good quality outcomes. Pupils in food technology evaluate their products and improve their final performance. Standards in graphic products vary considerably, with the better work showing effective skills in presentation and modelling. Standards of work in resistant materials are depressed by a limited understanding of the design process and insufficient efforts to explore and test design ideas or produce accurate production drawings and plans to guide the construction process.
142. Progress in GCSE courses in Key Stage 4 is satisfactory overall. Progress is good in textiles and in the upper bands of food technology where predominantly girls develop their research and product-testing skills as part of their major project work. In the electronic products group, higher-attaining boys show increasing skills in the use of computer applications for designing electronic circuits. Most pupils improve the presentation of design ideas, particularly in graphic products, with the higher-attaining modifying design proposals in the light of their research. However, pupils often make unsatisfactory progress in resistant materials courses. Pupils with special educational needs in the lower bands in food technology gain considerably in confidence and skills in the different practical activities. The initial progress of sixth form students in the new A-level course in graphic products is satisfactory, especially in improving drawing skills.
143. Most pupils enjoy the range of technology activities. In some of the long practical sessions pupils work at too relaxed a pace. Behaviour is mostly good and reflects the largely positive attitude of pupils to their teachers. In GCSE classes, pupils work with increasing self-reliance on their chosen projects.
144. Teaching is satisfactory. Staff absence has resulted in a considerable use of supply teachers, and affected the balance of specialist skills in the design and technology team with fewer strengths in systems and control. Even so, almost all teaching is at least satisfactory and over a third is good and very good. Planning is careful, with the better teaching establishing clear objectives at the start and reinforcing learning points at the end of lessons. Good practice includes varied and challenging activities to maintain momentum over the lesson. Staff establish a positive relationship with pupils and use this effectively to manage behaviour. Less effective and unsatisfactory teaching, while being encouraging and supportive in individual work, allows pupils to work at too relaxed a pace, resulting in slower progress. Marking and assessment of work are

completed conscientiously using the school system, though the National Curriculum and GCSE criteria are not explicitly shared with pupils to involve them in their own progress. Homework is regularly set and the better practice uses it to develop pupils' knowledge and to encourage greater research skills.

145. Subject leadership has been good in sustaining a team approach and planning for the school's development as a technology college. The curriculum is sufficiently well organised to meet National Curriculum requirements, though the carousel organisation of the Key Stage 3 programme makes it difficult to develop pupils' knowledge and skills in a coherent and progressive way. Teachers are well supported by technical staff and, despite limited accommodation in food technology, there is a sufficiently good range of accommodation and resources. Despite some staffing changes, the department has been successful in making progress since the last inspection, particularly in the significant improvement in GCSE attainment in most courses. The department will be able to make further gains in its curriculum and resources as a key area in the new technology college.

149. **Geography**

146. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is in line with national expectations, as shown by the 1998 and 1999 National Curriculum assessments. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 in 1998 was below the national average for the percentage of GCSE A* to C grades, but in line with the average for similar schools. The proportion graded A* to G was similar to the national average. The 1999 GCSE A* to C results unexpectedly and significantly decreased, an appeal for re-marking has been made to the examination board. A-level attainment is well below the national average.

147. Attainment in lessons and work overall is in line with the national average for similar schools. Sixth-form work on glacial erosion showed a high level of understanding of the processes. Year 11 pupils' work on coastal erosion and deposition, which linked physical, human and environmental themes in a case study of Holderness, varied from very good to poor. Some Year 10 pupils showed a high level of map reading skills in looking at settlement hierarchy in the Cambridge area, while others had problems in mapwork. Diagram drawing is a strength in all years, and particularly noticeable in Year 9 work on the features of a volcano. Attainment is at its best where good teaching with high quality visual resources stimulates pupils' interest in the topic. Poor attainment is often related to the low literacy skills of pupils. Oral responses usually show better knowledge and understanding of themes, with correct use of geographical terms, than written responses. Location of places at all scales features widely, improving knowledge, and atlases are used to advantage. Other geographical skills such as fieldwork, and graph drawing are less well developed.

148. Progress varies with topic, teacher, prior attainment, and pupil attitude. Initial recall of previous learning helps pupils consolidate knowledge and understanding, preparing them to make further progress. Grouping pupils with higher prior attainment in Key Stage 3 into a top set in each half year band helps those pupils make good progress with more difficult concepts and in developing extended writing skills. Pupils with very low prior attainment and learning difficulties also make good progress where there is a provision of visual material, active learning in simple steps, and good individual help from learning support assistants. The progress of middle sets is least satisfactory, particularly where poorly-behaved pupils distract others, hindering concentration.

149. Attitudes to learning are generally good, with some exceptions in Years 8 and 9. On the whole, pupils bring the correct equipment and books to class and settle quickly. Where there are stimulating resources and a variety of activities most pupils sustain interest and concentration throughout the lesson. The majority of pupils in Key Stage 3 behave well and all Key Stage 4 pupils behave well in lessons. Good relationships exist between pupils, and they are usually polite and respectful to teachers. Some collaborative group work was seen in Year 8 preparing

presentations on comparing Wales and London; otherwise most pupils work individually or in pairs, with little opportunity to show initiative or develop the capacity for personal study. Even the students in the very small Year 13 A-level group do not sufficiently take on responsibility for their own learning, and generally there is over-dependence on the teacher.

