

# INSPECTION REPORT

**Montgomery High School**

Blackpool

LEA area: Blackpool

Unique Reference Number: 119735

Inspection Number: 186792

Headteacher: Mr P Moss

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Reporting inspector: Mr T W M Comer  
15109

Dates of inspection: 11 – 15 October 1999

Under OFSTED contract number: 708172

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

|                              |   |
|------------------------------|---|
| Type of school:              | Comprehensive   |
| Type of control:             | Community   |
| Age range of pupils:         | 11 - 16   |
| Gender of pupils:            | Mixed   |
| School address:              | Montgomery High School<br>All Hallows Road<br>Bispham<br>Blackpool<br>FY2 0AZ |
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| Appropriate authority:       | The governing body  |
| Name of Chair of Governors:  | Mrs Barbara Roby  |
| Date of previous inspection: | March 1996  |

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| Mrs J Harrison, Lay I |  | Leadership and management<br>Attendance<br>Support, guidance and pupils' welfare<br>Partnership with parents and the community<br>Efficiency of the school |
| Mrs A Hawley          | Mathematics                                      |  |
| Dr A Marfleet         | Equal opportunities<br>English                   | Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development  |
| Mr P Hartwright       | Science  | Staffing, accommodation and learning resources   |
| Mr B Munden           | Design and technology<br>Information technology  |  |
| Mrs A Powell          | Modern foreign languages                         | Attitudes, behaviour and personal development  |
| Mr M Gill             | History  |  |
| Mr A Paver            | Geography  |  |
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## MAIN FINDINGS

### What the school does well

- The leadership is very strong and is moving the school forward.
- The ethos of the school as a language college fosters international understanding exceptionally well.
- Pupils achieve good examination results.
- The teaching is good throughout the school.
- The school has high expectations of pupils with regard to behaviour, effort and achievement.
- The pastoral system is excellent and monitors pupils' progress, behaviour, attendance and their personal development very effectively.
- Teachers provide a rich range of extracurricular activities which pupils enjoy.
- The school provides very well for pupils' social development. Relationships are very good.
- Pupils respond well to the good education they receive: they behave very well; they have good attitudes; they work enthusiastically in class and at home; they willingly accept responsibility; they are happy in their school and are proud of it.

### Where the school has weaknesses

- I. Though achievement is well monitored, the senior managers need a sharper focus in their monitoring of teaching, learning and the curriculum to show how further improvements can be made.
- II. Pupils' mathematical skills are not applied sufficiently in other subjects. The school lacks a strategy for numeracy to match its effective strategy for literacy.

**This is a good and improving school. Its strengths greatly outweigh its weaknesses. The weaknesses will form the basis of the governors' action plan.**

### How the school has improved since the last inspection

The school examination results have steadily improved in terms of the proportions of pupils achieving grades A\*-C in five or more subjects. The proportion of pupils achieving grades A\*-G has been sustained. Results in technology subjects have greatly improved. The school has achieved language college status, building on its established strengths of foreign language teaching and information technology. This most important achievement has transformed the character of the school and has led to raised expectations in all subjects. The school has made good progress with each of the five points for improvement which were raised at the time of the previous inspection. Since the last inspection, overall improvement is good and the school has the capability and energy necessary for further, sustained improvement.

### Standards in subjects

The following table shows standards achieved by 14 and 16-year-olds in national tests and GCSE examinations in 1998:

| Performance in:   | Compared with all schools | Compared with similar schools | Grade                     | Key |
|-------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------|-----|
| Key Stage 3 Tests | A                         | A                             | <i>well above average</i> | A   |
|                   |                           |                               | <i>above average</i>      | B   |
|                   |                           |                               | <i>Average</i>            | C   |
| GCSE Examinations | C                         | A                             | <i>below average</i>      | D   |
|                   |                           |                               | <i>well below average</i> | E   |

The results of the national tests in 1998 were well above average in comparison with those of all maintained secondary schools and very high in comparison with those of schools with similar intakes of pupils. The English test results were well above average, both in comparison with all schools and with similar schools. Mathematics results were even better: they were well above average for all schools and very high in comparison with similar schools. Science results were above average in comparison with all schools and well above average in comparison with similar schools. Pupils make good overall progress through Years 7-9, especially in modern foreign languages. The results in 1999 were not as good as those in 1998.

Pupils continue to make good overall progress in Key Stage 4. The 1998 GCSE results were comfortably above average for the proportion of pupils achieving grades A\*-C in five or more subjects, though the proportion achieving five or more A\*-G grades was average. The 1999 results were similar to those of the previous year. The GCSE results in technology subjects were very good and showed the greatest improvement of the subjects in 1999. As in the previous key stage, there are no weak subjects.

· **Quality of teaching**

|             | <b>Overall quality</b> | <b>Most effective in:</b>   | <b>Least effective in:</b>                  |
|-------------|------------------------|---|---|
| Years 7-9   | Good                   | Teaching is good in English, mathematics and science, modern foreign languages, geography, history, information technology, music and physical education.                             | Teaching is satisfactory in other subjects. |
| Years 10-11 | Good                   | Teaching is good in English, mathematics, science, child development, design and technology subjects, geography, history, information technology, modern foreign languages and music. | Teaching is satisfactory in other subjects. |
| English     | Good                   |   |   |
| Mathematics | Good                   |   |   |

The teaching is good in each key stage. It was at least satisfactory in 98 per cent of all 184 lessons seen during the inspection. It was good in 43 per cent of them and very good or excellent in a further 18 per cent. Unsatisfactory teaching occurred in just under two per cent of lessons. There was no poor teaching.

Teaching is at least satisfactory in all subjects and good in most of them. The strongest subjects are modern foreign languages at Key Stage 3 and design and technology subjects and information technology at GCSE. There are no weak subjects.

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

· **Other aspects of the school**

| <b>Aspect</b>             | <b>Comment</b>   |
|---------------------------|--|
| Behaviour                 | Pupils behave very well. They have very good attitudes to their studies.   |
| Attendance                | Attendance is above average.   |
| Ethos*                    | The school has high expectations of effort and achievement. Discipline is effective.   |
| Leadership and management | The leadership is very strong and the school is well managed. Though achievement is monitored effectively the senior managers need a sharper focus in their monitoring of teaching, learning and the curriculum to show how further improvements can be made. Statutory requirements are not |



|   |  |
|---|--|
| Curriculum                                      | met for the appraisal of teachers.<br>The curriculum is broad and balanced in Key Stage 3 and offers good choice and diversity in Key Stage 4. However, some pupils do not study a design and technology subject in Key Stage 4, as legally required. Again, in Key Stage 4, insufficient time is given for teaching religious education. The school has an effective strategy for literacy but lacks a similar one for numeracy though one is planned for the future. The school offers a rich range of extracurricular activities. |
| Pupils with special educational needs           | These pupils make generally good progress in each key stage.   |
| Spiritual, moral, social & cultural development | Spiritual development is satisfactory; moral and cultural development are good; social development is very good.   |
| Support, guidance and pupils' welfare           | A very good pastoral system monitors pupils' progress, behaviour and attendance and personal development very well.  |
| Staffing, resources and accommodation           | Staffing is satisfactory though pupil-to-teacher ratio is above average. The school has barely sufficient technical support. The accommodation is presently overcrowded but a major building programme has now begun. Learning resources are generally good but unsatisfactory for music and, in mathematics, for pupils with special educational needs.   |
| Value for money                                 | The school adds considerable value and gives good value for money.   |

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

· **The parents' views of the school**

**What most parents like about the school**

- III. Good standards of achievement.
- IV. Good discipline and behaviour.
- V. They are pleased about the language college status.
- VI. They appreciate the breadth of extracurricular activities.
- VII. They find that the information from the school is good, especially reports.
- VIII. The staff are approachable and listen to parents.
- IX. Homework is generally set on time and marked promptly.
- X. They are happy that their children enjoy school.

**What some parents are not happy about**

- XI. They would like children to have lockers in which

The questionnaires completed and returned by 566 parents, and opinions they expressed at the meeting held with the Registered Inspector show that parents are very satisfied with the quality of education provided by the school and the standards their children achieve. Inspectors agree with the parents' good opinions of the school. They also agree, and the Headteacher agrees, that lockers would be desirable. At present, however, there is nowhere to put them. Even with the improvements planned for the accommodation it is difficult to see where lockers could be placed.

## · **KEY ISSUES FOR ACTION**

*In order to improve further the quality of educational provision and educational standards achieved, the governors, Headteacher and staff should:*

- Put in place a more sharply focused system to monitor teaching and subject planning to show more clearly how standards can be raised further (*paragraph 59*);
- Implement plans for improving numeracy, similar in scope to the school's successful strategy for literacy, with a view to applying mathematical knowledge more consistently in all subjects (*paragraphs 7, 11, 85, 86, 91*).

*In addition to the key issues above, the following less important weaknesses should be considered for inclusion in the action plan.*

- Teaching time for religious education in Key Stage 4 is insufficient to do full justice to the local Agreed Syllabus (*paragraphs 29, 145, 147*).
- Resources for music and for lower attaining pupils in mathematics classes in Key Stage 4 are unsatisfactory (*paragraphs 9, 88, 137*).

## · **INTRODUCTION**

### · **Characteristics of the school**

1. Montgomery High School is a large, mixed 11-16 urban community comprehensive school with language college status. Parents are pleased with the school's new status. The school is very popular and is over-subscribed. The number on roll, at 1150, is above average for a school of this type. The number of boys (627) substantially exceeds the number of girls (523). A new building programme is scheduled to begin shortly and should alleviate the pressure on accommodation.

