

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **BRADON FOREST SCHOOL**

Purton, Swindon

Wiltshire

Unique reference number: 126503

Headteacher: Mr C Montacute

Reporting inspector: Mr Paul Cosway  
2734

Dates of inspection: 20<sup>th</sup> – 24<sup>th</sup> March

Inspection number: 186772

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Foundation
Age range of pupils:	11 to 16
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	The Peak Purton Swindon Wiltshire
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr F Young
Date of previous inspection:	February 1996

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
P. Cosway	<i>Registered Inspector</i>		What sort of school is it? What should the school do to improve further? The school's results and pupils' or students' achievements; How well are pupils or students taught? How well is the school led and managed? Other special features.
W. Walker	<i>Lay Inspector</i>	Equal opportunities.	Pupils attitudes, values and personal development; How well does the school care for its pupils or students? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
R. Wilkins	<i>Team Inspector</i>	Religious education.	
J. Boutbee	<i>Team Inspector</i>	Physical education.	
J. Morrell	<i>Team Inspector</i>	Music.	
P. Kendall	<i>Team Inspector</i>	Art.	
J. Carnaghan	<i>Team Inspector</i>	Geography.	
J. Laver	<i>Team Inspector</i>	History.	How good are the curricular and opportunities offered to pupils?
S. Richardson	<i>Team Inspector</i>	Modern foreign languages.	
M. Sinclair	<i>Team Inspector</i>	Information technology.	
C. Humphries	<i>Team Inspector</i>	Design and technology.	
D. Benstock	<i>Team Inspector</i>	Science.	
C. Rodney	<i>Team Inspector</i>	English as a second language; English; Drama.	
R. Portsmouth	<i>Team Inspector</i>	Mathematics.	

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## **PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

This is a comprehensive school educating boys and girls from the age of 11 to 16. It is a foundation school, having previously been grant-maintained. It is a popular school with a rising roll. There are 1096 pupils, almost equal numbers of boys and girls, and the vast majority is white, although there is a small number of pupils representing other world cultures, including a small group of young people from Japan, whose parents work at the nearby car factory. There is a small number, 0.2 per cent, of traveller children, and for three per cent of pupils, English is an additional language, more than in most schools. Almost a quarter of these pupils are on early stages of language acquisition, and the school receives additional funding to support them. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals, just over four per cent, is well below the national average. The proportion identified as having special educational needs is well below average, but the percentage with full statements of special educational need, about two per cent, is broadly average. Pupils are drawn from the western side of Swindon and from outlying villages. The housing is mixed: the majority is owner-occupied, but with a significant proportion of rented housing.

### **HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS**

This is a very effective school. It has maintained the good attitudes and behaviour that were a feature of the school at the time of the last inspection and very good leadership has added to these a sharper focus on high attainment. As a result, teaching has improved, standards have risen significantly and the school is an increasingly popular choice for parents in the surrounding area, both within and beyond the immediate catchment area. It provides good value for money.

### **WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL**

- Attainment is above national averages in almost every subject and pupils, including those with special educational needs, make good progress and their learning skills are developed well.
- It develops very positive attitudes to school in the pupils.
- Relationships are excellent and pupils' personal, moral and social development is very good.
- Teaching is good overall across the school and teachers have very good subject expertise.
- The leadership of the school is very good
- The school makes very effective use of funding and other resources available to it.

## WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

- The monitoring of teaching and learning, to find the strengths and weaknesses in teaching and improve it further, is inconsistent in quality and effectiveness across departments.
- The provision for pupils' spiritual development across the curriculum.
- The statutory requirements that are not being met for design and technology for all in Years 10 and 11, religious education in Year 11 and the provision of a daily act of worship for all.

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

## HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in March 1996. Since then there has been good progress. It has made very good progress in the performance of pupils at GCSE, the quality of teaching and the leadership. The proportion of pupils who gain five or more GCSE grades A\* to C, for example, has risen from 52 per cent to 63.4 per cent in that time. The quality of teaching has improved from 83 per cent to 96 per cent being satisfactory or better, with a relatively high proportion of very good or excellent teaching. Much of this is the result of the high expectations and guidance of the leadership of the school. The last report found that there were weaknesses in the school's accommodation; in the monitoring of teaching and learning; in the consistency of the recording of pupils' achievements; and in the use made of this information, in the provision for pupils with special educational needs. Apart from fulfilling the statutory requirements for a daily act of collective worship for all, for the provision of design and technology and for the provision for religious education for all in Year 11, the school has made good progress in addressing the issues.

## STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 16 year olds based on their results in GCSE examinations.

Performance in:	Compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1997	1998	1999	1999
GCSE examinations	A	A	A	B

<b>Key</b>	
<i>well above average</i>	A
<i>above average</i>	B
<i>average</i>	C
<i>below average</i>	D
<i>well below average</i>	E

Over the past three years, attainment has risen in the GCSE, at a higher rate than that found nationally. There has been significant improvement in the percentage of pupils who have attained five or more grades A\* to C, from 54.6 in 1997 to 63.4 in 1999. This is well above the national average, which is currently 46.3 per cent and is above that in similar schools. Girls attain more highly than boys overall, as is the case across the country, but boys' attainment at this school is well above the national average for boys and this has been



sustained over the past four years. All pupils make good progress and achieve well as they move through the school. Attainment on entry is in line with national expectations. At the end of Year 9, their attainment in the end of Key Stage 3 National Curriculum tests is above average overall compared with national figures in English, mathematics and science, and close to average compared with that of pupils from similar schools. Their continued good progress in Years 10 and 11 enables them to reach standards well above average by the end of their time in the school in most subjects. The inspection team found that attainment is currently very similar to that indicated by last year's test and examination results. Attainment is particularly high in English, geography, music, religious education, business studies and information studies. Attainment is relatively low in history in Key Stage 4 and in design and technology.

The school has set itself targets of 64 per cent of pupils attaining five or more grades A\* to C at GCSE and 98 per cent attaining five or more grades A\* to G. It has almost reached both targets already. It is now appropriate to raise these even further and higher targets are under active consideration.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good: pupils enjoy school, work hard and have a positive approach to their work.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good: they are well behaved overall in lessons and around the school.
Personal development and relationships	Very good: they relate excellently to each other and to adults. Boys and girls work well together and pupils from minority ethnic cultures are welcomed into the school community.
Attendance	Good: above the national average with unauthorised absence well below average.

The very positive attitudes to work and school that the school engenders in almost all pupils are a strong contributory factor in its success. Pupils value the school and react positively to the teachers. They want to succeed and so they sustain concentration in order to get the most out of their lessons. The good levels of attendance mean that learning is not interrupted and this has a positive effect on standards. The pupils are given many opportunities to be responsible and to learn to work independently. They respond to these well.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Teaching in English is good at Key Stage 3 and very good in Key Stage 4. In mathematics and science, it is good in both key stages.

There are many strengths in teaching. Eight per cent of teaching is excellent and 20 per cent very good. 96 per cent of teaching is satisfactory or better. There is little difference between the two key stages, although the small amount of unsatisfactory teaching, only four per cent, is all in Key Stage 4. There is very good teaching in drama and music and many instances of good and very good teaching in business and information studies, geography, media studies, drama, art, physical education at Key Stage 3, English, modern foreign languages and religious education. Teaching is less strong in design and technology, history and physical education, except examination classes, at Key Stage 4. Overall, the teaching meets the needs of all pupils well, including those with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language.

The strengths in teaching are in the very good planning and very good relationships in many lessons. Most teachers have very good subject expertise, which makes their lessons interesting, sometimes inspirational, and they have high expectations of their pupils. The brisk pace of learning and the sustained concentration that result lead to good progress being made. The skills of literacy are taught well and numeracy skills are developed satisfactorily across the school. In the weaker lessons, class control is insecure and expectations are low. Overall, the quality of teaching is a strength of the school and, as a result, learning skills develop well.

#### **OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL**

<b>Aspect</b>	<b>Comment</b>
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good in Key Stage 3. There are strengths in the Key Stage 4 curriculum in the overall breadth, the extra-curricular provision and in the balance of subjects across the option choices. However, it has to be deemed unsatisfactory because not all statutory requirements are met.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good: the provision for these pupils is very well managed and the support teachers and learning assistants work hard and effectively in partnership with parents and support agencies.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	There is good provision for the teaching of pupils with English as an additional language. Teachers are sensitive to their needs, they are mentored well by their peers and generally make good progress in their learning of English.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Satisfactory overall: there is very good provision for social and moral development. The provision for cultural development is good, but there is insufficient planned provision for spiritual development. Spiritual development has improved little since the last report and is unsatisfactory overall.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good: the school cares for its pupils well.

The school works well in partnership with parents. The information it provides for parents is good. The support that parents give their children, checking their homework and picking them up from school late in order that they can take part in after-school activities, is a strong factor in the school's success. In Key Stage 4, some elements of the curriculum do not meet statutory requirements. Design and technology is not taught to all pupils; pupils in Year 11 do not take religious education, having completed their GCSE course at the end of Year 10. The school cares well for its pupils overall. The procedures for ensuring good attendance, good behaviour and freedom from oppressive behaviour are all very effective.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good: the headteacher and senior management team provide clear direction for the work of the school, setting high expectations of both pupils and staff. The school is managed very well and this has been a key factor in its recent improvement.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good: the governors are supportive of the school and give of their time willingly to help the school and be involved in its work. They fulfil their responsibilities well.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Satisfactory: at a whole-school level, the school evaluates its performance well. At a department level it is less consistently effective.
The strategic use of resources	All lessons are taught by well qualified, specialist teachers. The accommodation is used well, though there are weaknesses in the range of accommodation for physical education. Effective use is made of all learning resources, such as books, equipment and computers.

The headteacher and the senior management team have set very clear direction for the work of the school and promoted high expectations of what the pupils can attain in terms of examination results and their personal development. They have had the full support of the governing body and the staff. As a result of the targets they have set, the very good monitoring and evaluation of the school's performance and the commitment of the teachers, standards are rising and it is becoming an increasingly successful school. The monitoring of work in some subjects by heads of department is carried out well, in English and geography for example, but it is done inconsistently across all departments and is not as effective in some key areas, such as science and mathematics.

Levels of staffing are adequate to meet the demands of the curriculum and the school successfully seeks best value in the use and deployment of all its resources and in the use of its budget.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<p>Over 90 per cent of parents think that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• their children like school and are making good progress.</li> <li>• behaviour is good in school and so is teaching.</li> <li>• the school expects its pupils to work hard and is developing responsible attitudes in them.</li> <li>• they would be comfortable approaching the school with any questions or problems they may have.</li> <li>• the school is led and managed well.</li> </ul>	<p>Of those parents who responded:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 18 per cent are concerned about the amount of homework that is set.</li> <li>• 16 per cent do not feel well informed about how their children are getting on at school.</li> <li>• 16 per cent do not think that the school works closely enough with parents.</li> </ul>

The inspectors agree with the positive points made by parents, finding that pupils make good progress, behave well and develop independence and responsibility. Their positive attitudes to school and their enjoyment of it are very positive influences, helping them to attain well and benefit from the good teaching. The homework provision is satisfactory, but the school needs to make the timetable and expectations clearer to pupils and parents and to monitor it effectively. The amount of information they receive about their children's progress is above average. The school welcomes parents and works hard to involve them, but this is sometimes difficult because some parents live some way from the school.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

#### **EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS AT THE SCHOOL**

##### **Attainment and progress**

1. Overall, pupils make good progress during their time in the school. Their attainment on entry is close to average, but attainment is above average in almost all subjects by the end of Year 11. Standards of attainment have improved since the last report.

##### Key Stage 3

2. In Key Stage 3, the improvement in performance in the National Curriculum tests over the last four years has been broadly in line with the trend nationally, and the attainment of pupils in the school has remained above the national average overall. Attainment is broadly in line with that of similar schools by the end of Key Stage 3.

3. Examining the National Curriculum test results for 1999 by subject, attainment in mathematics was above average compared with the country as a whole. The indications are that they were almost a term ahead of other pupils of a similar age nationally. Their attainment was average compared with pupils in similar schools. Over the last three years, attainment has been consistently above the national levels. In English, attainment was also above the national average and the pupils were, overall, one and a half terms ahead of pupils of their age nationally. Again, these high levels of performance have been sustained over the past three years and, compared with those of pupils in similar schools, they are above average. In science, pupils' performance was above average and exceeded expectations for pupils of their age by about a third of a term. This was slightly less than in previous years. The results were in line with those in similar schools.

4. The findings of the inspection support the levels of attainment in the core subjects indicated by last year's end of Key Stage 3 test results, except that attainment in science is closer to average than above. The pupils have above average skills in investigative science, but are average in their knowledge and understanding of scientific concepts. In the other subjects of the curriculum, performance ranges from being in line with expectations to being well above. The highest attainment is in geography, where it is well above that expected for pupils of this age. Overall, they reach above average standards in physical education, especially in games; French; German, especially in speaking skills; and drama, where they work well together to explore issues in small group work. They also attain standards above those expected for their age in music, where their skills develop well; religious education, where good teaching leads to good attainment in many aspects of the Agreed Syllabus; and history, where they explore historical concepts confidently and articulately.

5. In art, design and technology and information technology, pupils achieve the expected levels for their age at the end of Key Stage 3. There are no subjects in which their attainment is below average.

## Key Stage 4

6. Attainment at GCSE, measured by the average point score per candidate, has risen since the last report more quickly than the average nationally. Even more significant has been the rise in the proportion of pupils who pass five or more grades A\* to C. In 1996, the year of the last report, this was 52 per cent. By 1999, it had risen to 63.4 per cent. This is well above the national average, which is currently 46.3 per cent and is above that of similar schools. This represents very good achievement for the pupils in the cohort which took the examinations in 1999, because their attainment on entry was slightly below the national average and has risen significantly.

7. Girls attain more highly than boys overall, as is the case across the country, but boys' attainment in this school is well above the national average for boys and this has been sustained over the past four years. This is a significant improvement on the situation reported in the last inspection, when the inspection team believed that boys were under-attaining compared with girls. Recognising that boys' results in tests and examinations were relatively disappointing, the school put in place a number of successful initiatives to make the curriculum more attractive and relevant to boys.

8. GCSE results were above the national average in every subject except history, where they were disappointing, being 26 per cent below the national average for A\* to C grades. Many subjects had significant successes at GCSE. Business studies attained an A\* to C pass rate 31 per cent above the national average. Results in geography were 29 per cent above average, information technology 21 per cent above average and French 18 per cent above average with a high entry of 101 pupils. English literature attained a 72.3 per cent pass rate at A\* to C, significantly above the national rate of just under 60 per cent, with almost all pupils in the cohort entered. Overall, boys were most successful in information technology, French and German ; they did least well in history. Girls attained best in information technology and English literature; they also did least well in history. Overall, the pass rate for pupils attaining five or more GCSE grades A\* to G, 94.3 per cent was above the national average of 90.7 per cent and close to that in similar schools.

9. The finding of the inspection is that attainment in English at the end of Key Stage 4 is above average in speaking and listening, reading and writing. Pupils are particularly articulate and fluent, and can address adults appropriately in standard English. All pupils listen well. Reading skills are above average and pupils are adept at using books and information technology to access information. Writing skills are generally above average, but there is a significant proportion of lower-attaining pupils who have difficulty writing accurately, without punctuation and spelling mistakes. Attainment is well above average in English literature. Pupils read with understanding and express their ideas about fiction very well, both orally and in writing. They have made good progress in English over both key stages.

10. Attainment in mathematics is above average at the end of Year 11. High attainers achieve particularly well, taking GCSE mathematics at the end of Year 10 and preparing for A Level mathematics by taking a GCSE course in statistics in Year 11. All pupils make good

progress through the school in developing numeracy skills. Pupils are prepared well for the GCSE examination in science and so make good progress in all aspects of it through Key Stage 4. Attainment is above average at the end of Key Stage 4.