150. Teaching is satisfactory. Teaching was satisfactory or better for all but one lesson observed. Just over half the teaching was good or better. All teachers have appropriate qualifications, with good subject knowledge and understanding. Expectations of pupils are sometimes inappropriate, too high for the many lower attainers in the middle sets in Key Stage 3, and insufficiently challenging or stretching for the few higher attainers in all years. Planning of work and preparation of materials is good, undertaken on a whole department basis in regular meetings, then adapted by teachers to suit their pupils' needs, but with varying effectiveness. A common lesson structure (recall, aims of the lesson, a variety of activities then summarising learning) helps to develop consistency in teaching.

151. The good leadership and supportive ethos of the department, with clear behaviour management and assessment policies, raises the quality of teaching and learning overall. Marking is regular, with good constructive comments helping pupils know how to improve, setting individual targets. Resources are good, funding has been well spent on individual work booklets, a variety of text books and on audio-visual aids. Accommodation is good apart from the lack of sound-proofing between rooms in the humanities base, and the use of distant demountables.

152. Since the last inspection there have been changes of staff. Attainment remains similar, although pupils' knowledge of the location of places has improved. Pupils' enquiry skills are still underdeveloped and there is over-dependence on the teacher, although pupils are now usually responsive to questions and offer comments. Schemes of work and assessment in Key Stage 3 now provide focused progression and continuity between topics. Consideration needs to be given to the viability of the very small sixth-form classes and a more efficient and effective use of the geography teachers involved, to raise attainment in Key Stages 3 and 4.

156. **History**

153. Although GCSE performance is below the levels reached in 1995, there has been a distinct improvement on the well-below national levels achieved between 1996 and 1998. Performance remains below national levels but is on a rising trend, though it still compares unfavourably with most of the other subjects in the school. The average pupils' point score of 2.8 for 1999 is significantly below the national figure for similar schools. The earlier fall can be attributed, at least in part, to the adoption of a syllabus with a much reduced element of coursework, and also to staffing instability, now resolved. The 1999 results indicate that steps taken to adjust to the different requirements of the new syllabus are beginning to have beneficial effects. Further modifications to the curricular organisation and teaching approaches are well designed to improve pupils' potential examination performance. Boys performed better than girls in 1999 overall in terms of A* to C grades but less well in A* to E grades. These variations appear more dependent on pupils' attitudes and attendance than on gender differences. The positive attitudes of many girls in the lessons observed suggest that relative performance of boys and girls may be reversed at the end of the current year. Results at A-level have been below national averages but the small numbers of candidates make any generalisations unreliable.

154. Attainment in current work is below that expected nationally, but in the light of pupils' prior attainment on entry, progress over time is sound throughout. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress, not least because of the generous and effective provision of support staff and the good liaison between them and the class teachers. In most lessons, progress is mainly sound and sometimes good or very good. Variations in the nature of the teaching result in the progress made by both the lower and higher attainers varying from unsatisfactory to very good. At the end of Key Stage 3 pupils on average are on course to reach Level 4 of the National

Curriculum, a level below what is expected nationally. Similarly, in Key Stage 4, most pupils are working at a level consistent with attaining a grade D at GCSE. Within this median performance, there is a wide spread of attainment, but more pupils are reaching levels below than above the median. Only four students follow an A-level course; attainment is closely related to prior attainment and ability. Attainment in Year 13 is around or above average; in Year 12 it is below average.

155. The level of attainment varies little between the key elements. Pupils have sound basic knowledge and understanding, and have developed satisfactorily skills of handling source material. They mainly lack detailed knowledge and the more sophisticated skills of historical enquiry. Their chronological framework is insecure and some younger pupils are uncertain about date conventions. Few pupils understand that history is capable of different interpretations, largely because this is less emphasised than other key elements in the curriculum and teaching, even in the sixth form. Most pupils can communicate their knowledge and understanding quite well orally. Wide variations in their literacy affects the effectiveness of written communication. More able pupils write fluently but not at great length and what should be explanatory writing often becomes descriptive.
156. Pupils' attitudes to the subject are predominantly positive. In many lessons they display overt enthusiasm, particularly when they are actively involved as in role-play or 'detective work' with source material. In less stimulating lessons they are normally attentive and persist well with the work, though behaviour by a minority of pupils was poor on a small number of occasions and sufficiently disruptive to slow the progress that other pupils wished to make.
157. The quality of teaching is inconsistent. It ranges widely in quality from excellent to poor. More lessons were good than anything else. Poor classroom management and inappropriate expectations accounted for the two less than satisfactory lessons. In the best lessons the aims of the lesson were appropriate, made clear and emphasised to pupils. Progress in meeting the aims was evaluated by informal assessment during the lesson, modifying the lesson plan where this was necessary, and checked at the end through questioning to clarify whether the aims had been achieved. All lessons were soundly planned and consistently based on an agreed departmental scheme of work. These plans, however, while appropriate for pupils of middling ability, were not always sufficiently modified to meet the needs of the most or least able pupils. The department is aware of the need to match work to pupils' needs but is not always successful in doing so. In Year 10, however, an effective approach is being adopted for less able pupils. Teaching and short-term planning for the sixth form are sound, but are based on an under-developed scheme of work which does not sufficiently consider students' needs, particularly for Year 12.
158. All teachers use good questioning techniques that probe pupils' understanding and stimulate their thinking. All have at least satisfactory knowledge of the subject, and they adopt a suitably wide range of strategies. They make mainly good use of time available, and sound but slightly unimaginative use of resources. Opportunities are lost to stimulate imagination and promote the understanding of less academic pupils by the use of resources such as artefacts and large-scale timelines. In contrast, the very high level of display in all the rooms, outstanding in one, creates a very good historical environment that contributes to pupils' positive attitudes. All teachers have the interests of pupils as their top priority. Their high level of commitment and dedication is evident in the regular, detailed and helpful written comments on pupils' work and in their generous donation of time to provide extra lessons and run the after-school history clubs that are much better attended by girls than boys.
159. The department is well staffed and generally well housed, though one aging demountable classroom at a considerable distance from the humanities area militates against the close and effective teamwork that otherwise pervades the department. Noise from neighbouring rooms is a problem on some occasions because of inadequate sound proofing. Book resources are somewhat thin but substantially re-inforced by mainly well devised school-produced materials.