2. The social mix of the intake of pupils is broadly average. The school is pleasantly situated and the majority of pupils come from privately owned homes. The school mainly serves its local catchment area. An average proportion of pupils are entitled to a free school meal. No pupils have English as an additional language. Standardised tests of the annual intake of pupils indicate that attainment is close to average though the school takes fewer higher attaining pupils than would be expected. The number of pupils on the school's register of special educational needs is 142, which includes 31 with formal statements. Both of these figures are in line with national averages.

3. The school aims to challenge all pupils regardless of their ability, fostering their individual talents and ensuring that all learn the skills necessary for success in the world of work. As a language college, the school's international ethos is to teach pupils to understand other nations, cultures and languages, and this is reflected in the curriculum. In this context, the school clearly sets out its priorities for improvement: raising achievement, further developing information technology in all subjects, increased importance on pupils' responsibility for others, staff development, and stronger links with parents and community. Ambitious targets are set for GCSE examinations.

## Key indicators

### Attainment at Key Stage 3

|  |      |      |       |       |
|--|------|------|-------|-------|
| Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3<br>for latest reporting year: | Year | Boys | Girls | Total |
|  | 1999 | 116  | 92    | 208   |

| National Curriculum Test                      |          | English | Mathematics | Science |
|---|----------|---------|-------------|---------|
| <b>Results</b>                                |          |         |             |         |
| Number of pupils<br>at NC Level 5 or<br>Above | Boys     | 70      | 83          | 65      |
|   | Girls    | 73      | 71          | 53      |
|   | Total    | 143     | 154         | 118     |
| Percentage at NC<br>Level 5 or above          | School   | 69 (76) | 74 (72)     | 57 (66) |
|   | National | 63 (65) | 62 (59)     | 55 (56) |
| Percentage at NC<br>Level 6 or above          | School   | 34 (50) | 41 (48)     | 20 (29) |
|   | National | 28 (35) | 38 (36)     | 23 (27) |

| Teacher Assessments                           |          | English | Mathematics | Science |
|---|----------|---------|-------------|---------|
| Number of pupils<br>at NC Level 5 or<br>Above | Boys     | 72      | 85          | 65      |
|   | Girls    | 73      | 75          | 53      |
|   | Total    | 145     | 160         | 118     |
| Percentage at NC<br>Level 5 or above          | School   | 70 (74) | 77 (79)     | 57 (68) |
|   | National | 64 (62) | 64 (63)     | 60 (62) |
| Percentage at NC<br>Level 6 or above          | School   | 36 (47) | 44 (38)     | 19 (29) |
|   | National | 31 (31) | 37 (37)     | 28 (31) |

### Attainment at Key Stage 4

|  |      |      |       |       |
|--|------|------|-------|-------|
| Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest<br>reporting year: | Year | Boys | Girls | Total |
|  | 1999 | 118  | 88    | 206   |

| GCSE Results  |          | 5 or more grades<br>A* to C | 5 or more grades<br>A* to G | 1 or more grades<br>A* to G |
|---|----------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Number of pupils<br>Achieving<br>Standard specified | Boys     | 54                          | 100                         | 115                         |
|   | Girls    | 59                          | 85                          | 88                          |
|   | Total    | 113                         | 185                         | 203                         |
| Percentage achieving<br>Standard specified          | School   | 55 (54)                     | 90 (90)                     | 99 (99)                     |
|   | National | - (44.6)                    | - (89.8)                    | - (95.2)                    |

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

**Attendance**

|   |              |                           |     |
|---|--------------|---------------------------|-----|
| Percentage of half days (sessions) missed |              |                           | %   |
| Through absence for the latest complete   | Authorised   | School                    | 6.2 |
| Reporting year:                           | absence      | National comparative data | 7.9 |
|   | Unauthorised | School                    | 0.1 |
|   | absence      | National comparative data | 1.1 |

..

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**Exclusions**

|  |              |        |
|--|--------------|--------|
| Number of exclusions of pupils (of statutory school age) during the previous year: |              | Number |
|  | Fixed period | 35     |
|  | Permanent    | 2      |

..

**Quality of teaching**

|   |                        |    |
|---|------------------------|----|
| Percentage of teaching observed which is: |                        | %  |
|   | Very good or better    | 18 |
|   | Satisfactory or better | 98 |
|   | Less than satisfactory | 2  |

## **PART A: ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL**

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

#### **Attainment and progress**

##### ***Key Stage 3 national test and GCSE examination results***

4. The overall results of the 1998 national Key Stage 3 tests were very good. They were well above average in comparison with all maintained secondary schools nationally and very high in comparison with similar schools.

The test results were well above average in English and mathematics and above average in science. Over the three-year period 1996-98, the overall test results improved at a faster rate than the national trend. Both boys and girls do well. Boys' and girls' results are better than those for boys and girls nationally. No comparative data are yet available for 1999, but results were not as good as those of 1998.

5. The 1998 GCSE results were average in comparison with those of all maintained secondary schools but well above average when compared with those of similar schools. Results were above average in English, mathematics and science. Over a period of three years, boys' and girls' results were above average though girls outperform boys to a similar extent to that found nationally. The average number of GCSE points scored per pupil has remained fairly constant over a period of time. The proportion of pupils achieving grades A\*-C in five or more subjects was consistently above average over the five-year period 1994-1998 and improved at a faster rate than the national trend. However, the proportion of pupils achieving A\*-G grades in five or more subjects, though consistently above average, shows no clear trend. In 1999, the school achieved its best ever GCSE results, though national comparative data are not yet available. Examination results in some individual subjects fluctuate considerably from one year to another. The most successful subjects at GCSE in 1999 were information systems, electronics, food technology, resistant materials, biological science, child development, and business studies courses combined with modern foreign languages. Results in physical education were poor in 1998 but improved vastly in 1999. In 1999, 18 Year 11 pupils sat for the Advanced Supplementary level examination in information technology achieving very creditable results.

##### ***Inspection evidence***

6. Results of standardised tests administered by the school indicate that the attainment of its annual intake is close to average though slightly below overall, and there are fewer higher attaining pupils than would normally be expected. Pupils make good overall progress throughout the school and achieve above average standards. Parents are very satisfied with the standards their children achieve.

7. Consideration of pupils' achievements in test and examinations over time, the inspection of lessons, discussions with pupils and examination of samples of their work in all subjects show that they make good overall progress through Key Stage 3. They make good progress in English and good progress in speaking and listening, and in reading and writing. In mathematics, pupils generally make good progress: they make satisfactory progress in number and good progress in algebra, shape and space and data-handling. Progress in their ability to use and apply their mathematical skills is satisfactory though opportunities for this are insufficient in subjects other than mathematics. On occasions, Year 7 pupils spend too much time repeating work in mathematics that they have already done and understood in primary school. Pupils make good progress in all aspects of science. Pupils make very good progress in modern foreign languages and the school's work in French and German is very good in this key stage. Pupils make good progress in design and technology, geography, history, information technology and physical education. Pupils' progress in art, music and religious education is satisfactory. Unsatisfactory accommodation hinders progress to some extent in music. By the end of Key Stage 3, in relation to nationally expected standards, overall attainment is above average and it is above average in English, mathematics and science. In subjects other than English, mathematics and science, attainment is above average in design and technology, geography, information technology and modern foreign languages. It is average in art, history, music, physical education and religious education. There are no weak subjects.

8. Pupils continue to make good overall progress through Key Stage 4. They make good progress in English, mathematics and science and they make good progress in all other subjects except art and religious education, in which their progress is satisfactory. By the end of Key Stage 4, attainment is again above average in English, mathematics and science. It is well above average in information technology and child development, above average in design and technology, history, modern foreign languages and music, and average in geography, physical education and religious education. Despite above average examination results in art, and the fact that this subject shows consistently high 'added value', work seen during the inspection was no better than average overall. Standards can be raised further in art by improving pupils' preparatory work, especially in sketchbooks, and by encouraging greater independence in pupils' learning. The strongest subjects are technology subjects, biology, child development, and business studies with modern foreign languages. There are no weak subjects.

9. Pupils with special educational needs make good overall progress. Their needs in literacy are well met and their difficulties tackled effectively. In Key Stage 3, most of these pupils make good progress towards the targets set for them in their individual education plans. They also make good progress in mainstream lessons with the additional help they receive from special teaching in small groups. In Key Stage 4, their overall progress is good. It is good in English, modern foreign languages and physical education. In geography they make very good progress where there is effective support; however, pupils' progress in mathematics is sometimes unsatisfactory because the resources provided for them do not wholly match their needs.

#### ***Key skills - literacy***

10. Pupils' literacy skills support their learning effectively in all subjects. Reading is sound and pupils often read to the class. Private reading is satisfactory and is encouraged through the school's literacy scheme as well as in English lessons. Speaking and listening skills are generally well developed. Pupils listen attentively to their teachers and other pupils but would benefit from more opportunities for learning through speaking, especially working in pairs and small groups in some subjects. In modern foreign languages, however, listening and speaking are particular strengths, and boys and girls perform equally well. Writing is generally good and is a strength in modern foreign languages because pupils' good understanding of grammar and tenses enables them to tackle written work confidently. Information technology is used effectively to present and edit extended writing. Accuracy in spelling, grammar and punctuation is satisfactory. The school's literacy programme is making a significant contribution to the teaching of these skills. Pupils with special educational needs in literacy are well supported and their difficulties are tackled effectively.

#### ***Key Skills - numeracy***

11. Pupils' mathematical skills are adequate to support their work in subjects other than mathematics though they do not have sufficient planned opportunities to do so. The school has as yet no policy for numeracy across the curriculum though the school development plan includes this as a priority.

#### ***Key skills – information technology across the curriculum***

12. Pupils have good skills in information technology and can use computers for a variety of purposes. Some subjects apply and extend these skills effectively, for example to simulate electronic circuits in design and technology, and word processing skills are used efficiently to draft and present written work. Modern foreign languages make good use of Internet services for correspondence, information and research. The application of pupils' knowledge and skills is much more developed than it was at the time of the previous inspection.