11. There is a small group of subjects in which attainment is outstanding. Attainment in geography is high, with pupils showing particularly good knowledge and skills across all the aspects of the subject tested by the GCSE examination. Attainment is well above average in information technology and business studies. Pupils also attain standards well above average in music, where composition is a particular strength and religious education, in which their skills are highly developed. They make particularly good progress in all these subjects, mainly because the challenging and sometimes inspirational teaching increases the pupils' interest and commitment, so that they work hard to attain the high expectations their teachers have of them.

12. Attainment is above the average for Year 11 pupils in almost all other subjects, the result of good teaching and the good, positive attitudes to learning that the school generates in almost all its pupils. They attain well in physical education, especially in games skills, and in drama, where they excel in a wide range of aspects of the subject. In modern languages, the higher attaining pupils attain high levels of competence in using and understanding French or German and a particular strength is their ability to write at length in the target language. There are strengths in attainment in art, especially in drawing skills. The ability to comment critically on art is less well developed and attainment is close to average overall.

13. In two subjects, attainment is below average. In history, pupils are not prepared well for the examination and so are not able to convert the skills they have acquired into good examination answers. In design and technology, design skills are not developed well and so pupils are under-attaining.

14. Almost all parents who responded to the questionnaire believe that pupils make good progress at the school and the inspection finds this to be true. Over their whole time in the school, for example, pupils make good progress in English and in the development of their literacy skills. This is in large part due to the hard work of the English department, where teachers work skilfully to develop reading and writing skills. Drama provides good additional opportunities to develop a spoken vocabulary that pupils can transfer to their written work. Most subjects teach pupils the specialist vocabulary they need to succeed in their work and help them to express themselves better. There is a good awareness of the importance of literacy across the school, and overall it is developed well.

15. Pupils make satisfactory progress in the development of numeracy skills in both key stages. Developments in the curriculum and improvements in teaching have been concentrated on literacy in the school as a whole. Numeracy, therefore, is mainly the province of the mathematics department, where it is developed well. Some effective work is done in music, but raising awareness of numeracy as a cross-curricular issue is planned over the next few months.

16. Pupils with special educational needs are supported very well in their learning across the curriculum and make good progress. They attain standards that are good in relation to their prior attainment and a significant proportion come off the special educational needs register during their time at the school. Pupils with English as an additional language also make good progress as a result of good provision. The support teaching, especially for pupils who come from Japan, and the very effective mentoring system enable them to grow quickly in confidence and competence in speaking, reading and writing English. A significant proportion enters the school with little or no experience of English and leave reasonably fluent in the language and successful in GCSE examinations.

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

17. The pupils at Bradon Forest enjoy their schooling and almost all arrive in good time, eager to start the day. The very positive attitudes to work found at the time of the previous inspection are still much in evidence and the analysis of the parents' questionnaire returns shows that almost all believe that the school promotes good behaviour effectively. In both key stages, pupils settle quickly, listen carefully and show great interest and enthusiasm for what the school has to offer. They apply themselves assiduously, taking pride in their presentation. Their orderly demeanour, in all but a very few lessons, is conducive to learning. The examples seen of less satisfactory behaviour reflected teaching that lacked pace or stimulus.

18. Many examples were seen of lessons where the response of the pupils was excellent, because of their enthusiasm, excellent behaviour and their desire to succeed. Altogether, excellent attitudes were observed by inspectors in 12 per cent of lessons and very good attitudes in a further twenty per cent. The overall impression is of pupils who concentrate well, persevere with their work and show much confidence in their contribution to discussion. As they move through the school, they assume greater responsibility for their learning and for the organisation of their work. Levels of motivation are high and pupils appreciate the challenge, pace and variety of lessons. A particular strength is the positive way in which boys approach their learning. Unlike the picture nationally, boys' attitudes are as positive in lessons as those of girls. This has a very positive effect on the attainment of boys, as does the emphasis on very positive attitudes throughout the school from almost all pupils, irrespective of gender or ability.

19. Another factor that leads to high attainment amongst pupils is the good behaviour that allows them to be taught in a good environment for learning. About the school, pupils' behaviour is almost always good, often very good, creating a calm and civilised environment, in which all can work hard without fear of distracting or oppressive behaviour. They move about the school in an orderly way, mix easily with their peers and with adults, and they progress purposefully to their classrooms to ensure a prompt start to lessons. Almost all pupils show in their demeanour that they recognise the high expectations of the school and respond in a mature and responsible way. They know the school rules and respect them. Throughout the school, pupils show respect for the premises and for property. Materials and equipment, whether belonging to pupils or to the school, are handled with care. There are good levels of self-discipline. Pupils show consideration and good manners, holding open doors, offering precedence and being very quick to help and support anyone having difficulties. The good manners extend to the dining hall, where there is a relaxed, social environment. Pupils show good social skills, by a commendable readiness to share their table



and converse with visitors, for example. Lunchtimes are staggered, so that pupils are outside or in the school enjoying a lunch break whilst the other half of the school is having lessons. Those having their break are considerate and their behaviour rarely has any effect on the learning and teaching that happens around them.

20. There were no permanent exclusions in the year prior to the inspection. There were ten fixed period exclusions, which is an increase on the number found at the time of the previous inspection, but it is below the average for schools of similar size nationally. The exclusions procedure is used properly and appropriately.

21. Relationships at all levels are excellent and are a particular strength of the school. Teachers and other members of staff work particularly well as a team and, in their commitment to high standards and their concern for others, they set a good example to those in their charge. Pupils hold their teachers in high regard and react well to the examples they set. They show courtesy to their peers and collaborate effectively in their academic, sporting and social activities. They share resources unselfishly, listen to other viewpoints sympathetically and show warm appreciation for the efforts of others.

22. Pupils make very good progress in their personal development. When they join the school they quickly learn to take responsibility for their own actions. As they move through the school they acquire an increasingly mature understanding of the nature of good citizenship and the challenge and opportunities that stem from the rich diversity of beliefs, attitudes and cultural traditions to be found in the wider society. They are keen to assume responsibility for their own learning and readily volunteer to take an active part in the life of the school. Many pupils give very positive support to the school community by taking responsibilities as prefects and monitors, or by representing their colleagues on the school council. Others help to raise funds for charitable causes, assist younger or less assured colleagues with their reading or occasionally provide classroom support for pupils visiting from other schools. In these, and many other ways, pupils contribute in a very positive way to the strong sense of community that characterises the school. Good attitudes were praised in the last report; these have been maintained and even improved.

23. Levels of attendance in the school continue to be good, comparing favourably with those for other schools nationally. There is very little unauthorised absence. Most pupils arrive punctually, enabling a prompt start to be made to lessons.

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

24. At the time of the last report there was a relatively high proportion of unsatisfactory teaching. It was found to be less than satisfactory in 17 per cent of lessons. Teaching was good or very good in 43 per cent of lessons and some examples of good teaching were seen in most subject areas. Significant weaknesses in teaching were identified as low expectations and a lack of challenge across the ability range. Planning was weak, with insufficient regard to pace and the matching of work to the needs of pupils. Significant numbers of lessons were affected by the poor subject knowledge of the teachers.

25. The school has made very good progress in addressing the issues raised, and is well placed to continue to improve in future. The senior management team has put in place an

impressive programme of lesson observations and meetings with middle managers aimed at improving the quality of teaching and learning across the school. A considerable amount of professional development has been carried out across the school and the improvement of teaching and learning strategies has been the main thrust of development over the past two years. Outside expertise has been bought in where necessary to support departments where it was considered to be beneficial, and intensive support has been provided for teachers who were recognised to be struggling with any aspect of their role.

26. As a result, there is now very little unsatisfactory teaching in the school. Teaching is satisfactory or better in 96 per cent of lessons. A relatively high proportion of teaching is very good or excellent compared with the last report: almost thirty per cent of teaching falls into this category. Whereas 43 per cent of teaching was good or better at the time of the last report, the proportion is now almost 70 per cent, with 28 per cent of teaching being very good or excellent. Although the very few instances of unsatisfactory teaching are in Key Stage 4 rather than in Key Stage 3, the proportions of good and very good teaching are almost identical across the two key stages. Where there is unsatisfactory teaching, half is from temporary or supply staff. Teaching was described in the last report as a strength of the school. It is now a very significant strength and makes a major contribution to the quality of education and the standards attained.

27. Nevertheless, there are still some inconsistencies in approaches across departments and across teachers in departments, because the recommended strategies are not always implemented. A few teachers, for example, do not plan work to take account of the needs of all pupils in their classes. They do not set challenging enough tasks and their expectations are too low. It tends to happen that, in these lessons, relationships are less strong than they are elsewhere and class management is sometimes a weakness. In an unsatisfactory lesson with a Year 10 class, for example, the teacher did not insist that pupils concentrated on the task and so time was wasted in chatter that prevented progress being made. Pupils became bored as they waited to move on to the next task and this caused some inappropriate behaviour to develop. By the end of the lesson, the pupils had made little progress in their learning.

28. A feature of the better teaching is good subject knowledge that gives teachers the ability and confidence to extend and challenge even the most able pupils. In these lessons, teachers have positive relationships with their pupils. This leads to effective class control and an atmosphere of trust, in which pupils are able to share ideas and learn from their mistakes without being discouraged from trying hard in future. Teachers plan very effectively, setting clear learning objectives for the lesson. They share these objectives effectively with the pupils, so that they know what is expected, and revisit them at the end of the lesson to consolidate their learning. Lessons are structured so that skills and knowledge are built gradually and progressively over time. Resources are prepared to support lessons effectively. The pace of learning is brisk in the good lessons, and pupils are challenged appropriately. Those with lower attainment are supported in their learning, and the higher attainers are challenged and extended. Homework is used well to extend the learning opportunities in class; only rarely is homework to finish off the work being done.

29. There are many examples of excellent teaching that illustrate all of the above points. Excellent teaching of a Year 9 music class featured excellent control and management of class activity, very good awareness of pupils' individual strengths and weaknesses, and clear strategies for moving them forward. The teacher had very good subject knowledge and expertise and was able to play them examples on the piano to set very high expectations of what pupils might achieve, as well as illustrating the teaching points. In a similar example, this time a Year 8 German lesson, the teacher's excellent command of the subject and her expertise with the language meant that she was able to challenge all pupils, including the highest attainers. The class control was firm but friendly, creating an excellent environment for learning in which pupils worked and concentrated very well and felt able to make mistakes and learn from them. In both cases, a key element in the success of the lesson was the way in which the teacher made the lesson interesting and relevant to the pupils, so that they enjoyed being present and taking part. This fired their enthusiasm and led to excellent attitudes and learning skills. The pupils made excellent progress, sustained concentration throughout the lessons, thought for themselves and developed their ideas. They understood fully what they were doing and what was needed to improve their work further. These qualities were seen over and over again in all lessons in which good, very good or excellent teaching featured. The distinguishing factor between the different categories was the level of challenge and interest that the teacher generated. In the best lessons these were very high and the pupils were all the more involved and made even better progress as a result.

30. In lessons where teaching is satisfactory, there are many strengths that are consistent across almost all lessons. Teachers plan and prepare well so that the work is generally appropriate. It is organised so that pupils can begin work quickly and builds on what they have done and learnt previously. The aims of the lesson are shared with the pupils so that learning is not a 'secret garden' in the words of the school. In lessons that are good or better, the pupils know what the teachers want of them and how they can improve their work. The teachers have good class control and management, which ensure that there are no interruptions and pupils learn at a brisk pace. There are some relative weaknesses. In some lessons that are otherwise satisfactory or good, marking is somewhat superficial, with comments confined to praise for effort or neatness. In some sets of exercise books, there is a lack of comments that analyse the strengths and weaknesses in pupils' work, and clear guidelines on what to do to improve. The level of challenge in otherwise satisfactory lessons is generally appropriate for the whole class, but fails to take account of individual differences and needs.

31. Teaching is good in Key Stage 3 and very good in Key Stage 4 in English. The planning and organisation of lessons are areas of strength, and ensure that time is used effectively. In mathematics, there is good teaching in both key stages. It is thoroughly planned and classes are well managed, to ensure that there is a good learning environment. Teaching in science is good overall in Key Stage 3, characterised by good subject expertise. Teachers work well to encourage scientific thought from their pupils, with good use of questioning to promote understanding. It is satisfactory in Key Stage 4. Not all the high attainers are challenged sufficiently for them to make good progress.

32. The quality of teaching is a strength in many departments and makes a significant contribution to standards and the quality of learning. The teaching of music is exceptionally good; very good at Key Stage 3 and excellent for pupils in Years 10 and 11. Teaching is challenging and inspiring and pupils reach high standards as they respond to their teachers' high expectations. There is good teaching in Key Stage 3 and very good teaching in Key Stage 4 in both religious education and drama. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and plan very interesting lessons that stimulate the pupils to attain well. Very good teaching of media studies, characterised by enthusiasm and good subject knowledge, is leading to good learning in only the second year of the subject. Pupils are responding to the teacher's high expectations by working hard and taking great pride in the presentation of their work.

33. Teaching is good overall in both key stages in art, modern foreign languages and geography. In art, the aims are clear and teachers ensure that all pupils know what is expected of them and how to succeed. Positive use is made of praise and encouragement to build pupils' confidence and help them to succeed. Tasks are varied and interesting, which helps to motivate pupils. In French and German lessons, teachers' good knowledge and expertise, high expectations and good classroom management skills lead to pupils working hard and making good progress. Geography teaching is characterised by a good emphasis on the development of the skills necessary to succeed in the subject and good planning that ensures that all pupils are set work appropriate to their needs. As a result, all pupils learn at a good pace. Teaching is very good overall in media studies, information studies and business studies.

34. There are many instances of good and very good teaching elsewhere, but it is not always consistent. In physical education lessons in Key Stage 3, teaching is good, focused on developing the skills that pupils need to succeed in the subject. In Key Stage 4 there are examples of good teaching, but in some lessons there is insufficient emphasis on improving pupils' performance. Similarly in history, good subject knowledge and effective questioning in Key Stage 3 lead to good teaching and ensure that pupils master the necessary skills well, but progress slows in Key Stage 4 because of the slow pace of the lessons and the fact that not all pupils are covering work that is challenging enough for them. In design and technology, teaching is satisfactory overall in both key stages. The teachers are coping well with the recent bereavements that have had such a tragic effect on the department, but now need to focus on raising expectations and standards.

35. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language is very good, always planned effectively to help these pupils to meet the targets they have been set. The targets in their individual education plans are specific and the good use of assessment information by teachers helps them make progress. Class teachers are always made aware of the best teaching and learning strategies to enable pupils with special needs in their classes to succeed. Support assistants work well both with individuals and small groups. Those pupils who arrive from Japan with little or no knowledge of English are supported very effectively and the mentoring scheme, which partners them with another Japanese pupil who has had more experience of English, is very successful.

36. Overall, the high quality of teaching is a very significant strength of the school and is identified by parents as one of its best features. It leads in most lessons to pupils developing good, often very good, learning skills. They respond well to the expectations of them and work hard in class, concentrating well on their work and making considerable intellectual and, when appropriate, creative effort. The clear instructions they are given always ensure that they know what is expected of them. In the majority of lessons, teachers use assessment to help pupils improve, by ensuring that they know what they have to do to raise the level of their work. The school needs to ensure that this is true of all lessons.

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

### **The curriculum**

37. The school's curriculum is good at Key Stage 3. It is broad and balanced, providing a good range of subjects and meeting statutory requirements. In addition to studying the core subjects of the National Curriculum, all pupils study drama and an extensive programme of personal and social education. Information technology skills are taught very effectively through other subjects in the curriculum. All pupils in Year 7 study two modern foreign languages and then use this experience to make choices, some pupils opting to study only one of these languages from the beginning of Year 8.

38. The Key Stage 4 curriculum is unsatisfactory. It is broad, but not balanced. Although generally pupils have a good range of learning opportunities, there are two instances of the curriculum not meeting statutory requirements. In design and technology, pupils, other than approximately 40 opting for the subject at GCSE, do not study it, therefore statutory requirements are not being met. All pupils take the short course in GCSE religious studies to the end of Year 10 and succeed well in it, but, having covered the course in the Agreed Syllabus in Year 10, they are not taught religious studies in Year 11.