Combined Year 12 and 13 classes pose some difficulties of progression. The Certificate of Achievement course on offer in Key Stage 4 gives less academic pupils good access to the history curriculum in principle and enables them to make good progress in Year 10 where they are taught in a separate group. The present Year 11 arrangement, by which they are split and form a small minority in a large GCSE class, is not satisfactory and the end of this arrangement for future year-groups should be to the benefit of teachers and pupils alike. The use of visits to historical sites and museums is rare, as noted in the previous report. There is little planned use of information and communication technology. That seen was highly effective for lower attainers, but there remains great scope for increased use across the age and ability range. Close co-operation across the whole humanities area ensures that the department is effectively managed. The efficient arrangements for formal assessment and recording are one good example of this humanities-wide management.

Information and communication technology

160. Just prior to the inspection, the school substantially improved its information technology resources as part of its development as a newly-created technology college. Improved facilities have enabled the different subject areas to develop, or more often, introduce for the first time, a variety of learning activities that make constructive use of information technology. This new provision has yet to have impact on the levels of attainment and progress over time, though pupils are showing clear improvements in their skills in current lessons.
161. Attainment at the end of Year 9 is below national expectations, with considerable variation in knowledge and skills depending on the experiences pupils have had over Key Stage 3. All pupils can use computers to save information and most can access data from the Internet and CD-ROM when given the opportunity. Pupils also use word processing and simple desktop publishing to combine text and graphics and spreadsheets, to look at patterns and present information. Pupils have a basic understanding of measurement and control through the specifically organised learning activities in different subjects. However, the very limited computer resources and lack of lesson time have meant, until most recently, that few pupils have developed their skills to higher levels.
162. Progress in Key Stage 3 lessons is satisfactory and on occasion good, but progress over time has been unsatisfactory. The taught programme in Year 7 enables pupils to consolidate and develop their primary school experiences, mostly in using word processing and desk top publishing applications to develop skills in communicating information. Subjects such as history and geography now help pupils make progress in data handling and retrieval, including use of the Internet. Subjects such as English and modern foreign languages have valuably supported the development of pupils' skills in the last two years, though access to resources has proved difficult. The lack of any taught information technology after Year 7, and the limited involvement of many subjects until recently, has meant that most pupils have not been able to make sufficient gains in their knowledge and skills
163. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 is below the national average, with few pupils having greatly higher skills than those gained in Key Stage 3. Most pupils make unsatisfactory progress in developing their information technology skills in Key Stage 4 as there are no core lessons and no whole school planning to develop pupils' skills systematically. Additionally, pupils use information technology less than usual in several GCSE courses. The school enters its lower-attaining pupils for an information technology qualification, the GNVQ key skill unit, but none of the 1999 group completed it successfully. Closer monitoring of the course is expected to improve that result. However, a significant minority makes progress to higher skills when they use computers effectively in preparation for some GCSE courses. For example, in music technology computers are used for multi-tracking and sequencing in composition, and digital imaging is used in art. The different design and technology courses make good use of information technology; on electronic courses pupils competently use electronic circuit planning software, while the higher-attaining

pupils in textiles, food and graphics develop confident use of word processing and desk top publishing to present their course work. Some individual pupils make significant progress through their personal interest. Pupils following the alternative education programmes are taking GNVQ key skills and show sound gains, mainly in word processing skills. Pupils with special educational needs use programmes to enhance basic skills competently. Regular use of personal programmes is planned, and the budget for them ear-marked, once machines can be installed following building work.