#### **Attitudes, behaviour and personal development**

13. Parents say that their children enjoy school. Pupils respond very well to the quality of education they receive. Their attitudes to learning are very good; they are interested in their work, enjoy their lessons and show that they are capable of sustained concentration. Pupils with special educational needs have very positive attitudes to their work and make substantial gains in self-confidence and organising skills as they move through the school. They benefit from the high standard of care which is provided by the staff who support them.

14. Pupils are fully aware of the school's rules and abide by them. Behaviour in lessons is very good and pupils behave sensibly as they move about the building and in outdoor play areas. The number of permanent exclusions is low, though pupils are excluded for short periods for serious offences such as aggressive behaviour towards other pupils.

15. The quality of relationships in the school is very high and there is a mutual respect between pupils and teachers. Pupils are welcoming and courteous to the many visitors to the school. When the opportunity arises, pupils work well together in pairs and groups, for example in modern foreign languages and physical education. Pupils are very proud of their school and the facilities available, which they treat with much respect. Pupils share equipment, working together and helping one another and they show respect for the feelings and values of others in many subjects, notably drama and English.

16. Pupils in all year groups take full advantage of the many opportunities provided for their personal development. Around 300 pupils regularly participate in organised team games and other extracurricular activities. They raise funds for charity, help at open evenings, lead assemblies and assist at local primary school sports days. Year 11 pupils attend extra lessons after school. Pupils make very good use of the school's multimedia facilities to research information in their free time. More than half of all Key Stage 4 pupils are involved in the prefect system and some of them help younger pupils with their reading. The school council is very active and helps to make decisions.

..        **Attendance**

17. Attendance is good. In the last year, it was above local and national averages. Pupils continue to show the good attitudes towards attending school which were noted in the previous inspection. Unauthorised absence is rare and pupils are punctual to school and to lessons.

..        **QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED**

..        **Teaching**

18. The teaching is good overall. It was at least satisfactory in 98 per cent of all 184 lessons seen during the inspection: it was good in 43 per cent of them and very good or excellent in a further 18 per cent. Unsatisfactory teaching occurred in just under two per cent of lessons, but there was no poor teaching. Though teaching is good in each key stage it is better in Key Stage 3, where some teaching is outstanding. Teaching has improved significantly since the previous inspection. Good teaching is the principal factor in the pupils' good progress and above average attainment at each key stage, and underpins the school's good discipline and ethos, with which parents are pleased.

19. Teaching is at least satisfactory in all subjects. It is good in English, mathematics and science. In subjects other than English, mathematics and science, teaching is good in design and technology, geography, history, information technology, modern foreign languages, music and physical education, and it is satisfactory in art and religious education. Some very good teaching was seen in most subjects and, at Key Stage 3, some is outstanding in modern foreign languages, music and physical education. The most effective teaching in Key Stage 3 is in modern foreign languages. At Key Stage 4, the most effective teaching is found in the GCSE courses in technology subjects.

20. Pupils with special educational needs are taught within mainstream classes, their needs being met through setting arrangements and individual support in the classroom. Teachers know their pupils well and usually take account of individual needs in the planning and organisation of their lessons. In addition, pupils who have been identified as needing particular help are withdrawn in small groups or individually for specialised teaching, a strategy which is generally effective.

21. Teachers have a good knowledge and understanding of their subjects. This shows in many subjects, for example in English literature, and is a strong feature of the teaching of mathematics, modern foreign languages, information technology and music. The science teachers are enthusiastic about their subjects and their lessons are characteristically lively.

22. Teachers generally have high expectations of pupils. Pupils are managed well, discipline is effective and a good working atmosphere is sustained in nearly all lessons. Pupils' tasks are planned effectively in most lessons to match pupils' differing levels of attainment, though in history, planning sometimes neglects the needs of both higher and lower attaining pupils. Higher attaining pupils are challenged appropriately in mathematics, and also in modern foreign languages, in which teachers are determined to raise attainment further.

23. Lesson planning is good overall. It is good in many subjects, though it could still be improved further. In modern foreign languages, thorough planning helps to stimulate pupils' interest and build their confidence. In art and religious education, however, lessons are not always planned in such a way that objectives are shared with pupils at the outset and reviewed when activities have been completed. Greater emphasis is needed on experimental work in science, and in art the use of sketchbooks and other preparatory work is underdeveloped which adversely affects progress. Again in art insufficient time given for class discussion restricts the development of pupils' critical and analytical skills.

24. Teachers use a variety of methods successfully in most subjects and this is particularly so in English. In mathematics, however, lessons lack variety.

25. Lesson time is generally well used, especially in English lessons, which are well-paced with a clear sense of direction. Resources are used well in most subjects, especially in English and modern foreign languages. The use of information technology has improved since the last inspection, especially in English and modern foreign languages. In design and technology, equipment, materials and demonstrations are used effectively. However, in both mathematics and science, teachers tend to rely on textbooks too much.

26. Day-to-day assessment is effective in most subjects. Written work is generally marked promptly and thoroughly. In English, in particular, assessment is very thorough and the progress of each pupil is carefully monitored. In information technology good assessment procedures ensure that pupils are aware of their progress. In art, the marking of pupils' work in pottery gives pupils a clear idea of their progress but, in other art lessons, they do not have a clear idea of the standards they are achieving. In music, pupils are given little opportunity to appraise and assess their own work and that of others. Teachers mark written work regularly in religious education and make constructive comments but there is no subject policy on the correction of spelling errors and so elementary mistakes go unchecked.

27. Homework is set regularly. It is purposeful and makes a significant contribution to pupils' progress, enabling them to consolidate work done in lessons and engaging pupils in research and the learning of facts, definitions and, in modern foreign languages, the learning of new vocabulary. Parents say that they appreciate that homework is set regularly and marked promptly.

### **The curriculum and assessment**

28. The curriculum is broad, balanced and relevant to the needs of the pupils. Overall it promotes their intellectual, physical and personal development effectively. Pupils have broadly equal opportunities to study the full range of subjects offered. There are no disapplications of the curriculum in respect of pupils with special educational needs but five pupils are following approved work-related courses at Key Stage 4 and therefore do not follow the National Curriculum for all subjects. This is entirely satisfactory.

29. The time given to teaching is in line with recommendations in Key Stage 3 but falls short of the minimum recommended time in Key Stage 4. The school plans to increase teaching time in Key Stage 4 through extension of its literacy strategy into that key stage. The time given for religious education in Key Stage 4 is insufficient to do justice to the local Agreed Syllabus.



30. In Key Stage 3, the curriculum includes all the subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education. Most pupils study two modern foreign languages from Year 8 onwards and most pupils in Year 9 study three languages. A small group of higher attaining pupils in Year 9 study four languages, including Japanese taught outside of normal lesson time.

31. The curriculum in Key Stage 4 offers pupils a wide choice of GCSE subjects. However, some pupils do not study a design and technology subject because they are offered as options. The governors have made the decision to offer design and technology as an optional subject in Key Stage 4, rather than as a compulsory part of the National Curriculum, so as to increase diversity and choice in foreign language learning. Nevertheless, design and technology subjects are popular options: many pupils choose to study them and reach high standards in these subjects. Other options are GNVQ Intermediate and Foundation courses in leisure and tourism and information technology and a GCSE course in business studies with modern foreign languages. Additionally, a considerable number of Year 10 pupils take GCSE early in information technology. Some Year 11 pupils also take GCE a Advanced Supplementary course in information technology.

32. All pupils have personal and social education lessons which include statutory sex education and health education matters such as awareness of the dangers of drugs, smoking and alcohol. This course is well structured and is valued by pupils. The quality of careers education is good and begins in Year 9 with guidance on the choice of GCSE and other examination courses in Key Stage 4.

33. The school offers a rich range of extracurricular activities. Parents greatly value the hard work and commitment of the teachers to provide these. Many sporting activities and clubs of high quality contribute to this programme. Twelve members of staff and in excess of 300 pupils are involved in competitive team sport, outdoor pursuits and the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme. Other flourishing extracurricular activities include computing, drama, music and a language club.

34. The system of assessment is good and is very effective. It provides a wealth of data on which to base the measurement of pupils' progress and to set targets for subjects and groups. This is very well done. Statutory requirements for the assessment of pupils at the end of Key Stage 3 are in place. The teachers' assessments at the end of Key Stage 3 are particularly thorough in English, mathematics, science, design and technology, information technology and modern foreign languages, but are relatively undeveloped in art, history, music and physical education.

35. Procedures for assessment of pupils with special educational needs are good. They identify pupils' needs accurately and assist effectively in monitoring their progress. Individual education plans are in place for those who need them and the information they contain is comprehensive and clearly presented. However, short-term targets are not sufficiently precise. Assessment guides curriculum planning for these pupils effectively.

#### **Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development**

36. Provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development has improved since the previous inspection, especially that for spiritual and cultural development. Greater emphasis on these aspects of the school's provision in all subjects enhances the curriculum and has a positive impact on the ethos of the school.

37. Spiritual development is satisfactory overall. Collective worship is satisfactory; it has improved since the previous inspection and contributes effectively to pupils' spiritual development. Assemblies and form time now include a short time for reflection on a spiritual theme and an appropriate prayer. Religious education lessons provide many opportunities for pupils to understand and discuss different beliefs. In English lessons, discussion of spiritual matters occurs in the context of literature dealing with death and suffering or the nature of evil. In history, lessons include spiritual matters, for example in the context of different religions, the medieval church, the Reformation, and the study of the 1939-45 war. However, opportunities to develop pupils' spiritual awareness are missed in some other subjects.

38. The school provides a good moral education, reflected in the daily work of the school, its values and expectations. Pupils are taught right from wrong and teachers provide excellent examples of personal conduct. The personal and social education programme includes effective drugs and sex education. Pupils learn about and discuss moral issues, such as racism or the problems of environmental degradation, in science, modern

foreign languages, English, religious education, history and geography.