39. There are strengths in the Key Stage 4 curriculum in, for example, the breadth of option choice and the coverage of information and communication technology. Pupils also choose a course of studies from a wide range of options, with individual guidance from the school. There are arrangements to enable those pupils who wish to take more than one subject from the same group to do so: for example, pupils can study two expressive arts subject like music and drama, or two modern foreign languages. All pupils are taught information studies to GCSE level, and many take business studies also. The breadth of coverage and the range of skills the curriculum fosters, along with the range of option choices, contribute to the development of learning skills and the good progress that pupils make.

40. Provision for pupils' personal, social and health education is good. There is good provision for health and sex education and good drug awareness training. Pupils also follow an adequate careers education programme, part of which is included in their personal and social education lessons as a module of work. Pupils in Year 9 conduct a work-shadow exercise, and pupils in Year 10 follow a well-organised programme of work experience. Pupils in Year 11 take part in 'mock' interviews with representatives from local industry.

41. The curriculum benefits from strong links with other schools and colleges. For example, teachers go into local primary schools to share information about the curriculum and primary pupils come into the school to use its facilities, such as the library. Teachers from nearby post-16 colleges come into the school to talk to pupils and help them to prepare for their transition to the next phase of education.

42. The school ensures that pupils of all abilities have equal access to the curriculum. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good: a well-balanced programme of withdrawal and in-class support, appropriate to individual needs. There is good, specialist help for those pupils for whom English is an additional language. Curriculum planning takes account of the needs of more able pupils, who have the opportunity for more advanced study. In mathematics, for example, they take the GCSE examination early, allowing them, in Year 11, to progress to higher level courses, such as GCSE statistics, in preparation for 'A' level work. The grouping of pupils according to ability in many subjects ensures that they are challenged appropriately and so make good progress.

43. The curriculum is enriched by a good, wide range of additional activities. There are after-school lessons for pupils wishing to pursue extra subjects or avoid clashes in the curriculum. There is extensive provision for extra-curricular activities. For example, there is a good range of sports teams and clubs. The curriculum is enhanced further by inputs from the community. Musicians come into the school to teach, and a local business lends 'props' for drama productions. Another local company helps with colour photocopying. Visitors make a valuable contribution to religious education lessons. Parents of bilingual pupils sometimes come in to school to support them in preparing for examinations in their native, non-English language. Overall, even in those aspects of the curriculum that were criticised in the last report, and still have some shortcomings, there has been satisfactory improvement.

### **Personal development**

44. The school's provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is satisfactory overall.

45. The provision for the spiritual development of pupils has some weaknesses, however, and, despite areas of strength, is unsatisfactory. There is no central planning for the delivery of spiritual education; the curriculum provides too few opportunities for pupils to reflect on their own and others lives and the human condition. However, religious education teaching makes a significant contribution; spiritual matters are regularly considered in lessons and provision is very good. Art also makes a valuable contribution, encouraging pupils to wonder and to seek spiritual meaning and insight beyond the material. Music, English, drama and information technology make less significant but still satisfactory contributions. However, there is little provision in other areas of the curriculum, such as mathematics, science and geography and nowhere is it planned, arising rather out of inspired teaching than as any result of school or departmental policy. The acts of collective worship are too few in number and generally lack spiritual elements, although there are intermittent references to religious beliefs and occasional moments for reflection. Religious education teaching ends in Year 10. There is little evidence that spiritual issues are addressed in tutor periods and there is little provision in the personal and social education programme. Overall, the school's provision for pupils' spiritual development is unsatisfactory and shows little improvement on the last inspection.

46. Assemblies do make a strong contribution to the framework of moral values that clearly permeate the school. Provision for moral education is very good. The school's charter for acceptable behaviour, with its emphasis on consideration and respect, is a positive influence. Both the philosophy of the student support and development team and the planning and delivery of personal and social education make a strong contribution to moral development. A number of curriculum areas make significant contributions. Religious education tackles significant moral issues like prejudices; geography lessons regularly consider the moral issues arising from inequities in world development; physical education, with its emphasis on fair play gives practical examples of what is right and wrong. English explores moral issues such as slavery and parental responsibility through the study of texts. Teachers themselves are good role models and are invariably calm and reasonable in their dealings with pupils.

47. The provision for the social development of pupils is also very good. Pupils relate very well to one another and all staff, both teachers and non-teachers. When appropriate, they help each other with work, as a matter of course. There is a strong sense of community, which pervades the school. Pupils are required to be considerate to the needs of others and they respond well. This is exemplified during the staggered lunch hour. There is no disruption during this time, despite the fact that pupils have free access to many empty classrooms and corridor areas. Group activities in physical education, and good links with local sports clubs do much to encourage the development of social skills and drama helps to develop skills of teamwork and co-operation. Music provides good opportunities for social development in lessons, as do personal and social education and religious education. The parents questioned were almost all pleased with the attitudes and values that the school fosters in their children.

48. The school makes good provision for teaching pupils to appreciate their own and other cultural traditions. Drama, dance, music, modern foreign languages and art all make significant contributions in this area. Science teaching, notably, provides a good example, with competitions to design a cover for the departmental handbook and a poetry competition. In English, particularly in Key Stage 4, pupils read a wide range of texts from authors representing our own and other cultures, comparing styles and themes. The library gives pupils access to writing from other heritages. Pupils make visits to art galleries, museums and places of geographical and historical interest. Both the physical education and modern foreign languages departments organise trips abroad. There is also a Classical Greece trip and international exchanges to the USA and Israel.

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

49. The high level of pastoral care that was the subject of comment in the previous inspection is still a marked feature of school. The recent strategy to draw together pastoral and academic development through a broader role for the Student Support and Development Team and an emphasis on tutor involvement in the learning process has led to many fruitful initiatives. These include an evaluation and extension of the behaviour policy, the identification and mentoring of underachievers and the introduction of Key Stage 3 monitors

to assist in the daily routines of school life. The excellent relationships that characterise the school help to build pupils' self esteem and give them confidence that they will get sympathy and understanding with any problems. As a result, teachers get to know their pupils very well and are able to offer very constructive support, both academically and personally. Almost all parents questioned believe that the school is caring and supportive.

50. Governors have an effective health and safety policy and appropriate procedures to monitor risks on a day to basis. The concern expressed in the previous inspection report about unhygienic conditions for food technology lessons has been resolved by the provision of improved accommodation. Fire and electrical equipment is regularly checked and there is an efficient system for reporting, recording and investigating accidents. Heads of department are sensitive to safety issues and generally ensure that good practice is carried out in their curriculum areas.

51. The school complies fully with the procedures adopted by the Area Child Protection Committee and the designated person has received appropriate training to equip him for his role. Written guidance is readily available for teachers, but there has been no recent training for all staff to maintain and update their knowledge and understanding of procedures.

52. The behaviour policy has been extensively reviewed in consultation with all members of the school community. It is particularly effective because of the emphasis it places on the rights and responsibilities of each pupil and because it incorporates a whole school charter for acceptable, polite and courteous, behaviour. Equally effective is the anti-bullying charter that makes explicit the responsibilities of pupils, parents and staff in helping to eliminate oppressive behaviour.

53. The importance of regular attendance is stressed in the documentation for parents, who report that the school is quick to follow up non-attendance and rightly reluctant to condone family holidays in term-time. Teachers maintain the registers with care and both attendance and punctuality are carefully monitored. Any unauthorised absence is properly investigated with the support of the Education Welfare Officer. The school has introduced an award system to encourage higher levels of attendance and this is proving to be effective.

54. A revised policy on assessment has been developed, following criticism in the previous inspection report about a lack of consistency. The school's very methodical approach to assessment is set out in a handbook that is admirably clear and explicit in its objectives and procedures. Assessment procedures assist pupils of all abilities to make better progress. They ensure, in those subject areas that have implemented it fully, that all pupils have the information they need to know at what standard they are working and how to improve their work.

55. The quality of assessment is good. Teachers know the relative strengths and weaknesses of their pupils very well. They make increasing use of the results of assessment to inform their planning and teaching. Evidence of good practice was seen particularly in modern foreign languages, physical education and information and communication technology, but this is not the case in all departments. Some heads of department, notably English and geography, monitor pupils' attainment well and this contributes to improved teaching and learning; in other departments this is not the case.



56. Cognitive ability tests are used well to track pupils' progress through Key Stage 3, and on into Key Stage 4. In this key stage, pupils are informed of their projected GCSE grades and are very carefully monitored to make sure they are working at the levels indicated by their prior attainment. Any slippage is quickly identified and pupils are given individual support to help them to make up ground lost. The school's good examination results bear witness to the success of this strategy. Assessment and recording practices for pupils with special educational needs are detailed and constructive; very good use is made of individual educational plans.

57. Throughout their time at Bradon Forest, the school cares for its pupils very well. Induction procedures for pupils arriving from primary schools are, from a personal and social point of view, exemplary. The curricular links are generally good, but there is scope to extend them further, and the teachers who make up a permanent Year 7 team are already exploring ways of doing this. There is a progressive social and health education programme, which is effective in building pupils' self-confidence and in raising their awareness about healthy and safe living. As they move through the school, pupils are given many opportunities to exercise initiative and responsibility in their own learning and in the daily life of the school. All relevant statutory requirements are met. Pupils work in a safe environment and leave the school with a comprehensive Record of Achievement. Academically and personally, they are very well prepared for the next stage of their education.

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

58. Parents have a very positive view of Bradon Forest School. There was a high rate of response to the parents' questionnaire and the great majority of those who expressed views consider that their children like school, are well taught, make good progress, are expected to work hard and are helped to become mature and responsible. Most parents also indicated that teachers are very approachable and keep them well informed of their children's progress. There is much evidence to confirm the positive views of the parents.

59. The concerns expressed by a minority of parents all revolve around the quality of information provided for them, and reflect differing expectations. It is a stated aim of the school to work co-operatively with parents and there is a variety of ways in which the teachers seek to do so. Particularly impressive is the resource and commitment shown in planning and implementing the transfer of pupils from primary schools, taking full account of parental concerns as well as the pastoral and academic needs of pupils. Once pupils are established there is a well-structured procedure to inform parents about progress: a tutor-parent evening in the autumn to discuss general progress; a subject-parent evening in the spring to discuss attainment in specific areas, and a formal written report in the summer. These reports are of good quality. They are written in accordance with a clear, whole-school policy. They identify attainment in some detail, with reference to the course studied, and achievement in the context of the particular pupil. They also set targets for future learning. At appropriate stages of a pupil's education, there are additional parents' evenings to discuss, for example, how Year 7 pupils have settled, or what the implications are for subject options in Year 9. To those who are able to take advantage of them, these are fruitful occasions for parents to learn more about the curriculum and about the opportunities that are made for their children. For parents of pupils with special educational needs or for whom English is an additional language, the school is at pains to ensure that additional information and support is available in whatever

format is most useful and accessible. Overall, in relation to information for parents about the school's educational and personal provision for their children, the school gives a good and effective service that supports their attainment and progress.

60. Separate homework guidelines are produced annually for each year group, to make clear to pupils and parents the expectations for each subject. Despite the efforts of the school, however, there is clearly a problem with communications about homework and this is associated with some inconsistency in practice. Parents have been advised about the policy and are aware that the homework planners are intended to be an effective means of indicating what homework is required at any given time. Unfortunately, whilst the planners are used well by some, they are not always checked by tutors and some teachers do not follow the guidelines. Parents support their children effectively in many ways, showing great interest in the school and providing encouragement, facilities, and often transport to assist their involvement in events and activities. The school is aware of the need to make the timetable for homework, and the expectations of pupils, even clearer to parents and of the need to monitor more effectively in order to ensure that there is a more consistent practice across the school.

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

61. The last report noted that the school had an effective senior management team and a supportive governing body. There were criticisms, however, of school development planning and of the link between the process of planning for whole school development and that in subject departments. Statutory requirements were not being met for the provision of a daily act of collective worship for all and for the teaching of religious education in Key Stage 4.

62. Good progress has been made. Development planning is now good. It has been improved in departments and the school as a whole for a number of reasons. Effective management and leadership have led to improved communication with all members of staff, but especially with middle managers. This ensures that there is common understanding of whole-school aims and values. Effective professional development has ensured an agreed and consistent approach to the process of planning. The school still does not meet the statutory requirements indicated in the last report, but considerable progress has been made. Religious education is taught in Key Stage 4 to Year 10 to a very high standard and all pupils are entered for GCSE with considerable success. *A Thought for the Week* has been introduced to supplement the weekly assembly for each year group. The governing body has decided not to implement the statutory requirement for an act of collective worship for all every day. It does not believe that the school can provide this because of a shortage of accommodation large enough to take a whole year group. The spiritual development of pupils, a weakness in the last report, is unsatisfactory overall, partly as a result of this and partly because of insufficient planning for it across subjects. There have been other priorities in school development planning, but it is now time to address this issue. In addition, the school is not providing teaching of design and technology for all pupils in Key Stage 4, as it is required to do. It has not been possible to implement this in the current year because of staffing difficulties beyond the school's control. Plans are well advanced to meet requirements in the next academic year.

63. The quality of leadership is good overall. A new headteacher was appointed in 1997, and he, along with the rest of the senior management team, is providing very good leadership

in setting out a clear educational direction for the work of the school. He quickly analysed the strengths and weaknesses of the school and was instrumental in focusing professional development on the improvement of teaching and learning strategies and the raising of the expectations that teachers had of their pupils, in order to raise standards. The sharpened focus by senior management on the purpose of lessons has introduced more rigour into the work of most teachers.

64. There are systems newly in place for the monitoring and evaluation of teaching and curriculum development. At a senior management team level, these are rigorous and effective. The governing body is also involved. Governors are linked to departments and visit the school to attend departmental meetings and to observe lessons. The monitoring role of the governing body is developing well, but is still at a relatively early stage of its development. It needs to be more formalised. Some governors have adapted to this role well, but some are still growing into it. The effectiveness of the monitoring process is evident in the considerable improvements in teaching, learning and standards since the last report. It has led to increased consistency in lesson planning and delivery, as well as more consistent implementation of school policies for teaching and learning. Teachers are aware of the criteria that are being used to monitor the quality of their work in the classroom. The criteria for success are shared, and include all the characteristics of effective teaching, such as appropriate pace and the effective use of formative assessment to help pupils improve their work. In some departments, especially English, religious education and music, the clearer view that pupils now have of where they are in their learning and how to succeed has raised their sights, and enabled them to make progress at a more rapid rate. Not all teachers have a clear understanding of this approach and the next step for the school is to ensure that it is implemented more consistently across all departments. The inconsistencies tend to be in departments where there has not been regular monitoring of teaching by middle managers to support the work of the senior management team. Where heads of department are teaching at the same time as the rest of their teachers, they need to find ways of monitoring teachers' work without the need to observe them directly. This could be through regular scrutiny of exercise books, for example, and team teaching, in order to be aware of strengths and weaknesses in their departments and to share best practice.

65. Governors are supportive. Most know the school well and give readily of their time. They liaise effectively with the senior management team and participate in the setting of the school development plan as well as the budget, and seek to link the two effectively. The finance group helps to monitor the budget, and has begun to monitor the effectiveness of major budget decisions. Some of the governors have specific strengths and skills to bring to their work, and overall the governors fulfil their role well.

66. Heads of department and the heads of key stages provide very effective leadership, giving clear direction to the work of teachers in their charge. Policies and schemes of work provide good guidance for their work. The organisation and administration of departments and year teams are generally areas of strength and help to ensure that the work of the school runs smoothly. Overall, there is a good ethos and a commitment to high achievement, but it is not consistent in every department or classroom.

67. The management of provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good and the management of the teaching of pupils for whom English is an additional language is also good. The special educational needs policy meets the requirements of the Code of Practice.

The register of special educational needs is accurate, and the records of identified pupils are well kept. Statutory requirements for pupils with statements of special educational needs are fully met. Pupils on the register have individual education plans, drawn up well, with very appropriate targets that are set and reviewed regularly. Equality of opportunity is implicit in the schools' ethos and in the documentation of most departments, indicating an awareness of the need to provide equality of opportunity for all. The performance of pupils in tests and examinations is monitored by gender and the tutorial program offers pupils the opportunity to consider issues relating to self-esteem, stereotyping and prejudice.