164. Students following a range of sixth form GNVQ courses successfully complete the key skills unit in information technology at Levels 2 and 3, and in so doing, achieve standards in line with the national average. GNVQ students make satisfactory progress in developing their skills through the use of computers for assignment work. Progress of those following A-level courses is more limited in the absence of any specific information technology provision. However, there are instances of good progress for example, in A-level mathematics lesson where students use computers to help them understand calculations.
165. Pupils have responded enthusiastically to the new computers and work well in the taught course in Year 7 and in the increasing number of cross-curricular lessons. Behaviour is mostly good. When given the opportunity, pupils work well collaboratively. The limited skills of many pupils make them dependent on the teacher for assistance, though there are good instances of independent working in the GCSE courses.
166. Teaching is mostly carried out by non-specialist staff, though frequently with the effective support of the information technology co-ordinator and the two technicians. As a result, teaching is almost always satisfactory, half is good, and on occasion, it is very good. The best teaching is well planned and the teachers have a secure understanding of the applications being used. Good use is made of the new projection equipment, so enabling more effective whole-class presentation and demonstration. Sound, but less effective, teaching relies on pupils working at their own pace with teacher support and without sufficient lesson targets to ensure progress. Unsatisfactory teaching occurs when insufficient attention is given to classroom management.
167. The work of the information technology co-ordinator, supported by the senior management team, has been effective in producing a clear strategy covering curriculum, staff and resource development. Given the low base from which it is starting, the school has been ambitious in its wish to deliver two of the three years of Key Stage 3 entirely on a cross-curricular basis. Though this provision covers the National Curriculum Programme of Study, it has yet to implement effective systems for monitoring provision and assessing pupils' progress. The school has yet to plan Key Stage 4 provision and current arrangements do not meet National Curriculum requirements. In some ways, the school has made only limited progress in the development of information technology since the last inspection. However, its success in becoming a technology college has enabled it to make considerable improvements to its previously limited resources and to encourage a shared approach to the development of information technology across the school.

171. **Modern foreign languages**

168. GCSE results in French have improved gradually over the past few years, although the percentage achieving A* to C grades remains below the national average for similar schools. In German, where, until this year, entry to the examination has been restricted to a small group of high-attaining pupils, results have been substantially above the average for similar schools and above the national average for all maintained schools, with girls performing particularly well. The numbers taking A-level have been too small for statistical analysis; of the five candidates in both languages in the past two years three achieved a pass at grade E and one at grade B.
169. At Key Stage 3 standards of attainment in the four language skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing are broadly in line with the national expectation in most top sets and below in others.

Listening is noticeably better developed in those classes where teachers make extensive use of the foreign language. Speaking ranges from confident to very hesitant with gross pronunciation distortion. In a majority of lessons pupils do not have enough opportunity to use the language, to speak at length or spontaneously. Pupils' under-use of the foreign language was raised in the previous OFSTED report. Pupils rarely read beyond the textbook and their reading skills need developing through the implementation of a regular extended reading programme. Standards of writing are variable: by Year 9 higher attainers are able to write brief letters and accounts and they undertake some creative writing such as poems in French and a project on clothes in German where they produce their own booklets. Lower attainers copy too much vocabulary and often respond in single words.

170. At Key Stage 4 standards in most top sets are still just within the national expectation for the age group but below, and frequently well below, in other sets. Higher attainers write at greater length and by Year 11 demonstrate a growing understanding of pattern and structure as they use tenses other than the present and use different registers, such as formal and informal letters. Standards of the majority of pupils at Key Stage 4 are below average; they still operate at Key Stage 3 levels. They have poor recall of previously learnt material and frequently do not understand what they have written in their books. Written work is often very sparse or consists of long and inappropriate vocabulary lists. Standards on the A-level French course are average for similar schools.
171. An unstable staffing situation and poor teaching have adversely affected the progress made by pupils at both key stages. In a minority of lessons pupils made good progress due to rigorous teaching and high motivation. Pupils with special educational needs are helped to make satisfactory progress by the setting system, small group size and the frequent use of support assistants, some of whom have a good knowledge of French or German.
172. In a majority of lessons pupils are co-operative language learners. They listen carefully to the teacher and the tape-recorder and respond well to questions. In a few lessons they demonstrate real enthusiasm for language learning. Concentration is generally good for written tasks and pupils make as good use as they can of the opportunities provided to work in pairs. They refer sensibly to dictionaries when appropriate and enjoy using the newly installed computer facilities to enhance their language learning. In a sizeable minority of lessons behaviour is unsatisfactory. Pupils are demotivated, restless and occasionally overtly disruptive. Attitudes to foreign language learning have been affected by the difficulty the school has had in recruiting effective teachers.
173. The quality of teaching is inconsistent. Three-quarters is satisfactory or better, some of which is good and occasionally very good. However, one quarter of the teaching is unsatisfactory or poor. Some observed classes were not graded for teaching, two teachers were away sick in the later part of the week and work set was supervised by a non-specialist. There is wide variation in the linguistic competence of the teachers, ranging from a native speaker to an O-level pass. The use of the foreign language both as a medium of instruction and for routine classroom interaction varies from good with the lesson conducted entirely in the foreign language to poor when the lesson is almost entirely in English. Even when the foreign language is used extensively, there is sometimes frequent and unnecessary translation into English. Pupils are too often given pair work tasks without adequate preparation, thereby undermining their effectiveness. Better lessons are delivered briskly, contain challenging material combined with frequent change of task and make use of a variety of resources. Very good lessons are delivered with panache and use stimulating resources which capture the imagination of pupils. Unsatisfactory and poor lessons are characterised by one or more of the following: poor classroom control, little use of the foreign language, inadequate use of available resources with over-reliance on the textbook, a leisurely pace and low expectations of what pupils can achieve. Lessons were observed during the inspection where all five of the above features were apparent.
174. The modern languages curriculum is highly unsatisfactory. At present the time allocation in Year 7 is well below that recommended nationally. Due to difficulties in recruiting German teachers one