39. Social development is a strong feature of the school's work. Pupils are encouraged to collaborate in lessons and to take part in an excellent range of extracurricular activities, in which outdoor pursuits, team games and the performing arts feature strongly. Older pupils especially are expected to take responsibility for others, for example the literacy prefects who assist with the school's successful paired reading scheme. Pupils can influence the running of the school and contribute to decision making through the work of the School Council, for example in connection with the development of a Students' Charter and changes to the school uniform.

40. Cultural development is good. The new language college status has brought with it an increased emphasis on links with pupils in other countries, through visits and correspondence, for example through the Internet. In art, however, more could be done by emphasising art of other cultures. In mathematics, some opportunities are missed to acknowledge the debt owed to Greek, Arabic and Indian mathematicians for our number system and key concepts of algebra and geometry. Pupils visit live theatre and museums, and the local popular culture is acknowledged through involvement with stage and circus productions.

#### .. **Support, guidance and pupils' welfare**

41. The pastoral system at the school is excellent. The monitoring of pupils' progress is very effective: under-achieving pupils are quickly identified and set targets for improvement. Form teachers check pupils' homework and coursework regularly. Records are kept of all pupils' academic progress and are updated annually. Attendance is monitored effectively. Form tutors keep registers well and swiftly follow up absence.

42. Discipline is very effective in lessons and teachers supervise pupils effectively at break and lunchtime. Consistently good behaviour is expected and pupils respond well to the teachers' expectations of them. The system of merit awards for younger pupils and commendations for older pupils works well and encourages and motivates them. Measures to deal with bullying are effective and pupils feel safe in school.

43. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported. Teachers use pupils' individual education plans effectively to ensure that pupils make good progress towards the targets set for them. Pupils benefit from special initiatives, such as the summer literacy school, and from help from older pupils with reading and spelling in form time. Higher attaining pupils have many opportunities to excel; for example, a large proportion of pupils take three separate science subjects, many pupils take three and some take four foreign languages in Key Stage 4, and many take GCE Advanced Supplementary level examinations in information technology in Year 11.

44. Health and safety procedures are satisfactory and no evident risks emerged during the inspection. Satisfactory arrangements for child protection are in place which comply with legislation. Staff are aware of the identity of the designated person responsible.

#### .. **Partnership with parents and the community**

45. The school is a popular choice with parents. The outcomes of the survey of parents' opinions of the school's provision in advance of the inspection and at the meeting held with the Registered Inspector were very positive. There were no significant matters of dissatisfaction, though parents say their children carry heavy bags around all day and that lockers should be provided.

46. The strong backing and partnership established with parents have a positive effect on pupils' attainment. The Parents, Teachers and Friends Association gives strong support to the school, raising funds to supplement the school's resources and providing a forum for parents' discussion of school policies.

47. The school enjoys a strong partnership with parents who find the staff welcoming and approachable. Parents say that their children enjoy school and achieve high standards. Parents support the school principally

by supervising their children's work at home, attending parents' consultation evenings and ensuring that their children come to school well equipped and well prepared. In turn, the school informs parents quickly when their children under-achieve and helps parents to monitor GCSE coursework. The effective partnership between home and school is a significant factor in raising standards. The partnership with parents of pupils with special educational needs is particularly effective: parents attend reviews of their children's progress and are pleased with the support the children receive.

48. Information for parents, including that contained in the prospectus and regular newsletters, is useful. Parents are also pleased with the written reports of their children's progress. Though these present a clear picture of progress, they could be further improved with more specific comments on ways to tackle weaknesses in each subject.

49. Constructive links with primary schools enable pupils to make a smooth transfer to Year 7. Curricular links have improved since the previous inspection and are now particularly strong in teaching literacy, information technology and modern foreign languages; for example, Year 6 pupils use the school's Internet facilities and modern foreign language teachers visit primary schools to give lessons in French and German.

50. Relationships with the local community are very constructive. School facilities are used by the community and the school benefits from its links with, for example, local radio and television, the parish church, and British Aerospace. Pupils are currently developing an Internet-based magazine *Montgomery Mondeal*, forging links with schools in Japan, Germany, the Czech Republic, Romania, USA and Canada.

51. The school has an excellent partnership with the business community, and raised a large sum of money through sponsorship to match government funding in the successful bid for specialist language college status. Strong links with industry enrich the curriculum; for example, in aeronautical engineering.

52. All Year 10 pupils have two weeks of work experience. Well established links with a number of local and international enterprises ensure that pupils have experiences which enrich their education for the world of work.

## THE MANAGEMENT AND EFFICIENCY OF THE SCHOOL

### Leadership and management

53. Overall, the school is well managed and it benefits from very strong leadership. The governors and Headteacher provide clear direction for the school.

54. The senior management team is six strong. The management structure has been significantly improved since the previous inspection. All senior managers have well-defined areas of responsibility which include school improvement, finance and administration, development of the language college, pupils' guidance and welfare, the curriculum and its development. The senior managers work well as a team and have abilities, skills and strengths which complement each other well.

55. The governors are active in their support of the school. They work well through their committees and generally fulfil their responsibilities; however, the school does not currently comply with legislation for appraisal of teaching staff. The governors have taken the decision to make the study of a design and technology subject in Key Stage 4 optional rather than compulsory in order to diversify foreign language learning as much as possible. Consequently, a number of Key Stage 4 pupils do not study design and technology and the requirements of the National Curriculum are not therefore fully met. The technology subjects are popular options, however, and standards are high in these subjects.

56. The pastoral system works very well. Its organisation includes heads of lower and upper schools, heads of year, coordination of careers education and work experience, and health and safety matters.

57. The management of subjects is generally effective and the learning support department is well managed. The academic structure is organised effectively and includes the management of education of pupils with special educational needs, curriculum leaders and subject leaders, coordinator of vocational courses, and the computer network manager. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is well managed.

58. The school achieves considerable success with its aims for an international approach to the curriculum and learning. The school provides a disciplined and purposeful learning environment. Very good relationships and very good behaviour help pupils to take full advantage of the opportunities offered.

59. The senior managers' monitoring of standards is effective and has been instrumental in raising standards. The teaching is good but there is still room to raise satisfactory teaching to match the better teaching and to improve provision more generally. The senior managers monitor the school's work in lessons at first hand but they need a sharper focus on teaching and subject planning to show how improvements can be made. The inspection reveals some weaknesses in subject planning, in consistency in implementation of policy, and in the teaching: these weaknesses are minor in themselves but are important when taken as a whole. All could be eliminated quite easily through more focused monitoring followed by action planning.

60. The school's planning is good and is instrumental in the school's drive for higher standards. Ambitious targets have been set for examination results for this academic year. In its development plan, the management identifies their school's priorities appropriately as curriculum development, internationalism within the language college, further raising of achievement, the development of information technology in all subjects, staff development, work towards the *Investors in People* award, increased responsibility for pupils, and even stronger links with parents and the community.

61. The school has improved well since the previous inspection. Since that time, its most significant achievement has been the realisation of language college status, and this in itself has done much to raise staff morale and expectations throughout the school. The Key Stage 3 test results have improved at a faster rate than nationally. The proportion of pupils achieving grades A\*-C in five or more subjects in the GCSE examinations has also improved at a faster rate than the national trend.

62. Since the previous inspection the school has tackled all of the issues for action successfully, and has the capability necessary to continue to make improvements.

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

63. The school has sufficient teachers to cover the curriculum, though the overall pupil-to-teacher ratio is higher than average. Teaching staff, including those responsible for pupils' special educational needs, are well qualified and experienced. Though there are some large classes, some are small.

64. Teachers' qualifications match the subjects taught. The amount of money spent on staff development is below average but training generally matches the school's priorities, as expressed in the development plan. The school is working towards the *Investors in People* award; however, a formal system for appraisal of teaching staff is no longer in place. The school is involved with the initial training of teachers. In general, the school benefits from this arrangement.

65. The staff has a good balance of new and experienced teachers. Newly qualified staff are well supported and have a reduced timetable to enable them to settle in and to attend school-based training. The teaching staff is stable, only five teachers having left and eight teachers having joined the school over the previous two years.

66. The school has eight educational support staff, which is below average for a school of this size. They are well qualified and trained, and work effectively to support pupils with statements of special educational needs.

67. Accommodation is in good condition; however, the school is very full and there is some crowding. The school has adequate outdoor facilities for games and team sports. The effect of crowding is most marked in mathematics, music, science and history. Accommodation for music has improved since the previous inspection but remains unsatisfactory because there are no practice rooms or additional spaces so that all work in composition and performance has to be done in one room which adversely affects progress. Large classes and relatively small classrooms limit the range of activities which can be carried out in science, geography and art. Changing rooms in the physical education department need refurbishment. The teaching rooms for modern foreign languages have been improved following the successful bid for language college status. Information technology has very good accommodation. A new building programme has begun and is expected to resolve the present difficulties by September 2000. Even with the new programme, however, it will not be possible to find space for the lockers that parents would like to see.

68. The school's resources for learning are good for most subjects though they are inadequate for music and for the small mathematics classes of pupils with special educational needs. The library and resources centre are good features. Although the library bookstock is smaller than average, good stocks of reference books are held in classrooms. Information technology facilities are very good. Subjects have sufficient money to meet planned expenditure for books and equipment.

..       **The efficiency of the school**

69. The school has a lower than average income per pupil. The budget clearly reflects the school's priorities and targets for development. During the period of major expansion with language college status, the school applied to the local authority for agreement to overspend which made possible the early installation of equipment and met the criteria for the next phase of government funding. The planned overspend is expected to be cleared by 2001.