68. The very good and very effective leadership of the headteacher and the senior management team is the principal reason for the school's success and for the rapid improvements that have been made. The headteacher is very well qualified in educational management and is combining his experience and management theory very skilfully to provide management and direction. The management style is an inclusive one, allowing all a share in the decision-making process. The loyalty and commitment shown by all staff support the management of the school and ensure that it is well placed to continue to improve.

## **Finance**

69. The school budgets systematically and well for all expenditure. The senior management team and the Governing Body allocate major funding decisions according to the priorities outlined in the School Development Plan and always seek best value in the allocation of contracts. Their experience as a grant maintained school is serving them well in their application of the principles of best value. Middle managers have responsibility for their own budgets and similarly seek to maximise the value they can get from their funding in terms of the effectiveness of the resources they purchase. Overall, the quality of educational provision has benefited from the wise and careful management of the budget. Funds have been allocated successfully to areas of educational priority. These have proved to be successful in raising standards and the quality of educational experience for pupils. The improvements in information technology resources, for example, have helped to raise standards in that subject area by enabling more departments to have access to a wider range of more modern resources. The decision to use building grants to improve provision across the school, rather than for one new teaching block has meant that the school as a whole has become a more attractive and better leaning environment. The quality and rigour of financial management is excellent: the last auditors' report was very positive.

70. The school makes effective use of new technology. It is used well for administration and in many subject areas. Special grants, for educating pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language, for example, are used appropriately. There is regular review of the effectiveness of spending decisions by the senior management team and, informally, by governors. Overall, taking account of the progress made by pupils, the quality of teaching, the very good personal development of pupils and the relatively high costs of the school, value for money is good.

## **Staffing, accommodation and learning resources**

71. Accommodation in the school is satisfactory. The site is large and looks out to open countryside. There is a welcoming entrance area for visitors. The main hall is large, but is used for dining and physical education. Department rooms are grouped together which helps provide cohesion and efficient use of resources. A suite of six information and communication technology rooms provide a comprehensive service to departments, and the new large library and learning centre is well organised. Most departments have rooms of good size, especially English, geography, music and science. Displays are often of high standard both within rooms and along corridors. Some rooms are a little cramped for the size of class, for example those used for mathematics. Workshops in the technology area, apart from home economics, are dated, with little storage space and a lack of clean areas for design work. Facilities for drama are very good, with two large, purpose built studios with lighting and sound equipment.

72. Outdoor facilities for physical education are good, with appropriate sports pitches and several very good tennis courts. However, inside facilities are unsatisfactory. The hall and another large room are used for indoor sports, but both are cluttered with stacked furniture, and often, in the afternoon, there are remnants from lunchtime use. Changing facilities are poor and the standard of cleanliness in these rooms is unsatisfactory.

73. Learning resources are good in most departments. In particular, the equipment for drama, lighting and sound, is modern and extensive. The art department has good facilities, including computers with scanners and a good link with a photocopying company. Resources for information technology are good in the school, the central facilities being extensive, with a variety of appropriate software. Overall in the school, the ratio of computers to pupils is slightly above the national average. However, not all departments have easy access to the equipment and this affects standards in some areas. In music, there are difficulties in teaching the full programme of study to all pupils at Key Stage 3 because of a lack of appropriate software and of training in its use. A programme of continuous improvement in information technology resources, using specific grant funding, is in hand. There is an adequate supply of textbooks, overall. The library is well stocked with a variety of books, including a range of reference books, CD ROMS, and video resources.

74. The school has sufficient, appropriately qualified teachers to meet curriculum needs, except in design and technology, where a new appointment has just been made. The professional development is thorough and well organised and includes a continuing programme of appraisal of teachers. The support for newly qualified teachers is good. There are adequate learning support assistants, appropriately trained, and they give good levels of support, as do the clerical and administrative staffs. All other adults who work in the school, including technicians and the site manager, make a valuable contribution and help to ensure that the work of the school proceeds smoothly.

## WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

75. In order to continue to improve and to raise levels of attainment and the quality of education in the school, the governors, headteacher and teaching staff, with the support of the local education authority, should:

- spread to all departments the very good practice that exists in a small number for the monitoring of teaching and learning, and use the results to share and spread the best practice to improve teaching even further;  
*(Paragraphs: 27, 34, 36, 55, 64, 99, 100, 111, 140, 187 )*
- plan more effectively, through acts of collective worship and all subjects of the curriculum, for the spiritual development of pupils;  
*(Paragraphs:45, 62, 176)*
- meet all statutory requirements, including those for:
  - \* a daily act of collective worship for all pupils;
  - \* the teaching of religious education throughout Key Stage 4;
  - \* the opportunity for all pupils to study design and technology in Key Stage 4.
  - \* *(Paragraphs:38, 45, 62, 127, 199)*

76. Other areas of weakness which have been noted by the inspection team that the governors may wish to include in their action plan, but not picked out as key issues are:

- attainment in science at the end of Key Stage 3. It is close to average, but the school needs to continue to monitor and support teaching and place more emphasis on increasing pupils' factual knowledge in order to raise attainment to the levels which are achieved in English and mathematics;  
*(Paragraphs:3, 4, 103)*
- the quality of the indoor accommodation for physical education, because a shortage of facilities can affect the range of physical education teaching in inclement weather, and the resourcing of design and technology and music;  
*(Paragraphs:72, 187)*

- the need to ensure that the strategies for marking and assessment identified in school policies are implemented consistently across the school and that assessment information is used to ensure that all pupils are set appropriate work. There has been significant improvement since the last report, but, even so, a small number of teachers are not following school guidelines fully;  
*(Paragraphs:30, 55, 64, 108, 132, 163)*
- attainment in history at Key Stage 4;  
*(Paragraphs:8, 13, 34, 134, 139 )*
- attainment in design and technology in Key Stage 4, especially in design and making skills.  
*(Paragraphs:13, 34, 118, 119, 121, 122)*

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	156
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	41

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

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
8	20	40	30	3	0.6	0

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

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

<b>Pupils on the school's roll</b>	<b>Y7–Y11</b>
Number of pupils on the school's roll	1096
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	46

<b>Special educational needs</b>	<b>Y7–Y11</b>
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	27
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	148

<b>English as an additional language</b>	<b>No of pupils</b>
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	37

<b>Pupil mobility in the last school year</b>	<b>No of pupils</b>
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	19
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	24



### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

	%
School data	7.7
National comparative data	7.9

#### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.1
National comparative data	1.1

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

### Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	97	103	200

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 5 and above	Boys	73	71	59
	Girls	89	66	53
	Total	162	137	112
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	School	81	69	57
	National	63	62	55
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 6 or above	School	33	38	23
	National	28	38	23

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 5 and above	Boys	67	72	69
	Girls	86	72	68
	Total	153	144	137
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	School	77	72	69
	National	64	64	60
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 6 or above	School	27	43	36
	National	31	37	28

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

### Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4

Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year	<b>Year</b>	<b>Boys</b>	<b>Girls</b>	<b>Total</b>
	1999	102	89	191

<b>GCSE results</b>		<b>5 or more grades A* to C</b>	<b>5 or more grades A*-G</b>	<b>1 or more grades A*-G</b>
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	62	95	99
	Girls	59	86	87
	Total	121	181	186
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	63	95	97
	National	46.3	90.7	95.7

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

<b>GCSE results</b>		<b>GCSE point score</b>
Average point score per pupil	School	44
	National	37.8

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

### Ethnic background of pupils

	<b>No of pupils</b>
Black – Caribbean heritage	2
Black – African heritage	2
Black – other	3
Indian	9
Pakistani	1
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	2
White	991
Any other minority ethnic group	14

### Exclusions in the last school year

	<b>Fixed period</b>	<b>Permanent</b>
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	10	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

### *Teachers and classes*

#### **Qualified teachers and classes:**

##### **Y 7 - Y 11**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	58.7
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	18.7

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

#### **Education support staff:**

##### **Y 7 - Y11**

Total number of education support staff	17
Total aggregate hours worked per week	362

#### **Deployment of teachers:**

##### **Y 7 - Y11**

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	78
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#### **Average teaching group size:**

##### **Y 7 - Y11**

Key Stage 3	28
Key Stage 4	22

### *Financial information*

Financial year	<b>1998-1999</b>
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	<b>£</b>
Total income	2437726.00
Total expenditure	2442219.00
Expenditure per pupil	2356.00
Balance brought forward from previous year	212890.00
Balance carried forward to next year	208397.00

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

### **Questionnaire return rate**

Number of questionnaires sent out	1096
Number of questionnaires returned	556

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

	<b>Strongly agree</b>	<b>Tend to agree</b>	<b>Tend to disagree</b>	<b>Strongly disagree</b>	<b>Don't know</b>
My child likes school.	35.0	55.0	8.0	1.0	1.0
My child is making good progress in school.	41.0	54.0	4.0	0	2.0
Behaviour in the school is good.	22.0	64.0	8.0	1.0	5.0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	19.0	60.0	15.0	3.0	2.0
The teaching is good.	30.0	64.0	2.0	0	4.0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	26.0	56.0	13.0	3.0	2.0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	47.0	44.0	6.0	1.0	2.0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	51.0	46.0	2.0	0	1.0
The school works closely with parents.	22.0	59.0	14.0	2.0	3.0
The school is well led and managed.	29.0	60.0	5.0	0	6.0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	32.0	59.0	5.0	1.0	3.0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	24.0	52.0	12.0	2.0	11.0

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

Some parents are concerned about the amount of homework that is set, because they believe it to be inconsistent, and others find it difficult to know what homework should be expected and when it is due. Not all find it easy to reach the school or find the parents' evenings helpful, and so do not feel that the school works closely with them. They would like more information, about problems with the school buses or about how their children are getting on at school.

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

### **ENGLISH**

77. Standards in English are good in all year groups and a consistently high standard has been maintained over a period of time. In the 1999 National Curriculum tests, pupils exceeded the national average for their age group, with 81 per cent of all pupils achieving Level 5 or above compared with the national average of 64 per cent. Fewer pupils than the school expected achieve the higher levels, though the proportion was still above the national average. The department is addressing this and inspection evidence confirms that the higher attaining pupils are now on course to achieve Level 7 as a result of new teaching and learning strategies. Overall, results are average in comparison with similar schools.

78. At the end of Key Stage 4, the GCSE results for both boys and girls in English and English literature are very good. In the 1999 English literature examinations, pupils achieved exceptionally high standards, with 22 per cent gaining the highest grades and 50.8 per cent achieving grades A\*-B. Pupils achieve better results in English literature than they do in English, but in English they are also well above average. Boys and girls perform almost equally well and boys make very good progress. Against the national trend, they respond well to English teaching and teachers are aware of the need to modify the curriculum on occasions in order to make the work relevant to their needs and interests.

79. Attainment on entry is broadly in line with the national average, and the finding of the inspection is that, at the end of both key stages, pupils achieve standards that are well above average, reflecting their high performance in external tests and examinations. Standards have improved since the previous inspection.

80. Pupils have very good oral skills and speak confidently and fluently. They are articulate and give sustained answers when answering questions. Boys make a significant contribution to oral work and are alert and adept at answering questions. Sometimes girls lack the level of spontaneity and confidence demonstrated by boys. Lower-attaining pupils and pupils with a special educational need have well developed oral skills that surpass their writing skills. Almost all pupils, except a small number mainly in Key Stage 3, are confident and adept when making oral presentations.

81. High attaining pupils in Year 9 listen attentively with concentration and show consideration for each other's point of view when taking part in discussion. Listening skills are very good and pupils listen to each other and adapt each other's suggestions to improve their work, as seen in a Year 7 lesson, where pupils engaged in a lively debate on rhythm in poetry. At the end of Key Stage 4, the high-attaining Year 11 pupils have very good presentation skills and a keen understanding and awareness of their audience when delivering reports. This was seen in the lesson where they used good critiquing skills to analyse a range of poems. Similar standards were seen when pupils explained clearly the techniques of persuasive writing after reading demanding articles in a broadsheet paper.

82. Reading skills are good in all year groups and almost all pupils read fluently and accurately, often with expression and good intonation. By the end of Key Stage 3, a minority of low-attaining pupils, including pupils the early stages of learning English as an additional language, read below the standard expected nationally. These pupils use de-coding skills appropriately and work well with the support staff and librarian to develop their reading skills.

83. The average-attaining pupils read in line with the standard expected nationally and have a good understanding of plot, characters and themes, as seen in their reading of *Twelfth Night*. Textual analysis is good and, throughout Key Stage 3, pupils show good engagement with texts normally reserved for Key Stage 4, such as *Animal Farm* and *Dulce et Decorum Est*. The many high-attaining pupils read with insight and understanding, commenting on the linguistic and structural features of texts accurately. In Key Stage 4, the higher-attaining pupils provide analytical interpretation of their reading, and in many instances, adapt an academic approach to their reading. Average-attaining pupils respond positively to literary texts. Pupils with a special educational need and those for whom English is an additional language make good progress when criticising literary texts, with a significant minority producing work that is at or close to a GCSE grade C.

84. Pupils write in a range of styles and for different audiences, and writing skills are good throughout both key stages. From Year 7, pupils begin to use the main processes of writing, planning, drafting and editing their work. Editing skills are, however, at a superficial level. They involve little more than the correction of some spelling mistakes for the lower- and some average-attaining pupils, many of whom are, as a result, not fully aware of their errors. In Key Stage 3, the high-attaining pupils write accurately, using an extensive vocabulary and complex sentences. By the end of both key stages, the lower-attaining pupils, including those with a special educational need, make good progress in developing their writing skills. Extended writing is more structured, but standards are below average because vocabulary is less sophisticated and pupils make errors in their use of basic grammatical features. Poor spelling is also a weakness in many pupils' work. In Key Stage 4, the high attaining-pupils write with great assurance. They write with precision, work is well structured and they have a good command of standard English. Comparative essays, as well as assignments on the media, are well handled. Presentation and handwriting are good and many pupils make good use of information and communications technology when presenting research work and polished essays.

85. One of the striking features of the department is the exemplary behaviour of many pupils in a significant number of lessons. The high standards of behaviour and positive attitudes of pupils contribute to their work. They accept and meet the set challenges. For example, in a Year 10 lesson, with high-attaining pupils, they were challenged to produce a human chain essay within a short time. The high level of co-operation with each other and their teacher resulted in the whole class producing the essay to a high standard. They apply themselves to their work, are motivated and keen to learn and do well. The older pupils in Year 10 and 11 are mature and work hard to the set goals. Relationships are exceptionally good and the mixed-gender seating arrangement works well. They co-operate well with each other listen to each other and these qualities have a positive impact on their work.

86. The quality of teaching is good in Key Stage 3, very good in Key Stage 4 and is occasionally excellent. Teachers are enthusiastic and knowledgeable about the subject they teach. Teaching and learning are good overall with some very good features. Pupils are well prepared for the National Curriculum test and the GCSE examinations. Teaching improves learning, as pupils are given clear guidelines and high quality resources to develop their learning. This was well illustrated in a Year 11 lesson with high-attaining pupils. Pupils were taken through the process of developing revision packs on the poetry section of their GCSE anthology. Pupils succeeded in completing the task to a high standard based on the notes and guidelines.

87. Expectations are always high and pupils are encouraged to meet the set challenges with set time constraints, as seen in a Year 11 lesson with low-attaining pupils, preparing teaching guides on various themes in *Of Mice and Men*. In the very best lessons, pupils are pushed to the limit and activities are well balanced and clear lesson outcomes are shared with pupils. A brisk pace is maintained in lessons and as a result, pupils get through a lot of work. Activities flow into each other, enabling pupils to see the progress they are making. Questions are used effectively to probe their knowledge and develop their oral skill, as they are required to explain and justify their opinions. Previous work is reviewed and there is a sharp focus on what pupils know and understand. Teachers draw effectively on pupils' reading skills by focusing on textual analysis and appreciation and, as a result, work on literature is a strength because pupils are confident when analysing literary texts.