Year 8 class has been switched from German to French, causing resentment. The way pupils are allocated to French or German undermines the establishment of an effective system of setting pupils according to their ability. There is no opportunity for any pupil to study both languages. At Key Stage 4 some pupils on the short course leading to a certificate of achievement should be capable of attempting GCSE. The school has officially disapplied 59 Key Stage 4 pupils from studying a foreign language, partially because of recruitment difficulties. Although the decision is appropriate for some who are following an alternative course as a result of poor attendance, several in three other groups could follow an appropriate language course. Running an A-level course for one pupil is not an efficient use of staff time, particularly in a curriculum area where staff are difficult to recruit.

175. The department has been through difficult times in the past few years. The head of department post is currently vacant and the department is being managed by an acting head of department, supported by a non-specialist member of the senior management team. There have been substantial improvements in management and administration in the past year. A detailed handbook now exists, as do schemes of work and good policy statements. Satisfactory assessment procedures are now in place although teachers' understanding of the National Curriculum levels needs strengthening through regular standardisation meetings. All pupils now have their own coursebook. Of the seven teachers, four are new in post and two are long-term supply teachers. Not all have appropriate qualifications. The recruitment of a head of department and permanent, well-qualified and effective teachers is the single most important issue for modern languages at the school. Only when such appointments are made will the school be able seriously to tackle the poor progress and the low attainment.

179. **Music**

176. The 1997 and 1998 GCSE results were well above the national average for all maintained schools, and very high in relation to those of similar schools. Results improve each year and the 1999 results were outstanding, especially for boys who consistently achieve very well in music in relation to their other subjects. At A-level, numbers are too small to make valid national comparisons.

177. Currently, by the end of Key Stage 3 attainment is in line with national expectations for most pupils. By the end of Key Stage 4 standards are generally higher than those expected nationally. In the sixth form most pupils achieve well above national expectations for the course. By the end of Key Stage 3 most pupils achieve about average standards in the knowledge, understanding and use of notations including staff notation, the knowledge and understanding of musical styles and composers, using music to create special effects, and the appreciation of music using appropriate specialist vocabulary. Standards in composition are also about average, but some higher attainers make good use of dynamics, chromaticism and contrasts including good variations in pitch and rhythm. Performance and ensemble skills are about average, although some lower attainers have difficulty in keeping to a beat. Literacy standards are about average only for higher attainers. By the end of Key Stage 4 the majority are in line to reach above expectations in composition, performance and ensemble skills. Some imaginative and creative compositions by higher attainers make good use of sequences, structure, including a bridge, varied rhythms, chords and cadences. Pupils' knowledge and understanding of musical history and genres and standards in appreciation of music are at least satisfactory. Some higher attainers have good listening skills. Pupils do limited written work, but literacy standards are only just satisfactory for some in spelling and in the fluent expression of their views. The use of information and communication technology skills in composition is satisfactory.

178. In the sixth form most pupils have a good grasp of composition techniques and higher attainers use chords, beat and rhythm imaginatively. With the use of music technology, skilled compositions show some excellent use of structure, musical instruments and variety such as a melody in the bass. Music technology is used very well for tracking, transposing, sequencing and

recording. Performance standards are generally well above average; the pupils are talented instrumentalists and vocalists. Standards in harmony, musical analysis and history are also generally above average. Standards in the jazz ensemble and concert band are high and singing in the choir is satisfactory.

179. Pupils make good progress. At Key Stage 3, pupils in the top sets in Years 7 and 8 make at least good progress particularly in performance, as higher attainers take full advantage of the opportunities to use their instruments in lessons. Most pupils enter the school with limited attainment, but their enthusiasm for the subject and expert teaching often lead to good progress in most aspects of the course across the ability range. However, progress is only just satisfactory for many in Year 9, as some pupils are less well-organised and self-disciplined and lack a sense of urgency in completing tasks. Pupils' self-assessment is beginning to be used well to aid progress in Year 9. At Key Stage 4, progress is usually good and in the sixth form it is very good. Skilled teaching gives pupils of all abilities, including those with special educational needs, very good opportunities in Year 10 to increase their confidence in performance and to channel their excitement and collaborative skills into making good progress in the application of Rondo form in group compositions. In the jazz ensemble pupils make good progress in gaining the confidence to perform solo improvisations.
180. Most pupils enjoy music. Most are very keen at Key Stage 3. At Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form all pupils are extremely enthusiastic about their studies. Numbers taking GCSE music are steadily increasing, due to the subject's popularity. Pupils listen well, are co-operative, responsive, concentrate well on independent work and in groups and are very willing to volunteer, for example to perform to the class or to sing a solo in the choir. They show very good respect for instruments and usually listen sensitively to others. Behaviour is generally good, often very good and sometimes excellent. Pupils' responses overall improve through the key stages. They are very good at Key Stage 4 and excellent in the sixth form, where pupils give very sensitive and constructive evaluation to each other. Relationships in all musical activities among pupils and with staff are often excellent.
181. Teaching is good and often very good. It ranges from satisfactory lessons in Year 9 to an excellent sixth form lesson. Teaching in extra-curricular activities is at least very good and peripatetic staff provide high quality tuition. Teachers use their very good expertise well to develop pupils' skills, including experimentation and creativity and to support and challenge individual learning. For example, in a Year 9 lesson excellent organisation and use of resources resulted in each pupil having a personal written part to play in performing a song. Teachers respect pupils' views and class management is often first rate. Marking is conscientious.
182. The ethos for learning is excellent. Leadership, management and administration are very good, including forward planning to restructure the music school and to prepare assessment procedures to meet proposed National Curriculum changes. Currently the new head of department has not completed detailed schemes of work, although curriculum mapping is sound. There is no criterion-referenced assessment to track pupils' progress and to set specific targets for improvement, nor is there formal monitoring and evaluation of the subject by senior management. The commitment and high level of participation by pupils and by staff from different departments in a wide range of extra-curricular activities are outstanding. Large numbers, 117 pupils, take lessons in a range of instruments. Music contributes greatly to the life of the school and the community. It also contributes to pupils' personal and cultural development, through the high-quality annual productions, regular concerts and singing in community events. A very good programme of visits enriches the curriculum across the key stages, including strong links with the Southend Symphonic Wind Band and joint trips to Europe. The use of music technology is developing well, but the assistance of a technician is needed to ensure continuity and to extend its use into Key Stage 3 lessons. The lack of ventilation in several rooms needs attention to meet health and safety requirements. The department has maintained the high standards identified in the last inspection report.