70. Financial planning is very effective. The governing body and senior staff monitor spending effectively. The governors have a clear overview of the school's financial position and direction. The school development

plan has identified priorities and their costs clearly.

71. Special funds made available for training are spent prudently. The funding provided by the local authority to support designated pupils with special educational needs is spent appropriately. School funding for special educational needs is used very efficiently to promote pupils' progress through the provision of specialist teachers, smaller teaching groups, general classroom support, learning resources, and staff training. The spending of other additional grants is efficiently targeted and evaluated: for example, the success of the summer literacy scheme was thoroughly analysed in relation to costs and benefits.

72. Money made available to subjects is spent effectively. Staff are deployed efficiently in most areas of the school. Though shared teaching of classes accounts for three per cent of lessons, this is a far smaller proportion than at the time of the previous inspection. Support staff are generally well deployed.

73. The school makes very good use of available resources for learning. Accommodation is cramped but is used efficiently. The learning resource centre and the school's good facilities for information technology are used very effectively. The school is open at weekends and during most of the holiday period for use by pupils, the community and local primary schools.

74. Accounting procedures and administration are very efficient and ensure that governors are fully briefed on financial matters. The management of finance in subject departments is good.

75. At the time of the last inspection, the school gave good value for money. Pupils' socio-economic circumstances are average and the attainment of the annual Year 7 intake of pupils is also broadly average. Pupils make good progress throughout the school and achieve above average examination results. The teaching is good and pupils respond very well to the good quality of education they receive. The school has improved significantly since the previous inspection: in particular, it has achieved language college status and GCSE examination results have steadily improved. In view of these factors, and the relatively low cost of educating a pupil, the inspectors find that the school continues to give good value for money.

## **PART B: CURRICULUM AREAS AND SUBJECTS**

### **ENGLISH, MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCE**

#### **English**

76. The good standards reported at the time of the last inspection have been maintained or improved, mainly as a result of better teaching and planning. The recommendation that, in English, subject planning should be revised, has been implemented effectively.

77. National test results at the end of Key Stage 3 were well above average in 1998 and have been so over a period of three years, during which time they improved at a faster rate than nationally. The 1998 results were also well above the average for similar schools. The 1999 results were not as good as those of 1998. Boys perform less well than girls, but the relative performance does not differ significantly from the national picture. GCSE results were above average for both boys and girls, in terms of the proportions achieving grades A\*-C, in both English and English literature examinations in 1998, and over the last three years. In 1999, results were similar to those of 1998. Boys performed slightly less well in literature in 1999, as in most years. Girls also outperform boys in the GCSE media studies examination. Over 30 candidates each year are entered for this subject and over half usually achieve grades A\*-C.

78. When pupils enter the school, their attainment in English is a little below average in most years. They make good overall progress in Key Stage 3. Year 7 pupils appreciate sound patterns in verse through attempting to write poems themselves. Their reading skills develop well in regular class reading with a judicious choice of texts. They also develop word processing skills effectively in computer-based lessons and improve speaking and listening skills through well-structured class discussions. Year 8 pupils refine their note-making skills effectively and learn to analyse character in stories. Drafting skills are further refined in Year 9, in which classes discussed the use of settings in stories and attempted to write in a range of genres. By the end of Key Stage 3, pupils can write in a variety of styles, and sometimes at length. Pupils read well for their age and they respond to literary texts in detail, both in discussions and in written work. A Year 9 group, for example, confidently discussed features of the Gothic novel. Pupils redraft written work effectively, and their use of English becomes more accurate by the end of the key stage. Speaking and listening skills are also well developed by this time. By the end of the key stage, pupils' overall attainment is above average.

79. Pupils continue to make good overall progress in Key Stage 4, as seen both in lessons and in the portfolios of written work that each pupil is building up. Year 10 pupils increase their understanding of literary texts by writing about them, and of media forms, such as advertisements, by constructing their own. Year 11 pupils have acquired a good grasp of their set texts, and are ready to draw out contemporary issues, such as gender conflict, from their understanding of, for instance, Shakespeare's *Taming of the Shrew*. By the end of the key stage, overall attainment is above average. Many pupils can write at considerable length on a range of topics and in a variety of styles, including personal and imaginative writing. Most pupils write with accuracy and care. They relate thoughtfully to a range of texts, fictional and non-fictional. Good examples of this occurred in a Year 11 class's analysis of an 18th century poem, and a lower attaining class's response to *Of Mice and Men*. Pupils use their skills in speaking and listening to engage in fruitful class discussions on themes in the texts. Note-making is a skill that most have developed successfully. Information technology is used frequently in the production of final drafts of work, particularly assessed coursework. By the end of the key stage, overall attainment is again above average.

80. Pupils' attitudes are good. They enjoy their work, and respond well to the tasks they are given. They work effectively in pairs and in small groups. Behaviour in class is usually good, and relationships with teachers and with each other are good. Pupils show independence and take initiative, for instance, in producing fair copies of their work on a computer without being prompted to do so.

81. The teaching is good in both key stages. Nearly 80 per cent of lessons observed were good; 10 per cent were very good and none was unsatisfactory. Teachers have a good knowledge and understanding of their subject, and use these well in, for instance, the study of texts; references to the use of heroic couplets or Steinbeck's presentation of the American Dream are used confidently. Teachers have high expectations of

pupils; for example, a lower set was asked to reproduce the rhyme scheme and rhythm of poems. Planning is good and results in well-paced lessons with a clear sense of direction. Teachers use a variety of methods successfully, ranging from story-writing to quizzes, from impromptu speaking to media analysis. Pupils are managed well, and the rare disciplinary problems are dealt with effectively. Resources are used well, particularly worksheets and coursebooks, and teachers make excellent use of computer technology when they have access to rooms that are equipped for this purpose. Homework is set regularly and written work marked thoroughly. Assessment is very thorough and the progress of each pupil is carefully monitored which is a factor in the improvement of standards. The curriculum is enriched by the inclusion of both media studies and drama as options at Key Stage 4, and pupils are well prepared for work in these areas in Key Stage 3. The literacy programme in Key Stage 3 is proving particularly effective in raising standards, and has developed considerably since the previous inspection. Most pupils are entered for literature as well as English at GCSE, although a small number take the lower level Certificate of Achievement. English is a well managed subject and the teachers work very effectively as a team, for example, to share their planning and use of resources.

### ***Drama***

82. Drama is taught within the English department in Key Stage 3, but is a discrete subject in Key Stage 4, where there are now two GCSE classes in each year. Well over half the pupils entered have attained grades A\*-C in the GCSE examinations over the past four years. The proportion of boys achieving these grades is below the national average but girls usually achieve above average examination results. Progress, particularly of girls, is good throughout both key stages, and can be attributed to good teaching. Several teachers are qualified in drama as well as English. Classes explore the potential of monologues and improvisation. Pupils are well motivated, particularly those preparing pieces for assessment. Pupils plan work and present it together, often in mixed groups, with a confident sense of how to use their voices and bodies. The opportunities for working together on tasks add considerably to the personal development of the pupils involved, even those for whom high attainment in examinations is unlikely. The drama teachers are greatly involved in extracurricular activities and the drama club and school productions benefit from staff involvement. Three productions a year are usual, and there are also strong links with work in local theatre and circus. Many pupils participate in extra-curricular drama, which greatly enriches their educational experience. The present accommodation, including dining hall space, is inadequate. The new building programme, due to start shortly, is expected to remedy this situation.

### ***Key Skills - literacy***

83. Pupils' literacy skills support their learning effectively in all subjects. Reading is generally sound: pupils are expected to read out loud in various subjects, and do so well. Reading skills are sufficient to support, for instance, vocal work in music and scripted drama work. Lower attaining pupils in mathematics read and follow instructions to use computers effectively. Personal reading is encouraged through the literacy scheme as well as through English lessons. When allowed to do so, pupils talk fluently and collaborate well in groupwork. Pupils offer answers in lessons, but are also attentive when teachers are talking. Some lower attaining pupils express their knowledge and understanding fluently, but have difficulty in transferring their speech into acceptable writing. In modern foreign languages, listening and speaking are particular strengths. The majority of pupils write in increasingly extended forms for a variety of readerships. In geography, for instance, they write imaginatively in weather forecasting and in writing newspaper reports about a natural disaster. Extended writing features in several subjects, and is usually very well presented, often using computer technology. Writing is a strength in modern foreign languages and pupils' good understanding of grammar and tenses enables them to tackle written work confidently. Accuracy in spelling, grammar and punctuation varies across the range of pupils in the school, but all show skills which are at least satisfactory. The literacy programme is making a significant contribution to the teaching of these skills. Special funding was forthcoming to run the two-week summer literacy schools that now take place annually, and most of the pupils in need of extra help attend them. Pupils with special educational needs in literacy are well supported and their difficulties tackled effectively. An effective reading scheme helps younger readers paired with specially trained Year 10 pupils. The social benefits derived from this scheme are valuable and its success in improving reading skills is clear since some of the pupils helped are now in upper sets for English as a result of the scheme. Independent reading is developed effectively both through the paired scheme and through regular silent reading in tutor groups.



## .. **Mathematics**

84. The results of the 1998 national Key Stage 3 tests were well above the national average and were very high in comparison with the average for similar schools. Over the three-year period up to 1998, results improved at a faster rate than those nationally. The proportion of pupils achieving the higher levels in 1999 was slightly lower than in the previous year. The 1998 GCSE examination results were above average both in terms of the proportion achieving grades A\*-C and in the proportion gaining A\*-G. Again, girls achieved more highly than boys. There has been a steady improvement over the three-year period up to 1998. The results for 1999 show a further improvement.