88. Teachers use interesting resources and activities to stimulate pupils' imagination, activities are carefully selected and matched to the needs of pupils, and there is a good awareness of gender issues when selecting and using materials to interest boys. A lively interesting style and humour are used to stimulate pupils and relationships are good. In-class support is used effectively to support pupils with a special educational need. Marking is thorough and focuses on what pupils need to do to improve their work. Most teachers use assessment information well to target work appropriately for pupils. Small groups of pupils are not always set appropriate work in Key Stage 3 and this affects their progress. When this occurs they work at a slow pace and are unable to complete the set task.

89. A new head of department has brought a clear sense of leadership and direction to the department. Team effort characterises the running of the department and the clear aims for high achievement are seen in the year on year improvements in the test and examination results. The curriculum fully meets statutory requirements and provides pupils with a range of extra curricular activities and opportunities to develop their awareness of issues that affects their growth and development. The response to the last inspection report has been positive. Very good improvements have been made in developing procedures for assessing work at Key Stage 3 and monitoring teaching and learning. The procedures are now systematic and applied rigorously. The department still needs to integrate the use of information and communications technology into the schemes of work, and raise standards further by increasing the proportion of pupils achieving the highest grades in GCSE English and Level 7 in the National Curriculum tests. Target setting is in place but the monitoring and tracking of pupils' progress lack a sharp focus. The subject is a strength of the school.

## **LITERACY ACROSS THE CURRICULUM**

90. The skills of literacy are developed well in the school. Literacy skills are good, as a result of teachers' high expectations and the effective strategies to raise literacy skills that have been incorporated into schemes of work across the curriculum. Appropriate in-service training has taken place and the English and science departments take a leading role in promoting the developments.

91. Reading skills are good for almost all pupils. They read accurately with clear expression and understanding. They can select and use information and texts independently. Pupils are given the opportunity to read aloud and the recent 'paired reading' scheme, with Year 10 pupils mentoring Year 7 pupils with low reading scores, works well. These sessions contribute to raising standards in reading and have a positive impact on developing pupils' social and personal skills.

92. Standards of writing are good in both key stages and pupils write for a range of purposes and audiences. In science, extended creative writing is promoted. For example, journalistic writing on flood disaster and journeying through the circulatory system is set in Key Stage 3. Pupils plan, draft, revise and edit their work and draft books are well used in geography. Most pupils produce legible handwriting and spell reasonably well in most subjects. However, there is inconsistency in marking, resulting in grammatical errors not being corrected. Spelling tests are used with the lower attaining pupils to reinforce key words in geography.

93. Although not strictly literacy, oral skills make a significant contribution to pupils' knowledge and use of language. Pupils have very good speaking and listening skills and make good use of them in most areas of the curriculum. Almost all are articulate and confident speakers, expressing their opinions, answering questions and taking a full part in discussion. In drama, pupils use role-play to develop their understanding of the subject. Overall, pupils draw on a range of oral skills when using talk to develop their learning. They can make deductions, analyse information and adapt their speech based on circumstances.

## **MATHEMATICS**

94. The pupils' results in the 1999 national tests at the end of Key Stage 3 were above national averages for all schools and in line with the figures for similar schools nationally. Both boys and girls achieved results above the national figures. The attainment seen in the current Year 9 exceeds the national expectations for pupils at the end of Key Stage 3. Several Year 9 classes were seen to be working at quadratic equations and the laws of indices, which is Level 8 of the National Curriculum.

95. The pupils' results in the 1999 GCSE examinations were above national averages, with almost 55 percent of pupils gaining A\* to C grades compared to about 45 percent nationally. In 1999 the overall achievement of girls was higher than that of boys for the first time in recent years; boys, however, gained a greater proportion of the very highest grades of A\* and A. The trend in attainment over time shows a rate of increase greater than that recorded nationally. The current standards in Year 11 indicate that these trends are likely to continue. One group of year 11 pupils took their GCSE mathematics examination at the end of Year 10



and all gained A\* to C grades. They are now confidently studying GCSE statistics to prepare them for 'A' Level work. There is also a group of mid-attaining pupils who took their GCSE examination in November 1999. A majority of these pupils gained B and C grades and they are now being supported in their study of other subjects at GCSE Level. These achievements are a credit to the school. There are two other talented pupils, one in Year 8 and one in Year 9, who will take their GCSE examinations this current year. These pupils were identified in their junior schools and the department has continued to support their rapid mathematical development.

96. Progress overall is good. All pupils have their numerical skills developed well from Year 7, with higher-attaining pupils developing their algebraic skills so that they can plot straight-line graphs. In Year 8 they can work confidently with factors, powers and indices and in Year 9 use and apply their knowledge of indices and percentages to confidently work problems involving compound interest. Average-attaining pupils develop their algebraic skills from Year 7 to include work on algebraic factors in Year 8 and extend this to work on simultaneous equations in Year 9. Lower attaining pupils use their number work in Year 7 to include angles and bearings; which is extended in Year 8 to consider factors, prime numbers and square numbers. In Year 9, this is further extended to include work involving decimals, fractions and percentages. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported and taught in small sets that benefit from effective in-class support. Pupils' progress is well monitored by regular testing and the use of ability grouping by prior attainment enables these pupils to be taught at a level that is suited to their ability.

97. In Years 10 and 11, the very high attaining pupils develop their knowledge of trigonometry so that they can solve triangles using the sine and cosine rules. After taking their GCSE examination, they use moving averages and standard deviation to draw conclusions from statistical data. Average attaining pupils develop their knowledge of statistics to use frequency charts and diagrams to solve problems and in Year 11 use a range of linear and quadratic equations in algebraic problems. Lower attaining pupils develop their knowledge of shape and space to include Pythagoras' Rule and the circumference and area of circles.

98. In both key stages, pupils' attitudes to learning are very good. Pupils arrive at lessons ready to work with a very positive attitude, settle quickly, behave well and are very attentive to their teachers. Their work is well presented and their books are free from graffiti. In many lessons, pupils are encouraged to take an active part in the learning process by working examples on the board and offering explanations for their solution to the rest of the class. In these circumstances, pupils are not inhibited in their response and their peers listen attentively and with a good degree of mutual respect. Pupils respond very well when their lessons contain challenging material presented in a stimulating way, with delivery that encouraged them to continue to work at a high rate. Very effective lessons are delivered in short bursts, with constant checking of pupils' knowledge and reinforcement of previous learning, which results in improved pupil confidence in mathematics. In many instances pupils have access to the solutions to questions, but they do not choose to refer to them until the questions being worked are complete. These attitudes lead to good learning.

99. The quality of teaching is always satisfactory and in a majority of lessons in both key stages it is good. This is a major factor in the effective learning of all pupils. About one-third of lessons are very good. All teachers have good subject knowledge and this is very evident in their lesson planning and confident delivery. The expectations of teachers are high, especially

in Year 10, where the most able pupils were taking GCSE mathematics at higher level this summer, and overall standards achieved in lessons are a reflection of these high expectations. The department has reduced the length of time the teacher talks to the class and increased the time pupils spend working and interacting with the teacher. This is supplemented with some paired work as necessary, such as when using computers. This methodology involves pupils in their lessons and has a positive effect on motivation, behaviour and results. The very best lessons start well and have a very good pace, with material presented in an interesting, but challenging way. All pupils are involved from the start and every pupil is encouraged to make a positive contribution to the lesson either by answering questions, giving reasons for answers or by working examples on the board for the whole class to see. This strategy is used across the whole ability range and low-attaining pupils respond with equal enthusiasm. Most lessons have time dedicated to mental arithmetic skills. In Years 7, 8 and 9 this is on a formal basis with the marks being recorded and in Years 10 and 11 often informally, with calculator use not permitted for a short time. Whenever possible, teachers use a range of teaching aids and resources to ensure that their lessons are well illustrated and meaningful. Marking across the department is uneven in quality, but assignments for Attainment Target 1 are closely marked and moderated within the department.

100. The department is led by a very experienced teacher who provides support and guidance whenever necessary to a cohesive and mutually supportive team of teachers. This guidance is evident by a departmental development plan that supports the desire for a continuing increase in standards. There is a comprehensive department handbook that guides the teaching of mathematics throughout the school. This is subject to constant review as curricular and other changes are implemented. The head of department undertakes some informal monitoring of the work of the department and there is also some monitoring by the senior management team of the school. This could profitably be extended to occur on a more frequent basis.

101. Since the last inspection there has been satisfactory improvement. There has been an overall rise in attainment although there has not been a rise in the standard of pupils on entry. The strategies for recording and assessing achievement have improved with regular testing and analysis of test results. There has been some monitoring of teaching and learning, but this is still a developing feature of the work of the department. This is a hard working department with many strengths, fully committed to raising standards even higher than at present.

### **Numeracy across the school**

102. The development of numeracy skills across the curriculum is satisfactory. There is no evidence that a lack of numeracy skills affects access to any area of the curriculum. At present, there is no whole-school policy for the development of numerical skills across the curriculum and no audit of the skills required across the curriculum has yet been undertaken. However, numerical and mental skills are a regular feature of mathematics lessons and on the evidence of teacher records there has been a rise in standards over time. The use of electronic calculators is effective, but there is no over-reliance on their use in lessons. In science, in Key Stage 3, pupils make good use of their numeracy skills, better than in Key Stage 4. The main factor for this difference is the improvement in numeracy skills in the primary schools on which the school builds effectively. Good graphical drawing skills were also evident in science and geography, where pupils could construct graphs and charts with accuracy interpreting their results and drawing conclusions from them. The use of data handling skills was evident

in several subjects with pupils able to draw pie charts, bar charts and histograms with accuracy.

103. Information technology programmes are being used very successfully with all Year 7 pupils to help to develop both their literacy and numeracy skills. Careful monitoring of their progress has shown that their skills are improving rapidly.

## **SCIENCE**

104. At the end of Key Stage 3 in 1999, attainment, as indicated by the pupils average point score in the National Curriculum Tests, was just above the national average. The percentage of pupils gaining Level 5, or greater, was in line with national average and the performance of pupils overall was also in line with similar comprehensive schools. The attainment of pupils in 1999 was below that of the previous three years, but overall, since the last inspection, the standard has remained fairly steady. The performance of boys has been at a slightly higher level than that of girls over the past four years. Attainment, on entry to the school, has been in line with the national average, so that the progress of pupils in Key Stage 3 has been satisfactory.

105. Observation of work in class reflects the test results. Near the end of Key Stage 3, subject knowledge and understanding of higher-attaining pupils is above average. For example, a significant proportion of a group of higher-attaining pupils in the current year 9, have a clear knowledge of the production of sulphur dioxide, its acidity and tests for its effect on plant growth. Lower-attaining groups have a basic knowledge of solids, liquids and gases, but do not really appreciate particle behaviour and cannot readily predict the effect of temperature or apply the principles of diffusion.

106. At the end of Key Stage 4 in 1999, the average grade in the double award combined science at GCSE was significantly above the national average. The percentage of A\* to C grades was 61 per cent in 1999, clearly above the national average of 48 per cent, and above that in similar schools. Over the past three years the percentage of A\* to C has risen steadily. In 1999, boys' performance was significantly higher than that of girls, which is contrary to the national picture. Observation in class and the analysis of pupils' work reflect the overall level of attainment. Most pupils for example, know reactions between acids and metals, and many have a good understanding of balanced chemical equations. Only a few are confident with the more complex aspects of numerical calculations involving relative atomic mass.

107. Gifted pupils are identified in some areas and additional work provided, including a 'nurture club' in Year 8. However, many higher attaining pupils are not performing at their maximum capacity because teachers do not plan sufficient extension material.

108. Standards of behaviour in the majority of lessons are good, and the attitude to learning is very good. Pupils are diligent and keen to succeed. They answer questions with enthusiasm, but are less inclined to ask questions of the teacher. Collaborative teamwork is

well developed, with a good amount of group experimental investigation provided in the lessons. Pupils have due regard for safety, respect each other, as well as staff, and are also careful with equipment and the fabric of the building.

109. Teaching in science is good overall. During the inspection, all but one of the lessons seen were at least satisfactory, and over half were taught well or very well. All teachers are well qualified and have a secure knowledge of their subject. Planning is effective, with careful consideration of progression from previous work. Objectives are clear and shared with pupils. A good range of teaching methods is used. This involves frequent investigative work and also provides opportunities for developing literacy skills and oracy. Numeracy is not so well promoted and opportunities for development are not yet fully taken. Teachers are warm and encouraging to pupils, which motivates them and ensures good responses to questions. Work is partly matched to attainment, but more rigorous differentiation of resources used in class would ensure the higher attaining pupils were fully extended and the least able fully supported. Information and communication technology is not used sufficiently in the teaching of science.

110. Assessment is carried out regularly and, since the last inspection, an increasing use is made of it to help to plan the curriculum and to identify and help underachieving pupils. Marking of day-to-day work, however, is not consistently good and does not sufficiently indicate to pupils how they can improve their standard. The level of correction in exercise books is also inconsistent between members of staff.

111. In over half of all lessons in Key Stage 3 and 4, learning of new material or development of practical skills is good. Pupils work at a good pace as a result of good teaching and pupils respond to high expectations. A high level of concentration is maintained in the great majority of classes.

112. The science department is led and managed well. The development plan has appropriate priorities that reflect the school initiatives. These include enhancing the use of information technology and assessment and a focus on raising standards. All members of staff contribute through regular team meetings and collaboration on the development and review of the scheme of work. Monitoring of pupils' work and assessment records has been undertaken. However, teaching is not sufficiently rigorously monitored to evaluate its quality and effectiveness. In-service training for teachers has been undertaken and has been adequate, but the level of technician training has been low in recent years. Accommodation is good, with large laboratories, and a pleasant environment in which to work. Display is especially attractive, celebrates pupils' work, and gives exemplars of high standards.

## **ART**

113. Attainment in art at the end of both key stages is in line with expectations for the ages of the pupils and the requirements of the GCSE course. In both key stages, work in Attainment Target 1 (Investigating and Making) is good, but Attainment Target 2 (Knowledge and Understanding) is weaker.

114. In the 1999 GCSE examination, 65 per cent of pupils who took art gained \*A to C grades, compared with 61 per cent in all maintained schools nationally. The percentage of \*A to C grades was above the national level for both boys and girls. GCSE art results have improved consistently, reaching good levels in recent years.

115. Early in Key Stage 3, pupils develop a good range of researching, collecting and recording skills as preparation for individually expressive work. Practical skills with a range of materials and processes are good. For example, Year 8 pupils are able to practice skills with textiles before applying them in creative textile work and Year 9 pupils explore surrealist art through drawing and collage before making paintings informed by the work of Salvador Dali and Rene Magritte. Some of the work in line and tone is good, and colour work in a range of media is a strength. Some of the observational drawing is good, but the development of this key skill over time is weaker, and this affects the quality of image-making in some of the Key Stage 4 work. Art projects are informed by looking at the work of other artists, but pupils' knowledge and understanding about art and artists is generally underdeveloped. Opportunities for three-dimensional work and for larger scale work are insufficient. New computers and software are beginning to be used effectively in art.

116. Research, experimentation, the exploration of a range of ideas and the development of pupils' own interpretations are strengths in Key Stage 4. Pupils handle materials and processes well, although three-dimensional work is rare. Awareness of the work of other artists has an increasing impact on expressive work in Key Stage 4, but critical and historical understanding is still insecure and pupils lack experience of discussing ideas about art.

117. Teaching and learning in both key stages is good. Projects are well designed to engage pupils' interests and develop their skills and ideas. Pupils respond positively to well prepared and presented lessons, with expert demonstrations and clearly explained methods and stages, so that they can move forward purposefully and creatively. During practical sessions, the teacher provides plenty of detailed support, individually tailored to pupils' needs. All pupils, including pupils with special educational needs, benefit from this close relationship and all progress is good. Teachers generate a good creative working atmosphere in the art studios. In all art lessons seen behaviour was good. Pupils were keen to produce successful work.