186.

186. Physical education

183. Attainment in physical education at the end of Key Stage 3 is below expectations. At the end of Key Stage 4 examination results in 1998 and 1999 were broadly in line with national and similar school averages across grades A* to G; most pupils obtained their predicted grade. At the higher grades A* to C, results were below those of similar schools and well below national averages. Dance results in 1997, the last year pupils were entered, were below but approaching national averages at both the high grades and across the full range of grades. Examination results have improved considerably since the last inspection when they were very low. In the sixth form two students entered for the A-level examination for the first time in 1999 and both obtained average grades. The school has considerable success in the locality. In cricket Year 10 pupils were finalists in the South East Essex championship and Year 8 girls won the Southend Schools' netball league.
184. Pupils' attainment on entry is well below expectations. Although closer to expectations at Key Stage 4 than 3, it is below at the ends of both key stages. Many pupils under-achieve, particularly girls at Key Stage 3. However, a small but increasing minority of pupils attain the highest standards; at least ten pupils have obtained county honours in sports such as athletics, football or tennis. Standards in dance are satisfactory but they are below average in activities such as games, swimming and well below in gymnastics. Planning and evaluation skills are underdeveloped except in dance and pupils' knowledge and understanding of warm-ups is less than satisfactory. For example, too few pupils know or use the names of the main muscles of the body. At the end of Key Stage 4 the practical work of examination pupils in activities such as basketball, badminton and dance are sound. Pupils demonstrate good basic skills of dribbling and passing in basketball and higher-attaining pupils know when to use tactics such as the 'switch' in defence. In dance, pupils show the required level of skill, knowledge and understanding to learn a complex set piece with poise, clarity of movement and expression. All examination pupils are meeting course requirements in theory work and their literacy skills are sound. Pupils in core lessons are not attaining the standard expected, although a minority show good co-ordination technique and accuracy in badminton. In the sixth form, A-level students are meeting course requirements and their independent research skills are good.
185. The progress of pupils in lessons, including those with special educational needs, is inconsistent but mostly unsatisfactory at Key Stage 3 and satisfactory at Key Stage 4. Too many lessons observed at Key Stage 3 had weaknesses in pupil management or lesson planning which resulted in poor behaviour. Contributory factors included cramped accommodation in gymnastics, large groups in some instances and unhelpful group dynamics. In other lessons, such as a Year 7 dance lesson based on household chores, pupils made good progress as the content captured their imagination. The predominance of boys in mixed groups sometimes results in underachievement by girls, especially where a minority of boys misbehaves. Progress made in lessons is not necessarily retained over the key stage. This is because the schemes of work lack consistency and, in some areas, sufficient detail. They are insufficiently linked to pupil assessment. Through Key Stage 4 pupils in examination groups make steady gains in knowledge, understanding and skills as lessons are tightly structured and assessment procedures clearly understood. Where tasks are varied, as in a Year 10 examination theory lesson, pupils make very good progress. In core lessons insufficient progress is made overall and, in the case of Year 11 football, boys underachieve in lessons where girls are learning basic skills. Higher-attaining pupils who attend extra-curricular activities or play in school teams make good progress. They acquire higher level techniques and tactics in games such as basketball. Sixth form students make steady gains in anatomy, physiology and sports psychology where they can develop hypotheses, understand underlying issues and discuss a topic from a number of perspectives.
186. Pupils' response is broadly satisfactory at Key Stages 3 and 4 and is good in the sixth form. Pupils' enjoyment of physical education is reflected in the increasing numbers who are following examination courses, participating in extra-curricular activities and joining clubs out of school.

Absence from school or failure to participate contributes to underachievement and lack of progress in a significant number of instances. Pupils can work collaboratively in pairs, groups or teams but some poor behaviour, especially among a minority of boys in Years 7, 9 and 10 and girls in Year 9, spoil otherwise good relationships.

187. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall, but better at Key Stage 4 than Key Stage 3 where significant weaknesses in behaviour management in about one in four lessons is the main cause of pupils' underachievement. Where teaching is good, as in a Year 7 swimming lesson, the teacher establishes good relationships, anticipates problems well and selects tasks carefully. Teachers' knowledge and understanding are particularly strong in examination classes at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form where pupils make good progress. In some instances, lack of understanding of the requirements of the National Curriculum leads to inconsistent standards in pupils' planning and evaluation skills. Skills-based activities are taught effectively, but other teaching methods, such as those that promote independent learning, are less frequently used. Inconsistencies in teacher assessment lead to inconsistencies in pupils' progress. Good organisation of pupils and resources makes effective use of time. Insufficient feedback at the end of lessons contributes to lack of progress at Key Stage 3.

188. Provision for extra-curricular activities, competitive sport and enrichment activities, such as the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme, is good. The head of department has effectively and successfully managed changes associated with the new sports hall. Since the last inspection there have been improvements to the main school and sixth form curriculum, facilities, assessment procedures and departmental policies. Very good links with primary schools, sports' clubs and other institutions such as the All England Netball Association improve the quality and range of pupils' experiences. The department's development plan is insufficiently targeted on teaching, pupils' learning and staff development. This was raised in the last inspection report. Senior management has not worked sufficiently closely with the department in order to strengthen and monitor the quality of teaching.

192. **Religious education**

189. Religious education was introduced successfully into Key Stage 4 as a short GCSE course in 1996 in response to concerns expressed in the previous inspection. The school target of 50 per cent of pupils in Year 11 entering the examination in 1998 was surpassed and nearly 83 per cent entered in 1999. In 1998, 35 per cent obtained A* to C grades, increasing to 40 per cent in 1999, which is average for similar schools and compares very favourably with the national average of 45 per cent. A* to G grades, at 93 per cent and 95 per cent, were above the national average. These results are good considering that the number taking the examination is much larger than in most schools, across the whole attainment range, and the time available is the equivalent of 15 lessons short of that recommended over the two years.

190. Attainment on entry is well below the expected level, mainly due to poor literacy skills. By the end of Key Stage 3 attainment is just below that expected by the Agreed Syllabus. Higher attainers have a good knowledge and understanding of religious terms and concepts and are beginning to give extended answers showing learning from and about religion. Middle attainers answer factual questions briefly but accurately, give detailed answers orally, but have difficulty in giving extended written answers. Low attainers answer factual questions orally but need support in written work in order to write short accurate sentences. By the end of Key Stage 4 attainment is broadly in line with the expectations of the examination syllabus. Just under half the pupils give detailed answers, at the level of C plus grades, showing a good understanding of religious views on many topics and discuss issues in abstract terms with clear reasons to support views expressed using technical language well. The majority of the remaining pupils give accurate factual answers on religious topics but are less confident when explaining religious concepts in detail.

191. Half the pupils at Key Stages 3 make good progress and most of the remainder make satisfactory

progress. More pupils make good progress at Key Stage 4. This is an improvement on the previous inspection where significant numbers of pupils were underachieving. Pupils share ideas, sparking off new thoughts, providing a good base for discussion. They are challenged to give reasons to support views and to explain the importance of beliefs to religious groups. One lesson involved pupils in preparing a kosher menu for a Jewish festival. Pupils are developing good skills in examining issues from a number of different religious and personal perspectives before deciding on their own opinions, beliefs and values. An environmental game was used effectively as a starter to a detailed discussion on issues. Exercise books show that most pupils answer questions accurately and many are gaining confidence in writing long, well thought out responses. On occasions progress is affected by chatter when tasks run too long. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in most lessons, using specific tasks and receiving effective support from the teacher or learning support assistant.

192. Most pupils at Key Stage 3 have a good attitude to the subject, as shown by their keenness to be involved, enjoyment and pride in their work and excitement in preparing for role play. Attitudes towards the subject are improving at Key Stage 4. Most pupils realise that developing debating and discussion skills is helpful and they also enjoy many of the topics which are relevant to contemporary issues. Most pupils are polite and courteous. They support each other, especially if one of the group has a particular problem that they can help with. Pupils share personal experiences and express feelings, knowing that their beliefs will be respected by others. In a lesson on special places many pupils felt confident enough to talk about emotional and personal issues. Pupils work well in pairs. At Key Stage 3 a significant minority of pupils has not yet developed group work skills, although this is developing well for most. Small numbers of pupils seek attention by being disruptive, finding one hour lessons very long.
193. The quality of teaching is good at Key Stages 3 and 4. More good and very good lessons were observed at Key Stage 4. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed. This is a big improvement on the last inspection where the quality of teaching at Key Stage 4 had a number of shortcomings. The most successful lessons follow a similar pattern. A purposeful start sets the focus for the lesson by explaining what is to be covered and giving pupils an opportunity to say what they already know about the topic. Good relationships exist between teacher and pupils, based on respect for each other and a clear understanding that only good behaviour is acceptable. Humour and praise are well used to encourage participation and involve the reticent. The variety of activities used in each lesson keeps pupils actively engaged and maintains good concentration. Spiritual and moral development is at the forefront of teachers' minds as they encourage pupils to explore feelings, values and beliefs. Good questioning skills challenge high-attaining pupils to give detailed answers, whilst providing lower-attaining pupils with the opportunity to answer simple factual questions successfully and thus gain in confidence. Regular checks are made during the lesson and at the end to confirm that the objectives are being met and that pupils understand the key points. Homework activities give opportunities to use initiative and begin to develop independent learning skills. Teachers new to the school or to teaching religious education are concentrating on establishing good working relationships with their groups, ensuring that the subject matter is covered adequately. In the least successful lessons the pace slows, usually in the last quarter, because the activities fail to maintain interest.
194. Religious education now meets statutory requirements, an improvement since the last inspection. Students in the sixth form attend a series of well-planned, organised conferences followed up later in school. Time is below the recommendation at all stages, but the Agreed Syllabus is covered through a carefully designed programme of study. Information and communication technology is only used as part of lessons in one Year 9 module, a weakness which has not been addressed fully since the last inspection. Assessment follows the school policy, but pupils would benefit from more constructive comments. Only two of the nine teachers are religious education specialists. All appreciate excellent support from the head of department who has developed effective work books for pupils of different attainment. The two specialist teachers also teach in other departments, partly due to timetabling arrangements for religious education. The department