85. Pupils make good overall progress in each of the key stages, increasing their knowledge, skills and understanding at a good rate in number, algebra, shape and space and data-handling. The development of pupils' ability to use and apply mathematical skills to extended pieces of work is satisfactory. Planning for progression from Key Stage 3 to Key Stage 4 is good; however, on one occasion Year 7 pupils spent too much time repeating work they had done in primary school. By the end of each key stage, overall attainment is above average. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress but, in Key Stage 4, some of the resources are not well matched to their needs.

86. Mathematics teachers have begun to place greater emphasis on the development of mental numeracy skills and have introduced a number of positive strategies to improve these skills. In a Year 8 lesson, for example, pupils enjoyed looking for strategies for multiplication of two-digit numbers mentally. Calculators are used effectively, but not always appropriately or efficiently, by all pupils. However, a significant number of pupils across both key stages rely far too much on calculators. Higher attaining pupils cope well with algebra. For example, Year 11 pupils are succeeding with trial-and-improvement methods to solve quadratic equations.

87. Most pupils' attainment in shape and space is above average. Lower attaining Year 9 pupils have a sound understanding of the symmetries of regular polygons. Middle and higher attaining pupils apply formulae correctly to find the circumference and diameter of circles. The theorem of Pythagoras is applied accurately to a variety of two-dimensional problems. This work in geometry is extended in Key Stage 4 when higher attaining pupils tackle graphs of trigonometrical functions.

88. Data-handling skills are above average by the end of each key stage. Lower attaining Year 7 pupils enjoy using computers to draw and interpret a variety of graphs and charts, making good progress in mathematics and having to read and think for themselves. Most pupils continue to make good progress with statistics in Key Stage 4.

89. Pupils have good attitudes. They arrive promptly for lessons, settle quickly and listen attentively. Relationships with their teachers and one another are very good. All take responsibility for their own learning by producing homework on time. A significant number of Key Stage 4 pupils attend after-school tuition, with the aim of improving their chances of high grades in the GCSE examination. However, pupils have too few opportunities to contribute actively to discussion or to work collaboratively.

90. The teaching is good overall. In the 23 lessons visited during the inspection, teaching was good or very good in eight of them and satisfactory in the rest. The strongest features of the teaching are the teachers' command of the subject, very good discipline, and commitment to raising standards. Use of time is satisfactory and was particularly good in one lesson that was well structured and allowed time at the end of the lesson to assess pupils' level of understanding and clarify lingering misconceptions. Teachers' expectations are generally appropriate and sometimes very high. The use of information technology has improved since the last inspection. Assessment is effective. A weakness is a lack of variety in teaching strategies. Teachers do not make effective use of question and answer techniques and there is too little use of class discussion or opportunity for pupils to collaborate. Too great a reliance is placed on the one textbook.

### .. ***Key skills – numeracy across the curriculum***

91. Pupils' mathematical skills are adequate for those subjects where they are used. For example, in geography the presentation and analysis of field work data are good. Calculation skills are used effectively in chemistry, and pupils' knowledge of trigonometry was applied competently in a Year 10 physics lesson. Mathematics is

not used enough in design and technology, and mathematical skills are rarely used in most other subjects of the curriculum. The school as yet has no policy for the development of numeracy across the curriculum though the school's development plan shows that this is to be tackled. A coordinator for numeracy has been appointed.

92. The department is well led, much has been achieved since the previous inspection and achievement has risen substantially. However, greater emphasis on numeracy in all subjects could help to raise standards still further.

## " Science

93. At the time of the previous inspection, the national Key Stage 3 test results were above average and GCSE results were below average. Since then, achievement has been sustained at Key Stage 3 and raised at GCSE.

94. In 1998, the results of the national Key Stage 3 science tests were above the national average and were well above average in comparison with those of schools taking pupils from similar backgrounds. Boys' and girls' results were both above average, though boys achieved higher results than girls. Similar results were achieved consistently over the three-year period 1996-1998. In 1999, the results were not as good as in the previous year. The pattern of GCSE examination entry is complicated because most pupils take dual award GCSE science (equivalent to two GCSE subjects) whilst others take three separate sciences. Taking these factors into consideration, and comparing the proportion of the school's Year 11 population achieving at least two science GCSEs at grades A\*-C with that found nationally, the inspectors find that the GCSE results were above average in 1998. The pattern was similar in 1999.

95. Pupils make good progress in Key Stage 3. Pupils make best progress in practical work which draws on their good understanding of scientific ideas; for example, in a practical Year 9 chemistry lesson, pupils came to correct conclusions about their investigations through their knowledge of chemical formulae. By the end of Year 9, overall attainment is above average.

96. Pupils make good overall progress in Key Stage 4. Lower attaining pupils make good progress, especially when teaching is lively and imaginative, as was seen in a practical Year 10 lesson in which pupils successfully investigated mass and weight, using a computer spreadsheet effectively to check the accuracy of their calculations. Pupils taking the dual award science course make good progress. However, some pupils taking separate science courses find the work very demanding though they are well motivated to succeed. By the end of the GCSE course, overall attainment is again above average and many pupils achieve high standards.

97. Pupils have very good attitudes to the subject. They generally show interest in science and are particularly enthusiastic about practical and experimental work. They listen attentively to explanations and follow instructions carefully. They sustain concentration for the full length of the lesson. Pupils behave well and show respect for equipment. They are courteous and trustworthy, and collaborate effectively when working in pairs or small groups. They take initiative when the opportunity arises and older pupils conduct experimental and other practical work independently.

98. The teaching is good overall and has improved since the previous inspection. It is satisfactory in each key stage 3. Teaching was satisfactory in five of the 13 lessons visited during the inspection. It was good in a further three lessons and very good in four. Teachers have a good command of the subject. Much of the good teaching is characterised by enthusiasm for the subject and a lively approach. Lessons are well paced, having a suitable introduction, main task and plenary session. Planning is good and pupils' tasks are planned effectively to match the differing levels of attainment. Teachers have high expectations and pupils are appropriately challenged in lessons. Discipline is sound and pupils respond well to the teachers' effective management of them. Teachers use resources effectively on the whole, but wider use of atomic models in association with equations in chemistry would help the understanding of simple chemical reactions. On occasions, some teachers tend to rely too much on the textbook. Though pupils all carry out investigational work, a greater emphasis on this important aspect of science learning could improve the pupils' experience of a balance of scientific activities. On the other hand, investigative work in Year 11 is more thorough and complete. Some

opportunities to use information technology in science lessons are missed. Assessment is well developed and useful. Marking is thorough and constructive. The technical support is barely sufficient for a department of this size: the technicians provide very valuable assistance but there are only two of them and one is part-time.

## **OTHER SUBJECTS OR COURSES**

### **Art**

99. Standards achieved by pupils at the time of the previous inspection were broadly average in each key stage. Since the previous inspection, GCSE results have gradually improved and were considerably above average in 1998. Boys did better than girls. In 1999, results were again good though less so than those of the previous year. In each of the last five years art has been a successful subject at GCSE in terms of 'adding value'. Despite the good examination results, attainment can be raised further.

100. The inspection of lessons and of pupils' work indicates that overall attainment is broadly average by the end of Key Stage 3 and the Key Stage 4 GCSE course. Pupils make sound overall progress in each key stage; those pupils with special educational needs are well integrated in classes and consequently make similar progress to that of others. In pottery, pupils are stronger on three-dimensional realisation than two-dimensional preparation work but make good progress in the construction of final pieces. In both key stages, pupils develop claywork skills and the ability to use tools effectively. They develop both slab and coil techniques and the use of applied and incised design work satisfactorily. Final pieces are mainly sound in both shape and form, for example in relation to Art Deco or decorative pattern in the style of Clarice Cliff. Initial two-dimensional work in Key Stage 3 suitably emphasises the development of visual elements such as pattern, tone and texture. In this respect, Year 7 pupils' work is at least satisfactory and much is good. In some other ways, however, progress through Key Stage 3 is more limited. Drawing and the colouring of drawings receive too much emphasis, so that colour is used insufficiently for its own sake. The general standard of work in sketchbooks, in each key stage, is unsatisfactory because teaching does not lay enough stress on the central importance of sketching for the preparation and development of work.

101. Pupils have satisfactory attitudes towards their lessons in each key stage. They behave well and collaborate satisfactorily when setting up practical sessions or when using or sharing tools and other resources. Pace is satisfactory in pottery lessons and pupils are well motivated. However, in painting and drawing lessons pupils get on with their individual work but sometimes lack enthusiasm. By contrast, pupils often show enjoyment in the practical aspects of making pottery. In their other artwork, however, pupils are too often content with work that is satisfactory rather than creative and challenging.

102. The teaching is satisfactory overall though curriculum planning for Key Stage 3 needs updating. Of the ten lessons visited during the inspection, six were satisfactory and two were good. The main weakness is that use of sketchbooks and other preparatory work are underdeveloped. At Key Stage 4, secondary source material is used too much as a starting point rather than the development of the pupils' own creative and imaginative work. Teachers' responses to pupils' work and efforts show a proper valuing of their achievements and this is a good feature of the teaching. Teachers discuss pupils' work with them individually and help them to identify common problems and to make progress. There are too few planned opportunities to help develop critical and analytical skills. Teaching is satisfactory in pottery and is good in Key Stage 4 when skilful, practical demonstration of clay work techniques develops pupils' skills effectively. Information technology is making a positive contribution on the subject, for example to undertake research work in Art Deco and its influence on ceramics. Assessment is insufficiently well developed through either longer term or lesson planning. Teachers' assessment of pottery work in lessons provides pupils with a clear idea as to their progress but in some other art lessons teachers do not give pupils a clear idea of the standards they are achieving or their potential for improvement.

### **Design and technology**

103. The examination results have very much improved since the previous inspection. GCSE results have improved for each of the last three years and are well above national averages. The results were well above

average in 1998 and better still in 1999.