118. Since the 1996 inspection, the art department has made many improvements. As a result, pupils' response to the subject has improved and levels of attainment have started to rise. The scheme of work now provides good range and progression in most areas of art. In order to improve further, the scheme of work needs to be developed to address the weaker aspects of attainment in pupils' knowledge and understanding of art and artists, three-dimensional work and computer-aided design.

## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

119. Standards of attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 are in line with expectations overall, but there are elements that are less than satisfactory. Pupils lack sufficient knowledge of the materials and processes they are using and practical skills are underdeveloped. This shows in the unsatisfactory quality of finished work using resistant materials in Year 9 and the lack of knowledge and use of drawing skills.

120. Standards of attainment at Key Stage 4 are below average and pupils do less well in design and technology than in other subjects. However, the mean average point score does show a steady improvement since the last inspection. Last year, this improvement was maintained, even though the pupils taking the subject were of relatively low ability. In Key Stages 3 and 4, the standards attained using food are satisfactory. Although their investigative skills are relatively weak, pupils do have a satisfactory knowledge of foods, food products and the varying needs of the individual and the consumer.

121. Pupils are achieving satisfactory standards in lessons in Key Stage 3. In Year 7, when using wood, pupils can measure, mark and cut simple lengths with some accuracy and they take care when constructing simple joints, but the quality of drawing skills is barely satisfactory. In the graphics lessons, standards of achievement are good and pupils can produce a broad range of very imaginative product names and design ideas. They know the legal requirements when packaging a product. Pupils in Year 8, using food, know the basic method for making bread and the conditions necessary for making good dough. In a textile lesson, they know the principles of Adire Eleko and are beginning to develop some careful observational studies. Pupils using food in Year 9 understand product development and analysis and what is meant by good quality in a product, but they lack the knowledge to extend their answers. In the workshop, when pupils are making their working models, they lack the knowledge of automata and do not fully understand how the mechanisms work. They are not always sure how to proceed and they do not make progress with their drawing skills. Throughout the key stage there is insufficient evidence of pupils drawing on their understanding and knowledge of the programme of study to help them to generate ideas.

122. Achievements in lessons at Key Stage 4 are unsatisfactory. Drawing skills are limited and pupils frequently depend on work sheets for instructions. Annotation styles are basic and all pupils do not investigate the working characteristics of materials and components to sufficient depth. The information used to generate ideas comes from a narrow range of knowledge and is limited to familiar products. Standards achieved in Year 11 project folders for pupils using resistant materials are satisfactory. In food studies, the standards build on the achievements in Key Stage 3 and pupils reach standards close to the national average. There are some examples of good presentation skills in both material areas.

123. In both key stages, pupils do not have sufficient working knowledge of materials and their properties and their practical skills are under-developed.

124. Teaching is satisfactory overall at Key Stage 3 and 4. It ranges from excellent to unsatisfactory, with unsatisfactory teaching in just over ten per cent of lessons. In a Year 7 lesson, designing packages to contain sweets of their own invention, pupils were well motivated by sharp, focused questioning and clear instructions that got them on task quickly. Praise was used selectively and the teacher ensured they knew what they have achieved and what to do next. She expanded the learning opportunities by selectively introducing more variables for the pupils to consider and made good use of thinking time, following a 'brainstorming' session, so they could show what they knew and could contribute further information. In an unsatisfactory lesson making automata, basic skills and knowledge were not well taught and pupils did not have sufficient information to inform their work or answer questions.

125. The good and very good teaching in the department has clear assessable objectives supported by very good resources, including very good examples of pupils' own work. The use of traditional Eleko designs and the teacher's accompanying commentary excites pupils and sets high but achievable expectations for the pupils' work. In a Year 8 graphics lesson, the teacher recognised that pupils needed extra help with drawing skills and provided detailed support sheets to inform their progress. When using food in Year 9, the teacher knew her pupils well and gave support through working one to one to support and guide their progress. However, in both key stages, teachers often do not provide pupils with sufficient knowledge to enable them to make progress with their learning. Frequently, too much time is spent designing and the results are not reflected in the standards, which are unsatisfactory because too little time is dedicated to making. This was evident in the lesson making ball games, where the quality of pupils' work was also affected by the lack of suitable areas for designing.

126. Pupils are well behaved. They respond positively to good teaching, are attentive and good listeners. They enjoy the subject and are proud when they do something well. The teacher/pupil relationships are good and very supportive. Pupils respond well to praise and are able to concentrate well. There is some unsociable behaviour very occasionally from girls, but this is well managed by the teachers. Pupils generally respect the help and support they receive.

127. The progress that pupils make is assessed satisfactorily in both key stages overall, but the practice is not consistent. In the majority of lessons, they are kept informed of the progress they are making and how they can improve on their achievements. Learning support assistants make a significant contribution to pupils' learning, enabling them to work with direction and at a good pace.

128. The curriculum is not secure. In Key Stage 3, the school teaches the six aspects of design and technology - graphics, resistant materials, food, textiles, information technology and business studies. Not all aspects are offered to each year group and this affects continuity and progression adversely, reduces the total time available for designing and making and the balance of coverage of the Key Stage 3 programme of study. At Key Stage 4, not all pupils follow a course in design and technology and the subject does not meet statutory requirements. The department has suffered from fragmented leadership. The department is functioning admirably in spite of having to cope with a series of tragic events that have resulted in a loss of subject leadership and co-ordination. The senior management team has identified the need for a clear educational direction for the subject and the need to provide a full curriculum. Procedures are well underway to secure informed leadership. At the time of the last inspection standards in design and technology were reported to be unsatisfactory in Key Stage 3. They are now satisfactory. Standards of achievement at Key Stage 4 have dropped from being in line with and, in food lessons, above national expectations to being unsatisfactory in resistant materials and satisfactory using food. With the support of the senior management team, the leadership for developing the subject and ensuring good progress in future is good.

## GEOGRAPHY

129. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is well above national expectations. By Year 9, pupils have developed a wide range of geographical knowledge. One group was able to use string and a scale to make accurate measurements of the length of a river on a map. This was then developed further as, in groups, pupils discussed and evaluated various options for flood control in a low-lying area. Throughout the key stage, pupils use their good oral skills in discussing and justifying decisions on geographical issues. Most have the skills to write fluent reports on their findings. Those of lower ability, assisted by good adaptation of their tasks by teachers, show growing understanding and confidence in their work. Again, recall of work covered earlier in the course is good and pupils make good progress from average levels of attainment on entry.

130. Attainment in Key Stage 4 is very high in relation to national expectations. The GCSE examination standard in 1999 was very high compared to that of comprehensive schools nationally, 83 per cent of pupils achieving A\* to C grades, compared to the national average of 53.1 per cent. There have been great improvements in the proportion of pupils achieving these levels over the period 1996 -99. There is no significant difference between girls' and boys' attainment. In the 1999 GCSE examinations, the results in the subject were well above the school average. Inspection of lessons and pupils' work confirms this picture. Year 11 pupils have good recall of work covered in Year 10; this enables them to use a wide range of information to test hypotheses raised in GCSE coursework. At the end of Key Stage 4, they all have a good range of skills in, for example, map and atlas work and understand geographical concepts such as site and situation. Because teaching keeps pupils at full stretch and sets very high expectations, their achievement is very good. Pupils in both key stages show genuine enjoyment of the subject and are keen to answer questions. They respond to the teaching very well, showing very good attitudes to work and a strong desire to do well. All concentrate well in class, in response to stimulating teaching, and sustain concentration well. They make rapid progress as a result of the pace at which they work and the fact that they understand what to do in order to improve.

131. Geography teaching is good overall in Key Stage 3. No unsatisfactory lessons were seen and a fifth of lessons were excellent. Just over half the lessons were satisfactory and the rest good. There are very good qualities; in particular, lesson planning is excellent and teachers have strong subject knowledge. A Year 9 lesson on flood management had clearly expressed aims, was well planned with an interesting range of brief activities, which built on learning from earlier lessons. The group task led to pupils giving presentations to justify the expenditure of £1 million on water control schemes. The lesson had the additional benefit of improving their basic skills in literacy and numeracy. All pupils enjoyed this work and their enthusiasm and confidence in evaluating various solutions and an effective plenary session led by the teacher ensured that the quality of learning was also good. Teaching at Key Stage 4 is also good overall, with very good or excellent teaching in almost half the lessons and, again, no unsatisfactory teaching. A particular strength is the way that teachers maintain a strong focus on the demands of the examination syllabus and prepare pupils for it well. For example, pupil assessment throughout the two years is through 'old' examination questions. The enthusiasm and commitment of teachers inspires pupils to make good progress. Lessons are thoroughly planned, with an interesting and varied range of activities to maintain pupil interest. The pace of lessons rarely flags. A very good Year 11 lesson exemplified these strengths; high expectations and persistent questioning ensured a very good pupil response, so that all made



very good progress in their revision of settlement patterns whilst studying changes in their local town. Work is planned effectively to meet the needs of all levels of pupil attainment, with stimulating extension work for the able and talented.

132. Management of the department is good. The curriculum is very thoroughly planned. Schemes of work indicate varied activities to address the full range of abilities and include detailed guidance on the range of excellent resources available to teachers. Fieldwork is an important part of the schemes of work. The benefit this brings to the standards that pupils attain is shown the very high quality of coursework submitted for the GCSE examination. Pupils are regularly assessed, but in Key Stage 3, although the marks are moderated across the department and pupils are given their levels and appropriate learning targets, these are not recorded systematically, so cannot fully inform teaching and learning. Key Stage 4 pupils' work is both fully moderated and recorded, to the benefit of teaching and learning.

133. Since the last inspection, pupils' attainment at each key stage has risen markedly. There have been considerable improvements in the planning of the Key Stage 3 schemes of work and in the provision and use of information technology.

## **HISTORY**

134. Standards of attainment in history at the end of Key Stage 3, in the key areas of knowledge and understanding, historical enquiry and the ability to communicate information effectively, are above the expectations for similarly aged pupils nationally for a significant number of pupils. This judgement confirms the most recent teacher assessments, which show a high proportion of pupils achieving at Level 5 or above.

135. Standards of attainment in history at Key Stage 4, however, are below national expectations in the key areas of communicating knowledge and understanding and pupils' ability to analyse and evaluate historical evidence. Recent GCSE examination results show that the proportion of girls and boys achieving A\* to C grades is considerably below the national average for all maintained schools, because a significant number of pupils do not have the examination skills to translate their knowledge, understanding and historical skills effectively into a good examination performance.

136. Pupils enter Key Stage 3 with levels of knowledge and understanding and basic skills in history at or above the expectations of eleven year-old pupils nationally. During Key Stage 3, they further their knowledge of some key events and themes in British history, and they develop a good understanding of how to use different forms of evidence to find out about the past. Most pupils develop good comprehension skills and learn how to assess reliability and usefulness when considering a range of evidence. They also study the reasons for the Renaissance and its impact on a city like Florence. They learn about different attitudes towards religion in Tudor Britain and increase their historical vocabulary, learning concepts such as 'heresy' and 'martyrdom'. When studying the history of Britain in the last two hundred years, pupils learn about the factors behind Britain's rise as an economic power. Higher-attaining pupils develop a good understanding of different interpretations of history, for example studying Haig's reputation as a general during the First World War. Through a detailed study of the suffragettes, pupils learn about changing attitudes towards the role of women.

137. Pupils in Key Stage 4 study the development of crime and punishment throughout British history. Higher-attaining pupils make satisfactory progress in developing an understanding of how attitudes change or stay the same across time. Pupils also learn in detail about events in Germany leading to the rise of Hitler, and they begin to understand the range of attitudes prevalent at the time.

138. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress in extending their knowledge and understanding at both Key Stages 3 and 4.

139. The quality of teaching in Key Stage 3 is always at least satisfactory, and is good in just under half the lessons. The quality of teaching in Key Stage 4 is just satisfactory overall. In both key stages, good teaching shares the same characteristics. Resources are used effectively to stimulate interest, as when video material is employed in a study of the 1934 purge in Germany, or of protest and change in industrial Britain. Teachers set out the objectives of lessons clearly and review progress before the end of lessons, so giving lower-attaining pupils, in particular, a sense of achievement. Teachers' good subject knowledge enhances pupil understanding. Where control of pupils is good and classroom management is effective, a purposeful working atmosphere is maintained and pupils respond by working constructively both alone and in groups. Teachers emphasise the importance of learning the skills of source analysis, as when comparing life in Britain in the eighteenth century and 1900. Teachers set appropriate homework, which reinforces the learning done in lessons. In order to stimulate pupil interest, they adopt strategies such as setting up a debate in Year 9 on the suffragettes. They assist pupils' learning skills by using writing frames to improve the quality of extended writing, as seen in a follow-up lesson on the suffragettes.

140. Where teaching, or aspects of teaching, are unsatisfactory, work is not consistently geared to the ability range of pupils: in particular, the needs of more able pupils are not always met. The teaching methods are sometimes inappropriate, involving low-level drawing or copying tasks, even in Key Stage 4, and this restricts the learning of higher-attaining pupils. Poor classroom management sometimes restrict progress. Lesson planning is sometimes brief and not specifically linked to appropriately identified outcomes. Some pupils in Key Stage 4 do not receive adequate guidance in examination preparation. This means that much of the good learning and progress comes to nothing when pupils are unable to demonstrate and prove their knowledge and skills effectively.

141. The department has a common philosophy and approach, which has been helped by the development of a detailed set of policies and scheme of work. There have been changes since the last inspection, but improvement has been unsatisfactory overall. Standards of attainment at Key Stage 3 have risen. However, they have fallen at Key Stage 4 since 1996. The overall quality of teaching has improved at Key Stage 3, but there are still some weaknesses at Key Stage 4. There is now better guidance in the form of policies and a scheme of work, but there is still limited monitoring of teaching within the department itself.

## INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

142. When pupils enter the school, their standards of attainment in (information and communications technology) vary, because they have had different experiences in their primary schools. By the end of Key Stage 3, they have made satisfactory progress and their attainment is in line with national expectations. Pupils are confident and competent in the use of word processing, spreadsheets and databases and have learnt about control technology. They have begun to consider social and moral issues such as the use of information and communication technology in the compilation of police records. Year 7 pupils with special educational needs benefit from the use of an information and communication technology package which focuses on a structured and integrated approach to the learning of literacy and numeracy.

143. During the key stage they complete a number of tasks that enable them to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding. These are primarily delivered by the design and technology faculty, but are also taught within science, maths and geography. Very good teaching materials, prepared by the teachers and the information and communication technology manager, enable pupils to learn easily and well. As pupils complete these short-term, highly-structured tasks, they are systematically increasing their knowledge in these lessons. They act in a mature manner and work confidently, with minimal supervision, eager to learn and anxious to succeed. These positive attitudes have a good impact on learning.

144. Year 7 and Year 8 pupils learn to use spreadsheets and this also enhances their understanding of mathematics. Pupils collect and amend quantitative and qualitative information. They can plot co-ordinates and enter different values, appreciating the effect on the formulae. Good work, especially by the boys, reflects the high quality of the teaching seen in Year 8 classes. Clear and rapid support by the teacher ensures that all pupils are competent at each step of the task and the pace of learning proceeds briskly. Year 8 'scientists' use data-logging software to measure light levels, assessing the reflective properties of different surfaces. Good classroom organisation enables the teacher to work exclusively with those using sensors and to give extra help to pupils with special needs, who benefit from the practical reinforcement of scientific ideas. Year 9 pupils complete a unit on energy that involves more work on databases and the reinforcement of word processing and desktop publishing skills. Year 8 and Year 9 pupils understand the use of control technology. Good practical demonstrations by the teacher enhance understanding and the pupils have written a programme to control disco lights. They can explain about robotic arms.

145. The geography department makes a commendable contribution to the delivery of information and communication technology. However, not all departments are networked and the Internet and Intranet are not widely available. There is a lack of detailed on-going tracking of the achievement of individual pupils and the systematic, regular reinforcement and extension of knowledge. The school has good plans to rectify these weaknesses.