would benefit from fewer teachers, which would facilitate more effective monitoring, continuity and progression, particularly at Key Stage 3.

198. **PART C: INSPECTION DATA**

198. **SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE**

195. Before the inspection week, the registered inspector visited the school twice and spoke with the headteacher and staff. She and the lay inspector met with the Chair of Governors and then with the majority of governors for about an hour, held a meeting attended by 21 parents and read 140 responses (an 11 per cent return) to a questionnaire sent to parents before the inspection. The analysis is appended to this report. Inspectors also took into consideration points raised by parents in additional correspondence. All team inspectors studied school data and documents and subject documents before the inspection.
196. In the main inspection week, a team of 13 inspectors spent a total of 52 days in the school. They observed 239 lessons or part lessons (including instrumental lessons) and several extra-curricular sessions. All teachers present in the school were observed teaching once and almost all were observed more than once. Inspectors visited a range of extra-curricular activities. They spoke formally to representative samples of pupils from each year and informally to many more pupils in lessons and around the school. All inspectors reviewed a good range of pupils' work and discussed academic, pastoral and financial aspects of the school with teaching and non-teaching staff and with several governors.
197. A sample of registration and tutorial sessions and all assemblies were observed. Registers, pupils' reports and individual education plans were examined.

201. **DATA AND INDICATORS**

201. **Pupil data**

	Number of pupils on roll (full-time equivalent)	Number of pupils with Statements of SEN	Number of pupils on school's register of SEN	Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals
Y7 – Y13	1277	14	247	287

201. **Teachers and classes**

201. **Qualified teachers (Y7 - Y13)**

Total number of qualified teachers (full-time equivalent):	71.9
Number of pupils per qualified teacher:	17.8

201. **Education support staff (Y7 – Y11)**

Total number of education support staff:	23
Total aggregate hours worked each week:	646.1

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes:	74.6
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Average teaching group size:	KS3	25
	KS4	24

201. **Financial data**

Financial year:	1998-99
	£
Total income	3,030,957
Total expenditure	2,968,743
Expenditure per pupil	2,473
Balance brought forward from previous year	7,477
Balance carried forward to next year	69,691

201. PARENTAL SURVEY

Number of questionnaires sent out: 1277
 Number of questionnaires returned: 140

Responses (percentage of answers in each category):

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I feel the school encourages parents to play an active part in the life of the school	15.8	60.4	15.9	7.9	0.7
I would find it easy to approach the school with questions or problems to do with my child(ren)	25.7	57.9	9.3	6.4	0.7
The school handles complaints from parents well	10.5	44.4	31.6	9.8	3.8
The school gives me a clear understanding of what is taught	15.9	52.9	15.9	12.3	2.9
The school keeps me well informed about my child(ren)'s progress	17.3	48.2	17.3	13.7	3.6
The school enables my child(ren) to achieve a good standard of work	25.9	54.7	11.5	5.8	2.2
The school encourages children to get involved in more than just their daily lessons	29.5	44.6	15.8	8.6	1.4
I am satisfied with the work that my child(ren) is/are expected to do at home	17.9	53.6	5.7	17.1	5.7
The school's values and attitudes have a positive effect on my child(ren)	21.6	49.6	18.7	5.0	5.0
The school achieves high standards of good behaviour	13.8	44.9	26.1	13.8	1.4
My child(ren) like(s) school	33.1	46.0	13.7	5.8	1.4

201.

201. Other issues raised by parents

Several parents praise:

- links with the community and local businesses
- helpfulness of many staff
- 'Aiming High' day
- pastoral care
- reward scheme which encourages good attendance
- high quality school productions
- homework club but pupils do not always take full advantage of it.

Several parents dislike:

- insufficient and irregular homework given in several forms
- reports which are too general and often come too late in year or after parents' meeting

Suitable homework was set in the inspection week, but pupils' planners and comments indicated that it was not always set according to the school plan. (Paragraph 34). The school is aware that the present reports are not satisfactory and is introducing new reports. (Paragraph 65)