104. All pupils, including those with special needs, make good progress in Key Stage 3. Boys and girls make similar progress. Teaching is planned so that pupils develop their knowledge and designing and making skills consistently well in a variety of materials and contexts. By the end of Key Stage 3, attainment is above average and teachers' end of key stage assessments indicate that the great majority of pupils reach nationally expected standards. Both design and practical work are good. Pupils' folders are well organised and indicate sound development in knowledge and understanding of the design process and the quality of written and drawn work is good. All pupils carry out research, develop their design ideas and present these clearly. Higher attaining pupils produce very good work in terms of content and presentation. Practical skills are satisfactory overall and the standard of some work is high. The quality of practical work varies but some pupils produce good practical work.

105. Pupils continue to make good progress in Key Stage 4, in which they follow a structured approach to the design process which enables all pupils, boys and girls, to make good progress. All pupils produce well-structured design folders and practical work which are in line with the requirements of the GCSE examinations. Many boys and girls produce work of a very good standard in each of the design and technology subjects. The design process is enhanced by extended research and analysis, often by obtaining information from a range of sources including effective use of information technology. By the end of the GCSE course, overall attainment is again above average. The best work is very high in quality, in terms of research, analysis and development of design ideas. Final designs are well made using a range of appropriate materials and skills, and pupils' evaluation of their work is well thought out.

106. Pupils' have good attitudes to the subject and their behaviour in lessons is very good. They are interested in their work and sustain concentration well. Pupils are keen to do well and take responsibility for their own work. Very good established working relationships make for a very positive working atmosphere in lessons.

107. Teaching is always satisfactory and in most lessons it is good or very good. Teachers have good subject knowledge and both long-term planning and the planning of individual lessons is good. Lesson objectives are clear to pupils. Teachers use a variety of teaching methods and good teaching aids, example materials and demonstrations effectively to illustrate points and stimulate pupils to produce interesting work. The general management of pupils and resources is good. Teachers expect and maintain good standards of discipline and a very good working atmosphere is created in most lessons. Time is used effectively. Homework is set regularly but the marking of work contains too few detailed written comments. The number of teachers is just sufficient but would not be so if all pupils were to take a design and technology subject in Key Stage 4.

## .. **Geography**

108. Since the previous inspection, GCSE results have improved. They improved steadily over a period of three years to 1997, though they fell below average in 1998. Results improved greatly in 1999. The subject attracts a comparatively large proportion of lower attaining pupils. Over the past two years, these lower attaining pupils have done particularly well in geography at GCSE. Girls outperform boys in this subject.

109. All pupils make good progress through Key Stage 3. Year 7 pupils make rapid progress, settling quickly into new routines. Higher attaining pupils make good progress, for example in understanding how international aid is organised. Where lower attainers and those with special educational needs have extra support in the classroom they make very quick progress, but there are some classes where there is no support for these pupils. Pupils do not always have a clear idea of their attainment or how they can improve. Teachers use the school grounds well to promote practical geography but pupils lack experience of field work at this key stage to give them a better start to GCSE coursework at Key Stage 4. By the end of Key Stage 3, overall attainment is above average. Teachers' Key Stage 3 assessments indicate that the majority of pupils reach expected standards.

110. Pupils make good progress in Key Stage 4 considering that many of the lower attaining pupils choose geography as a GCSE option. In contrast to the previous key stage, pupils are well prepared for field work. Pupils make rapid progress in understanding the complexities of world trade and how different economies

develop. By the end of Key Stage 4, overall standards are broadly average.

111. Attainment and revision are well supported by regular use of past GCSE questions and booklets of printed materials which also contain the pupils' own notes; these booklets are well produced within the department and justify their high cost of printing.

112. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are generally good and often very good. Pupils settle to work quickly and listen attentively but some, especially girls, do not respond readily enough to teachers' questions unless prompted. When allowed, pupils work well in pairs and join in lively group discussions. They manage their own work effectively. They react with interest to lessons especially when the teacher makes use of videos, transparencies and slides.

113. Teaching is good overall. It is never less than satisfactory; it is good in half of all lessons and some is of very high quality at both key stages. The strength of the teaching lies in good team-work and effective planning. Materials and equipment are well chosen and activities are varied. Relationships are very good. The use of information technology enhances pupils' learning. Written comments in pupils' exercise books do not show weaknesses sufficiently clearly or indicate ways in which pupils could improve. Teachers rightly identify field work as a priority for improvement at Key Stage 3. Demanding homework tasks effectively complement classwork. Geography makes a positive contribution to the development of literacy and information technology. Social skills and thinking skills to solve problems develop well in some lessons. The application of mathematical knowledge and skills is unplanned and therefore does not effectively support the development of numeracy.

## **History**

114. The teaching has improved since the previous inspection. The 1998 GCSE examination results were above the national average. The 1999 results fell a little below those of the previous year. Over time results have fluctuated with no overall trend. There is little difference in the performance of girls and boys at GCSE.

115. Pupils make good overall progress through Key Stage 3. Lower attaining, average and higher attaining pupils make similar progress in relation to their differing starting points. Year 7 pupils are making good progress in mapping the growth of the Roman Empire, using a sound understanding of chronology to identify correctly the countries that were absorbed at different stages. Higher attaining Year 9 pupils make good progress in their understanding of the advantages to industry of the development of the road system in the late eighteenth century and draft well-reasoned letters to bid for new turnpike franchises. Many pupils in Key Stage 3 communicate their knowledge and understanding more effectively in their speaking than in their written work. Pupils' grasp of chronology is better developed than their skills of analysis of source materials, though these are satisfactory. Year 8 pupils successfully identify the grievances which prompted the launching of the Spanish Armada and use role-play effectively to present the Spanish view of events. By the end of Key Stage 3, overall attainment is average.

116. Pupils choosing to study history to GCSE continue to make good progress in Key Stage 4. Year 10 pupils' good grasp of the strategic importance of Ypres for the defence of the channel ports in the First World War enables them to make rational judgements of the value placed on its capture by both British and German high commands. Year 11 pupils studying documentary sources, successfully identify bias and the manipulation of evidence employed by the Nazi party in their attempt to justify their treatment of Jewish people in Germany. These Year 11 pupils have a very good grasp of both the strengths and weaknesses of *Schindler's List* as a source upon which to make judgments on the treatment of the Jewish people in occupied Poland during World War II. Overall attainment by the end of the GCSE course is above average, broadly reflecting the examination results.

117. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good and are sometimes excellent. Pupils sustain concentration very well and listen attentively to one another and the teacher. Pupils generally take pride in the presentation of their work. A high proportion of pupils following the GCSE course display a good capacity for independent,

personal study. When given the opportunity to work collaboratively, pupils do so very well. History is a popular subject at GCSE.

118. Teaching is good overall though it is stronger in Key Stage 4 than Key Stage 3. Teachers mostly have good knowledge and understanding of their subject. The management of pupils is very good and discipline is excellent. Lessons are varied in approach, though opportunities for pupils to manage their own learning, through research, for example, are limited. Planning is satisfactory but sometimes fails to take account of the needs of least and most able pupils in the class. The GCSE work builds well on work done in Key Stage 3. Much attention is given to history's contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural education of pupils. Pupils' learning is enriched by field studies. However, information technology is not used sufficiently. The marking of pupils' work is largely consistent, systematic and informative. Key Stage 3 assessments have not been standardised and are therefore unreliable.

### **Information technology**

119. In the previous inspection standards in Key Stage 3 and GCSE examination results were above average. Information technology was not used sufficiently in other subjects but this has improved.

120. GCSE results are consistently above average. In 1998, they were well above average and in 1999, they rose further. Many pupils also successfully take GCSE and GCE AS level at the end of Year 10. Pupils taking GNVQ courses succeed in achieving their qualifications.

121. All pupils make good overall progress in Key Stage 3. All pupils, including those with special needs, make similar progress in relation to their differing starting points. Higher attaining pupils are given extended tasks which enable them to excel. Pupils gain knowledge and experience of working in the range of work specified by the National Curriculum, and learn to appreciate the effects and influences of computers on society. Pupils develop skills and confidence by working through set exercises and become more capable as they apply these skills in their work. By the end of Key Stage 3, attainment is above average. Teachers' assessments at the end of the key stage indicate that the great majority of pupils reach expected standards. Boys' and girls' attainment shows little difference.

122. Pupils continue to make good progress in Key Stage 4. They make good progress in word processing, desktop publishing, databases, spreadsheets and information retrieval. They also make good progress in the application of microprocessors to control and monitor external events, and in understanding the social, economic, ethical and moral issues raised by the use of computers. Pupils develop skills and confidence with a good range of software. They analyse problems and develop action plans which set out the appropriate software to be used. They develop the ability to present outcomes effectively. Work is constantly improved and pupils successfully evaluate their own work. By the end of Key Stage 4, overall attainment is well above average and pupils taking examination courses reach high standards.

123. Pupils have good attitudes towards their learning and their behaviour is also good. Pupils show considerable interest when using computers and all sustain their concentration well. Pupils are keen to practise and produce individual work, and their use of information technology for researching information is becoming more productive. As pupils develop knowledge and skills they have increasing opportunities to show initiative and act responsibly. Pupils respond positively to teachers' high expectations. Relationships are good and pupils collaborate well.

124. The teaching is never less than satisfactory and is good in two thirds of lessons. Teachers have good technical knowledge and support pupils effectively when they have difficulties. They expect high achievement. Lesson planning is good and an appropriate range of teaching methods is used. Pupils are well managed and consequently working relationships and discipline are good. Good assessment procedures are in place and pupils receive frequent information about the quality of their work through individual teaching. Homework is used well to extend classwork. Since the last inspection, resources and accommodation have improved.

### ***Key skills – information technology across the curriculum***

125. An increasing number of pupils make effective use of computers in their work in some but not all subjects. Pupils have very good skills in using computers for a variety of purposes. They present examination coursework skilfully and attractively using word processing and graphs. They research information from the Internet and from reference material held on compact disk.