146. Overall, there had been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection. A number of issues were raised and some of these have not yet been completely addressed. The number of departments involved in the delivery of information and communication technology has doubled, but the school policy of teaching information and communication technology through subjects is still not consistently implemented. The report commented on the lack of teachers' skills and confidence and very good, school-based training took place in February 1999 to rectify this. There is now a far more rigorous approach to the delivery of the specific units and

fewer teachers are involved, so that monitoring and evaluation is more effective. Good strategic plans for the deployment and planned replacement of resources are in place and there has been a significant improvement in the achievement of Key Stage 4 pupils, who now do very well when compared to their attainment at the end of Key Stage 3.

### **Business and information studies**

147. In 1999 all but five per cent of the Year 11 pupils took a GCSE in information Studies (IS). The 1999 results were excellent, with 74 per cent of the pupils obtaining A\* to C grade, compared to a national average of 58 per cent. Three times more pupils got an A\* than the national average and 50 per cent more attained grade A. Both boys and girls achieve significantly better in information studies when compared to the average grade obtained in all their other GCSE's, with evidence that pupils who enter the school with relatively low scores often do remarkably well in this subject.

148. These standards were reflected in the work seen at the school during the week of inspection, with pupils doing very good work in their information and communication technology tasks and showing a good understanding of the business environment.

149. Most pupils make very good progress over time and in their lessons. Their learning is made easier by the very good schemes of work that the teachers have written and by the very good teaching that permeates the department. For example, the learning of Year 10 pupils has improved as the result of skilled on-going assessment that enables the teachers to identify problems and respond immediately. As a result, all pupils are able to insert graphs into a word processing package. Teachers work very hard with pupils who sometimes find aspects of information and communication technology difficult, giving a lot of informed help and improving concentration through the use of short-term targets. The very well prepared revision materials and programmes help pupils to achieve good examination results. Excellent teaching occurred in a Year 10 class where a quarter of the pupils had special educational needs. The teacher used humour and expert knowledge of the class to improve learning, making sure, for example, that much discussion and repetition of key words preceded the writing drafts. The teaching observed was good or better in all classes taken by permanent staff and is good overall.

150. The majority of pupils concentrate and work well. They gain confidence as the result of skilled questioning by the teachers and are motivated to succeed. The practical nature of the course, linked to the world of work, is meaningful to many. Teachers set high standards and pupils respond accordingly, by, for example, presenting work neatly and attractively. Pupils are involved in producing action plans for the completion of their assignments and this participation is one of the factors that produces a good environment for learning.

## **BUSINESS STUDIES**

151. The achievement of the pupils taking GCSE business studies is well above national average and has consistently been so since the last OFSTED inspection. In 1999, the proportion of pupils gaining grades A\* to C was well above the national average, but the proportion reaching the highest grades was lower than usual, as a result of unforeseen staffing problems. Pupils studying business studies also take GCSE information studies and attain well.

152. Almost all Year 11 pupils demonstrate very good knowledge of the range of business activities. This includes an in-depth appreciation of the financial aspects of business and the use of accounting tools and information and communication technology for business decision making and planning, which was mentioned as a weakness in the last report. The department has shown initiative in using information and communication technology, and pupils' access to information has improved since the last inspection, with the new Intranet and an on-line textbook. These facilities have already had a positive effect on academic standards, as is indicated by the good work pupils have done on *Theme Parks*. The rewritten schemes of work, with tasks and expectations more clearly defined, are also raising achievement.

153. The attainment of one Year 11 class was well above average, with many able to make extensive links between different aspects of business behaviour. Excellent teaching promoted this depth of learning, through continuous references to the underlying concepts. In almost every lesson, teachers provide very good, continuous, on-going assessment that results in higher levels of learning and achievement. These pupils were successfully prompted to produce a searching analysis of hierarchical management structures and control spans, when considering a take-over bid. Year 10 classes have a good knowledge of subject vocabulary and their understanding of, for example, marketing is good at this stage in the course.

154. Almost all teaching is good or better. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen, even though non-specialist temporary teachers were taking lessons. It is very good overall. Teachers ensure that pupils are aware of the aim of the lesson and the quality of questioning is frequently very good. Open-ended questions make pupils think about, for example, the best location of a new theme park. In the majority of lessons, the teachers' very good subject knowledge and their pertinent references enable pupils to link their studies with the real world, such as the effects of current budgetary changes on their business plans. In some lessons, teaching could be improved even further, with a clearer focus on the basic ideas, explained more slowly and in more detail.

155. There are some missed opportunities to extend the more able. Teachers refer to different levels of learning outcomes in their lesson plans, but these are not always specific enough about exactly what the more able are required to understand in terms of, for example, an appreciation of the interdependence of business activity or a more detailed understanding of concepts and theories. Pupils could be more productively involved in research. For example, they are not required to take responsibility for summarising and presenting up-dates on aspects of business activity, such as industrial relations, which could involve the scrutiny of newspapers.

156. The pupils have good attitudes to study. The staff works hard and successfully to ensure that most pupils know exactly what they are required to do to be successful and, as a result, motivation increases. Almost all pupils study well, in an environment that promotes a strong work ethic and responsibility for their own learning.

157. The department is very good at using data to analyse performance. Results for each class are analysed and the department moderates all coursework throughout the year. They are aware that the more able have to be continually challenged and have examined a number of strategies. The staff has identified the need for more involvement of the community and an increase in the number of visits and visitors.

158. An information and communication technology manager was appointed in 1998, with the specific brief to implement the school's information and communication technology policy. The information and communication technology manager has taken over the role of Head of Business and Information Studies and is currently involved in overseeing Key Stage 3 information and communication technology. There is much evidence of good leadership, commitment, effort and vision. However, there is still much to do before information and communication technology is used well throughout the school, with full access to a network, the Internet, Intranet, e-mail and video conferencing. Information and communication technology across the curriculum and as a tool to aid learning is still not fully developed. More staff training is required. All of these targets have already been identified by the very well organised faculty.

## **MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES**

159. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 has remained consistently high over the last three years. The results of the 1999 teachers' assessments are well above national averages. The numbers of pupils attaining Level 5 and above are also well above national averages. The attainment of pupils currently in Key Stage 3 mirrors the 1999 teachers' assessment. High-attaining pupils achieve good standards. Most average and lower attaining pupils achieve satisfactory standards relative to their ability. The achievement of some pupils with special educational needs, however, is not always as high as it could be, as work is sometimes not adequately adapted to their needs.

160. In Key Stage 3, most pupils make good progress in developing reading, writing, speaking and listening skills. By the end of Year 9, they are able to read for general comprehension and can pick out salient details from a text. They learn to write freely about themselves from the beginning of Year 7, so that by Year 9, in French in particular, higher attaining pupils are writing accurately and at some length, confident in the use of the present, past and continuous future tenses. Average and lower attaining pupils write less accurately and more briefly, but still express themselves effectively using both past and present tenses. All pupils can replicate simple, spoken dialogues in both French and German and respond to their teachers' questions. Pronunciation in French is weaker than in German, especially when pupils rely on written prompts to help them. In German, in particular, they express

themselves fluently and imaginatively as, for example, a Year 8 group who invented and performed amusing, original sketches on the clothes they liked. Pupils are used to hearing French and German as the routine medium of instruction. As a result, in general, their comprehension of the spoken word is good. Some higher attaining pupils in a Year 9 class, for example, were able to understand the words of a difficult pop song in French, after hearing it only briefly.

161. Standards of attainment are above average overall at the end of Key Stage 4. In 1999, GCSE results were above national averages in both languages for girls and for boys. Boys' results in French, in particular, were well above national averages. The number of pupils achieving the highest grades was also above national averages, especially the number of boys in German. Girls performed better than boys. However, boys' performance relative to girls' was better than the national picture. Pupils attained higher standards in languages in comparison to their other subjects than is the case nationally. 1999 results in French showed considerable improvement over 1998 results. High and average attaining pupils, at present in Key Stage 4 achieve good standards. Some lower attaining pupils, especially in Year 11 do not achieve as well as they might. As in Key Stage 3, work is, at times, inappropriate to their needs.

162. Pupils' ability to write develops well from Key Stage 3. By the end of Year 11, higher attaining pupils can express facts and opinions using a good range of idiom and vocabulary. They are starting to use more complex sentence structures, but need to develop this skill more fully. Some, mostly higher-attaining pupils, are able to sustain a conversation about themselves and their aspirations with some fluency as, for example, a Year 11 French group discussing what they would do if they won the lottery. However, many pupils do not venture beyond set responses to standard, structured dialogues. Pronunciation in French, in particular, remains weak. Pupils' comprehension of the spoken word is well extended in Key Stage 4 by the increasing complexity of the language used by their teachers in normal classroom instruction.

163. All teaching at Key Stage 3 was satisfactory. In two thirds of classes it was good to excellent and is good overall. In Key Stage 4, half of the teaching was good or very good and is good overall, despite a small number of instances of unsatisfactory teaching. Teachers manage pupils very effectively. As a result classrooms are calm and orderly, and the atmosphere is conducive to learning. Pupils show interest in what they are doing and, where teaching is particularly good, are enthusiastic learners. Pupils' learning is most effective when the lessons are conducted at a brisk pace, cover all four skill areas with a suitable range of graded tasks to match the needs of the pupils and when teachers' expectations are high. Learning is less effective where the range of tasks is insufficient to cover the needs of all pupils, particularly those with special educational needs. Generally careful marking of work supports pupils' learning, but the quality of marking is inconsistent across the faculty.

164. Teachers pay good attention to the development of pupils' literacy skills. Reading, writing speaking and listening are each practised in most lessons. Where possible, opportunities are exploited to develop numeracy skills. Surveys conducted in French and German on, for example, favourite subjects in school or types of pets, are converted into pie charts and bar graphs before being written up as reports in the target language. Few, if any, opportunities, however, are afforded to pupils to develop their skills in information technology.

165. The team of experienced subject specialists work well together under the leadership of the head of department. The good provision for languages in the curriculum has been carefully planned to ensure equality for opportunity for all pupils in the two languages taught. Gifted and bi-lingual pupils are given adequate additional support. Assessment is well used to evaluate and improve curricular provision. Monitoring of teaching and learning is beginning to have a positive impact on standards of attainment. Tuition by foreign language assistants and regular visits to France and Germany make a valuable contribution to pupils' learning.

166. Since the last inspection standards of attainment have improved, particularly at Key Stage 3. The range of written work by pupils of all abilities, but particularly by high-attaining pupils, has improved. Pupils are given greater encouragement to speak spontaneously. The use of French and German as the medium of instruction in all classes is now firmly established. Video material is now used regularly in lessons.

## MUSIC

167. Teacher assessments at the end of Key Stage 3, in 1999 show that attainment is above national expectations. Results at the end of Key Stage 3 have been consistently high since the last inspection. Standards at the end of Key Stage 4 are well above average. The GCSE results for music in the summer of 1999 are well above school averages for the proportion of candidates achieving both A\* to C and A\* to G grades. They have shown a steady improvement since the last inspection, and with an increase in the number of candidates taking the examination.

168. Current standards in music in Key Stage 3 are above average. Pupils follow a largely practical course, which also includes regular opportunities for practising literacy skills. Pupils in Year 7 are introduced to the basic elements of music, note values, and perform rhythmically based pieces. They also compose melodies by adding notes to a given rhythm, participate in a musical production – the musical chosen for 1999 was *Oliver* – and learn to play *The Black Note March* on keyboards. Pupils in Year 8 discover form in music, study music from other cultures including Indian, Gamelan, and Caribbean, and learn the basic principles of melody writing. Pupils in Year 9 listen to ragtime, jazz, rock n' roll, and music from the sixties, and use composition techniques from these styles in their own pieces.

169. Current standards at Key Stage 4 are well above average. This is partly due to the grounding received in Key Stage 3, but due also to the systematic development of composition skills that begins early in Key Stage 4. Pupils in Year 10 are given specific regular composition tasks, which result in a portfolio of small pieces. These are then revisited in Year 11, revised, extended, or used as the basis for a new composition, and polished for presentation for the GCSE examination. Written statements about music played or heard feature in the Key Stage 3 curriculum and this skill is developed further in Key Stage 4, in preparation for the GCSE listening examination.

170. Learning in Key Stage 3 is good. It is sometimes very good. Pupils in Year 7 write out the rhythm of a march and compose their own melody for it. They also practise identifying the number of beats there are in a bar in pieces of music heard, and conduct using the recognised hand patterns. Pupils in Year 8 write a melody in AABA form, and develop their keyboard



skills by playing a simple melody with a drone in the left hand. This exercise is extended for the more able pupils by offering extra right and left hand work. Pupils in Year 9 discuss repeated patterns and the structure of chords. They then listen to Pachelbel's *Canon* in two different versions, counting the repetitions of the bass line, and proceed to compose and play their own variations above the bass line from it.

171. Learning at Key Stage 4 is very good. Pupils in Year 10 discuss tension in music, listen to Barber's *Adagio* and adopt some of the techniques in their own group compositions. During performances of their pieces at the end of the lesson, the remaining pupils write a brief evaluation of the piece being played. Pupils in Year 11 are in the final stages of their GCSE examination preparation, and revision for the listening paper is a regular feature of the lessons.

172. In both Key Stages, pupils with special educational needs benefit from the differentiated tasks set where appropriate, and also from the support they receive from their peers and teachers. The pupils make good progress.

173. Attitudes and behaviour in music are generally good in Key Stage 3. They are, on occasions, excellent. Pupils participate eagerly in the practical activities, listen attentively to the teachers, and respond well in listening activities. Pupils' behaviour in the classroom is excellent and instruments are handled in a responsible manner. When changing rooms for keyboard activities, pupils are keen to start playing, which encourages swift but orderly movement between rooms. They are polite to the teacher and do not speak out of turn. In keyboard activities, they work well on their own, concentrating hard on the set task, and develop their individual study skills. When performing to the remainder of the class, pupils become totally involved in the performance, communicating well with the listeners.

174. Attitudes and behaviour at Key Stage 4 are excellent. Pupils use musical terminology accurately and confidently. They work well in groups, considering all suggestions and diplomatically negotiating the final outcome. They are aware of the connections between the tasks set for the lesson and previous work, and know what is required to achieve good results in the GCSE examination.

175. Teaching in Key Stage 3 is very good; in Key Stage 4, it is excellent. The teachers have an excellent knowledge of the subject and spare no effort in ensuring that all pupils understand what is being taught and how they are to tackle the ensuing tasks. Activities to develop literacy skills, as well as those designed to give beneficial musical experiences, feature regularly in lessons. Teachers plan lessons so that no time is wasted, and time is always available at the end of the lessons for pupils to perform the results of their work to the remainder of the class. Resources are prepared in advance, and lessons contain a variety of interesting activities. During practical work the teachers circulate giving advice and challenging pupils to move on to the next stage when they have completed each stage of the task.

176. Both teachers have a friendly professional manner with the pupils, encouraging organised discussion, but leaving the pupils in no doubt as to the expected code of conduct. The atmosphere in music lessons is totally conducive to good music making and this is

largely due to the quiet, firm manner of the teachers, which sets a good example to the pupils. The present system of assessment is being reviewed so that it will meet the needs of the new National Curriculum, inform pupils and parents, and will be manageable. Homework is set on a regular basis and usually relates to the activities covered in the lesson. Teachers ensure that pupils are fully informed of what is expected of them and how they are to achieve it, and details are written down in the pupils' planners. A contributory factor to the high standards of teaching is the monitoring carried out by the senior management team.

177. Instrumental teaching is undertaken by seven visiting teachers, who teach a variety of instruments to over one tenth of the pupils in the school. They also make invaluable contributions to school concerts and productions, and, together with the two permanent members of staff, have raised musical standards and thereby have enhanced the reputation of the school. At present, the school subsidises part of the cost of the instrumental lessons, but this is due to end within the next two years. There are insufficient opportunities for pupils to play in assembly, which makes these a less spiritual occasion and denies the individuals the opportunity to experience playing to a wider audience.

178. Since the head of department joined the school, the department has been located in two different areas before arriving in its present purpose built accommodation. The new premises offer enviable classroom and practising facilities, with one of the two classrooms being permanently set up as a keyboard area. The main classrooms are attractively decorated with examples of pupils' work, photographs of recent productions and other curriculum-related material. Most of the resources meet the needs of the National Curriculum, with the exception of the computer provision. This makes access to computers difficult for classes in both key stages, restricting the range of musical experiences for those pupils not fortunate enough to be able to play instruments fluently. Furthermore, Key Stage 4 pupils have to spend time learning to use musical software at a time when they should be sufficiently fluent to benefit from the resources available. The need for computers to be introduced in Key Stage 3 features in the department development plan and both teachers have identified a need for training in this area as a priority.

179. Issues relating to resources and accommodation arising from the last report have been addressed well. The numbers of pupils taking GCSE have risen, partly due to some after-school lessons being arranged. The collation of an evidence base for assessment is in progress, alongside the development of a new music curriculum and assessment system based on the requirements of the new National Curriculum for music. There has been very good improvement since the last report.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

180. At the end of Key Stage 3, pupils attain levels that are above national expectations in games. In football, pupils have good ball control, understand the importance of creating space, and can perform different types of passes. Pupils in Year 9 are in the early stages of learning volleyball. Most understand the techniques involved but they lack consistency, when performing the skills in the game. Boys and girls in Year 8 are able to copy and repeat movements in dance with an awareness of rhythm and space. In gymnastics, pupils' attainment is in line with expectations. They respond well to creative and co-operative tasks and link movements fluently together, but their movements lack quality and body tension.

181. GCSE examinations were taken for the first time in 1999 and 65 percent of pupils achieved A\* to C grades. These results are well above the national average of 50 percent and compare very favourably with all other subjects in the school. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 perform well in both the theory and practical aspects of the course. They have a good knowledge of health and fitness and many have presented comprehensive assignments on methods of training. Results of written tests indicate that most pupils have a sound understanding of the rules of rounders, netball and football.

182. At the end of Key Stage 4 attainment is above national expectations. Their skills in games are particularly well developed. In football, boys play with speed, skill and accuracy. In netball, girls have a good knowledge and understanding of the rules and tactics. Pupils take responsibility for organising their own teams and referees. The attainment of some individual pupils and teams is very good. They play football, basketball, hockey, netball, rugby, cricket, tennis and athletics at district, county and national levels.

183. The quality of teaching is mostly good, with one quarter of lessons being very good. Teaching is stronger in Key Stage 3, where seven out of eight lessons were good or very good and it is good overall. It is satisfactory overall in Key Stage 4, though there were examples of good and very good teaching in this key stage. One lesson observed during the inspection was unsatisfactory. Learning is good overall and, in two thirds of lessons, pupils made good or very good progress. In one lesson in twelve, pupils made insufficient progress.

184. Teachers have very good subject expertise. They give appropriate demonstrations and handle pupils' responses effectively. This gives the pupils a clear idea of performance techniques and enables them to improve their skills. The curriculum is divided into ability groups for games and, when the range of ability in the whole class group demands more flexibility, the class is divided into smaller ability groups, for example in boys' football. These two strategies allow pupils of all abilities to make the same amount of progress, helping the less able and extending the more gifted pupils. GCSE theory groups are divided according to attainment. This enables the more able pupils to study body systems and training programmes in more detail.

185. Relationships with pupils are very good. Pupils are keen, enthusiastic and determined in their lessons. All lessons provide opportunities for pupils to extend their health and fitness in the form of 'warm up' sections and to show independence in their participation of this element of the national curriculum. However, teaching does not always address all other areas of the national curriculum in the appropriate balance, thereby denying pupils the opportunity to improve their planning, performance and evaluative skills in each lesson. A few gymnastics and dance lessons concentrate only on the planning element and do not give pupils sufficient movement vocabulary to help with the task. Many lessons, especially in Key Stage 4, where they are very performance-based, miss opportunities for pupils to look at and evaluate their own work and that of others. However, the department does encourage pupils to give a written evaluation of their own work at the end of each unit and this is a good base on which to develop more oral evaluations in each lesson. The use of additional sources of reference in the form of activity sheets or work cards would promote learning more fully. Most lessons are good but, in the less successful lessons, the management of pupils is not sufficiently firm resulting in pupils' inability to listen to their teacher and to others in the group. This lack of concentration inhibits pupils' learning.

186. Most pupils are very keen and well behaved. They dress appropriately and smartly and have good attitudes to physical education. The large numbers opting to take GCSE, and who attend the many extracurricular activities provided by the department, demonstrate their enthusiasm for the subject. A few pupils in Key stage 4 lack concentration and interest.

187. The curriculum meets statutory requirements. However, games activities dominate the programme in both Key Stages and no gymnastics or dance is taught in Year 9. The two-week timetable cycle and the nine form entry in Year 7 has meant that a few Year 7 pupils have different teachers for the same activity and this has an effect on their progress. The links with parents and the local community are strong and pupils benefit from their support. The department provides equal opportunities for both boys and girls; Year 9 girls, for example, have a strong rugby team. The extensive extra-curricular provision, the wide use of group and pair work and the activity visits abroad contribute fully to the pupils' social, moral and cultural development

188. The very good leadership of the department has addressed all issues from the previous inspection, but would be even more effective if teaching were regularly monitored and the very good practice in the department shared. Many improvements have taken place since the previous inspection. Documentation is thorough. Gymnastics and dance programmes of study have been successfully developed, but could still be extended further to address the weaknesses already mentioned. Pupils' profiles and end-of-unit evaluations are part of the comprehensive assessment process and now need to be supported by the setting of evaluative tasks in lessons. The introduction of GCSE examinations has been a successful initiative. The pupils' very high standards in games have been maintained. The indoor accommodation remains inadequate. It prevents the implementation of a broad and balanced curriculum and limits the progress of pupils in their planned activity when the weather is inclement.

## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

189. Provision for religious education in the school is determined by the Agreed Syllabus for Wiltshire. At Key Stage 4, pupils fulfil its requirements through a course of study leading to the GCSE Short Course examination, which they sit early, at the end of Year 10. In addition, they have also been able to opt to pursue the GCSE Full Course, taking it at the end of Year 11.

190. In the 1999 GCSE Full Course examination, the proportion of pupils gaining grades A\* to C was significantly above the national norms for the subject in all maintained schools. In the 1999 GCSE Short Course examination, the proportion of pupils gaining grades A\* to C was also significantly above national norms for the examination, despite the early entry. These levels of attainment in the GCSE examinations exceed the expectations of the Agreed Syllabus for the end of Key Stage 4.

191. At the end of Key Stage 3, the attainment of pupils is above national expectations for their age. The majority of pupils have a good knowledge and understanding of the richness and diversity of religion, of the place of Christianity and other principal religions in the country, and of how their adherents' lives are shaped by their beliefs. They have a good understanding of religious language, symbols and ideas. Their skills in applying religious insights to their own experience, and to that of others, are particularly well developed.

192. In Key Stage 3, the majority of pupils, including those with special educational needs, make good progress and, in many instances, very good progress, both in lessons, and over the key stage. Work becomes increasingly challenging year on year, and their skills develop accordingly. During their first year in the school they can, for example, describe and explain the key features of Christian baptism and confirmation, or make a simple personal response to Buddhist teaching on suffering. By Year 9, they are being challenged by work demanding a well-developed ability to grasp highly abstract concepts, and deploy analytical and evaluative skills in, for example, their exploration of Descartes', Aquinas', and Paley's philosophical arguments for the existence of God.

193. In Key Stage 4, the majority of pupils make very good progress, building on and extending the gains made in Year 9. By the end of Year 10, when the course concludes, they can, for example, apply religious insights to a range of complex moral issues, such as those surrounding the sanctity of life. They make particularly good gains in skills of synthesis, interpretation and evaluation.

194. This good progress is a reflection of both good teaching, and the good response of the large majority of pupils towards the subject. In both key stages, pupils are well motivated, come to lessons keen to learn, and sustain concentration well. They are very keen to ask and answer questions, and listen with respect to each other's views and opinions in discussion. They behave very well, and they enjoy harmonious relationships with each other. They are provided with good opportunities for developing skills of independent research and enquiry, and of collaborative working. They have a good understanding of the level of their attainments, and of how to raise them further.

195. The quality of teaching is a strength of the department, good in Key Stage 3 and very good in Key Stage 4. In Key Stage 3, half the lessons are good and half very good. In Key Stage 4, teaching is never less than good and very good in two thirds of lessons. Teachers have a very good grasp of their subject. They know what they wish their pupils to learn, and communicate their aims clearly to them.

196. They achieve their objectives through a variety of imaginative and challenging activities and tasks, which engage and hold their pupils' interest. When, for example, Year 8 pupils studied religious responses to environmental issues, they did so through a study of the relationship between land and belief in Australian aboriginal culture. They worked in pairs to prepare and present speeches to a court of enquiry, concerning proposals to mine uranium on sacred aboriginal land. Year 9 pupils studying Ramadan wrote letters to a Moslem girl, explaining why she should continue to embrace the practice of fasting in secular Western society.

197. Teachers pay good attention to the differing needs of pupils, structuring tasks accordingly. For example, higher attaining pupils in Year 10 studying pilgrimage in Islam, were set extension work making greater demands on their skills of evaluation. They make very good use of questioning to extend pupils' understanding. Very good examples of this were seen when teachers were helping Year 10 pupils to grasp the Christian concept of forgiveness in the context of the experience of survivors of the Holocaust. Teachers set homework regularly, which extends work done in class. They mark work regularly and supportively and help pupils to understand how to raise their attainment.

198. This good teaching is underpinned by the high expectations that teachers have of their pupils, and the very good relationships they forge with them. They expect the best of pupils, in both work and behaviour. They know their pupils well, treat them with respect, and expect an equal respect in turn. Teachers create a caring and secure ethos in the classroom, in which learning can flourish.

199. The head of department exercises effective leadership and management. She has a clear vision of the educational direction the subject should take, if standards of attainment are to be further raised. She has significantly improved the quality of schemes of work, and improved procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress. The new Agreed Syllabus is being successfully implemented.

200. The Department has shown good improvement since the previous inspection. Pupils' levels of attainment have been significantly improved at the end of Key Stage 4, and improved at the end of Key Stage 3. The content of what is taught has been improved through the introduction of the GCSE Short Course, and revised schemes of work. Appropriate time has now been allocated to teaching religious education in Year 10. However, after pupils have sat the GCSE Short Course examination at the end of Year 10, there is no provision for them to continue to study religious education in Year 11. The school is therefore still not fully meeting the requirements of the Agreed Syllabus at Key Stage 4.

## **OTHER COURSES STUDIED**

### **MEDIA STUDIES**

201. A media study course is now offered as a new option with the first group of pupils taking the GCSE examination this year. In the work seen, a high proportion of pupils, above the national average, are on course to achieve an A\* to C grade in the GCSE examination. The standard of written work is good, and the high-attaining pupils produce assignments to a very high standard. Pupils undertake a wide range of assignments, exploring the different forms of the media and applying an analytical and evaluative approach to their work. They understand how to develop and analyse questionnaires and make good progress in developing their understanding of presenting images to a specific audience. Pupils demonstrate a good grasp of the power and range of media and their influence on our lives. Pupils develop an understanding of all aspects of media texts, and become skilful at identifying features such as audience and purpose, bias and the difference between fact and opinion.

202. Pupils respond positively to the work and high- and average attaining pupils work extremely hard to produce a large volume of work, taking pride in its presentation. They make very good use of information and communications technology to produce work to a high standard.

203. Teaching is good. Clear lesson objectives are set and assessment criteria are shared with pupils. There is a brisk pace and an effective use of time. High expectations are a feature of teachers and pupils alike. Pupils are articulate, analytical and confident in their use of audio-visual equipment. The course outline is good and booklets on topics covered

provide detailed information for pupils to use. The management of the subject as a serious GCSE option is good, and the English department is presently considering expanding its provision, as the popularity of the course increases.

## **DRAMA**

204. Drama is one of the strengths of the school. Attainment in drama is good and by the end of Key Stage 3, many pupils reach high standards. In the 1999 GCSE examinations, the proportion of pupils obtaining grades A\* to C was well above the national average, as was the proportion reaching the highest, A\* and A, grades.

205. In Key Stage 3, pupils are articulate and engage seriously and deeply in drama lessons, interacting well together. They create and sustain roles well, supporting each other and building on each other's ideas, and they maintain a very good level of concentration when in role. They use their bodies well to express emotion, character and social order and use group work well to create dramatic effects. Pupils evaluate each other's work very effectively, showing good observational skills. They respond appropriately when evaluating performances, identifying and modelling their appraisal on their teachers' comments, pointing out the essential points for improving movements. In a Year 7 lesson, pupils responded positively to a number of interesting aural and visual stimuli in order to explore drama skills, as they concentrated on developing a range of movements to express their feelings. The high attaining pupils performed well, but some average-attaining pupils were self-conscious about their performance.

206. Drama is a well-supported option in Key Stage 4 and both boys and girls do equally well. They are committed to developing their work and rehearse with energy and enthusiasm. They work very seriously when devising drama for the realisation component of the GCSE examination. The Year 10 pupils co-operate well with their teachers to develop their understanding of new techniques, designed to develop their response to drama. They recognise the importance of physical movement when working on everyday actions to convey their inner feelings. In both key stages, pupils listen attentively to instructions before beginning their work, they respect the opinions of others and they develop a high level of teamwork. In lessons, the level of concentration is often excellent across the year groups. In a Year 10 lesson, the intense concentration and positive response to work that characterises drama lessons were shown, when pupils volunteered to perform and share their work in front of a large audience.

207. Pupils are positive about their work and respond well to the stimuli. They are keen to succeed and, above all, they enjoy their drama lessons. The Year 11 pupils take responsibility for their practical examination. They listen to and accept advice from each other and their teacher. A mature approach contributes to their success. On rare occasions in Key Stage 3, some of the younger pupils lose concentration and show a certain level of embarrassment about performing in front of their peers. When this happens, their lack of engagement affects the direction of the lesson.

208. The quality of teaching is predominantly good with some excellent lessons. In excellent lessons, pupils are inspired and captivated to think deeply about using their creative skills to bring out the inner self when developing drama. Expectations are high, pace is brisk and the

tasks are demanding. As a result, pupils make very good progress. This was shown in a Year 10 lesson, where a new approach of teaching and developing drama skills was used. In this lesson, pupils were required to develop a series of simple movements in rapid succession, concentrating on developing their style and movements.

209. Teachers have a deep understanding of their subject and use their expertise to develop pupils' skills quickly. They reinforce pupils' drama and evaluative skills by focusing their attention on the need to observe and appraise each other's performance repeatedly. The insistence on high standards and the very good use of questions are used successfully to extend pupils' understanding of directing and adapting new approaches to their work. Teachers command respect, have good relationships with pupils and classroom organisation and management are very good. When teaching is satisfactory, breaks from one activity to another slow down the pace of learning and lead to pupils making slower progress than expected. They lose concentration and firm enough direction is not given to enable them to maintain the required focus.

210. The department is well led and has clear aims, focused on developing a high standard of work. Good teamwork contributes to the clear vision of raising standards. The department is innovative in outlook and is presently introducing new ideas to improve pupils' performance and understanding of the subject. The new method of working, focusing on the physicality of drama, is beginning to have a positive impact on the quality of pupils' performance. However, whilst clear schemes of work are developing, they are not linked to an assessment scheme. Good use is made of information and communications technology to develop stagecraft. The department makes an excellent contribution to extra curricular activities through the dedication and commitment of both staff and pupils that extends to working outside of the normal working day into evenings and weekends. The long tradition of fostering the development of drama includes numerous, high quality productions and links with theatre groups working with the school. Since the last inspection there has been good improvement. The accommodation has improved vastly and includes two excellent, well-equipped drama studios. Procedures for assessing pupils' work have also developed. However, although there are good procedures in place for monitoring teaching and learning in the expressive arts faculty, the process is infrequent and lacks a systematic, formal approach.