.. **Modern foreign languages**

126. The previous inspection found attainment in both key stages was average. GCSE results in languages have improved substantially since the previous inspection. Proportions of pupils achieving GCSE grades A\*-C in French in 1998 were above the national average. Results in German were average. In 1999, results were not quite so good in French but improved greatly in German. Though boys perform less well than girls, they perform significantly better than boys nationally.

127. Pupils make very good progress in Key Stage 3. Listening and speaking are particular strengths and boys and girls perform equally well. Writing is also a strength because pupils acquire an understanding of basic rules of grammar and are introduced to tenses early. However, there is scope for pupils to develop their reading skills further, for example, by reading short stories on a regular basis. Most pupils understand classroom instructions, they can listen for detail, engage in a dialogue, read a short text and write a simple account. Higher attaining pupils speak and write more confidently and at greater length, and their knowledge of tenses and awareness of structures enable many of them to reach well above the expected standard. Lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs make steady gains in knowledge and understanding so that they reach an appropriate level of attainment in each skill. By the end of Key Stage 3, pupils' overall attainment in French and German is above average.

128. Since the previous inspection, opportunities for pupils to study more than one language in Key Stage 3 have been introduced. From Year 8, the vast majority of pupils study both German and French, followed in Year 9 by a short taster course in Spanish for all pupils. In addition, the most able linguists in Year 9 start to learn Japanese in the summer term. There are now regular opportunities for pupils to develop their skills in the use of information technology in both key stages.

129. Pupils make good progress in Key Stage 4, building on the secure foundation laid in Key Stage 3, showing continued strengths in listening and speaking. Average attainers extract factual information from tapes and printed material. Pupils are taught in small classes and make very good progress in speaking; for example, a class spoke about healthy eating with the confidence and fluency consistent with higher level GCSE. Higher attaining pupils listen attentively to lengthier tapes and read more complex material. In discussion and written work based on a variety of topics, most pupils express their ideas and opinions fluently and confidently. Pupils with special educational needs follow a modular vocational course leading to a Certificate of Achievement and make good progress towards the targets set for them. By the end of the key stage, pupils' overall attainment in French and German is above average.

130. Courses in French or German leading to GCSE are taken by well over 90 per cent of pupils. Increasing numbers of pupils choose to study a second or third language. The first entry for Spanish GCSE will be in the year 2000. The first pupils to study Japanese are working towards the Certificate of Achievement.

131. Pupils have very good attitudes to language learning and thoroughly enjoy their lessons, particularly the oral activities, which make learning languages such fun. They listen well and enjoy working in pairs. Behaviour is very good. Relationships between pupils and their teachers are very positive. Pupils willingly give up their free time to improve their language competence, for example by attending Japanese lessons, lunchtime language clubs or conversation classes laid on by the foreign language assistants. Pupils appreciate the help and support of their teachers.

132. The quality of teaching is good. It is never less than satisfactory, is good in most lessons and sometimes it is very good. Very good leadership ensures that teachers work well together as a team sharing common goals to raise standards and that teaching methods used across the department are consistent. Planning is thorough and activities and resources are carefully chosen to stimulate interest, to build pupils' confidence and to ensure progression. Homework forms an integral part of this planning, with a strong emphasis placed on learning by heart. Assessment is thorough and used to review planning and set targets. In the most successful lessons,

teachers work imaginatively with their pupils in the modern foreign language, employing good questioning techniques with flashcards and making very effective use of the overhead projector. They skilfully draw out the best in their pupils by setting high expectations in terms of quality of work and by giving frequent praise.

133. Very strong subject leadership and vision have led to the successful implementation of many new initiatives since the previous inspection, especially the recent winning of language college status. New languages have recently been introduced and are studied by increasing numbers of pupils. Work in local primary schools includes the teaching of French, German and Japanese in those schools for one afternoon each week. Links with schools abroad greatly benefit pupils.

.. **Music**

134. Very few pupils take music to GCSE level, nevertheless examination results are consistently above average.

135. When pupils enter Year 7 their knowledge, skills and experience vary widely. Some are already advanced performers with wide experience and good skills in musical literacy, while others have little musical accomplishment. A significant minority, 76 pupils throughout the school, have regular instrumental lessons and do well. Pupils make satisfactory overall progress through Key Stage 3 and the best musicians make particularly good progress. These able pupils are well above average for their age in performance, and average or above average in composition and listening by the end of the key stage. Other pupils, including those with special educational needs, often make good progress in individual lessons but performance and composition are hindered by the inadequate accommodation though the new building programme will remedy this situation. Resources are also inadequate. In consequence of the deficiencies in resources and the accommodation, some average and lower attaining pupils are still working towards nationally expected standards at the end of Year 9. By the end of the key stage, overall attainment is broadly average. Most pupils who choose to continue music in Key Stage 4 are able instrumentalists. They make good progress through the GCSE course. By the end of the course, attainment is above average.

136. In Key Stage 3, most pupils come to lessons expecting to enjoy hard work. They show interest, are willing and cooperative and most of them maintain good concentration and take pride in achievement, though a few have difficulty in concentrating but respond well to firm control. Inadequate accommodation for group work and a lack of tuned instruments lead to too few opportunities for pupils to show initiative and act responsibly. Relationships with pupils and teachers are very good, and almost all pupils are courteous, reliable and respectful of property and the feelings of others. Attitudes in Key Stage 4 are excellent and as there is less crowding than in larger Key Stage 3 classes, pupils can show initiative and take responsibility for their own progress.

137. Teaching is good overall. It is always satisfactory and mostly good, with many instances of excellent practice. Specialist staff are skilled musicians with an understanding of how pupils learn, and use a wide variety of methodologies and strategies. Expectations are usually high, though higher attaining Key Stage 3 pupils could be challenged further. Pupils are controlled in a warm, friendly climate for learning, and the better lessons are taught with enthusiasm, humour, energy and infectious enjoyment. Pace is suitably varied, and instructions and explanations are clear. Schemes of work, though carefully planned, do not include enough extended tasks for the more able. Assessment in Key Stage 3 focuses on knowledge to the neglect of skills, and pupils are given little opportunity to appraise and assess their own work and that of others. This detracts from the value of assessment as a guide to future planning and as an aid to ensuring that all pupils make good progress in all aspects of the subject. At present the subject lacks space and resources, and makes insufficient use of information technology as an aid to composition. However, the teachers efficiently use such resources as they have.



138. Very generous time is given to extra-curricular activities, many of which are open to all pupils and are of a high standard. A performance of *Annie* is planned for next term. Shows, concerts and recitals enhance the cultural life of the school and the community, and are an excellent shop window for the school.

### **Physical education**

139. The 1998 GCSE results were well below the national average, but those for 1999 showed an immense improvement. The leadership of the subject is very effective and is taking the subject forward. Consequently, the subject ethos is very positive; standards are high and improving.

140. Pupils make good progress throughout Key stage 3. Pupils with special educational needs make very good progress. In lessons, standards are generally satisfactory and sometimes good. Some pupils make excellent progress in gymnastics, especially in Year 7, putting skills of rolling, balancing and moving into sequences, and linking these movements fluently. Year 7 pupils make good progress in hockey, learning skills of hitting accurately and dribbling the ball with control. By the end of the key stage, overall standards are average.

141. Pupils continue to make good progress in Key Stage 4. Rugby is played to a high level with skill and commitment. Handling skills are good. The progress in the GCSE course is very good, and this is reflected in the latest examination results. Pupils with special educational needs make very good progress in lessons, tackling the same work as other pupils. By the end of the key stage, attainment is average overall. Standards are above average in rugby, in which Year 11 pupils have a sound understanding of the laws of the game and passing and tackling skills are good. Standards in the GCSE course are also average.

142. Pupils' attitudes to physical education are very good and sometimes excellent, especially in Key Stage 3. Pupils' attitudes to the GCSE course are very good. Pupils come to lessons with enthusiasm, work hard and concentrate well on tasks set. They listen attentively to instructions, are articulate and take part in discussion. Behaviour is very good and pupils are always appropriately turned out for physical activities. They work collaboratively in groups and help each other. They enjoy their lessons and relationships with the teachers are good.

143. The teaching is good overall. All the teaching observed was at least satisfactory, with two thirds being good or very good. Teachers' knowledge of the subject is secure. Planning is good and lessons move at a brisk pace. Teachers know their pupils well and relationships with pupils are very good and a strength of the department. Pupils work hard to meet the high standards set by teachers though sometimes too much is expected from pupils when they lack the required skills and experience to cope with difficult activities, for example in basketball. Although the curriculum meets statutory requirements at both key stages, no dance is taught. The procedure for assessing pupils' attainment in physical education is good but reports to parents, though indicating clearly the quality of pupils' effort and attitude, do not evaluate pupils' progress sufficiently well.

144. There is a wide range of extracurricular activities on offer and 300 pupils regularly participate in these. School teams are successful in a number of sports and individual pupils have achieved success at area, regional, and county level. The girls' under-16 football team won the Lancashire Championship in 1997, 1998 and 1999, and the National Championship in 1997. The school has won two prestigious awards which reflect the high quality of the work of the physical education teachers: the Sportsmark award in 1998, and the F.A. Charter Award for Football. The provision for outdoor education is very impressive. It is excellent and plays an important part in the life of the school, involving many teachers and pupils. A substantial number of teachers hold leadership qualifications in outdoor pursuits, for example in mountain walking and climbing. Pupils greatly benefit from the school's special strength in these and other outdoor pursuits such as sailing, mountain biking, fishing and canoeing. The teachers involved in outdoor pursuits teach pupils for the expedition element of the Duke of Edinburgh's Bronze Award, providing training, weekend navigation, and supervision of expeditions. The breadth of extracurricular activities reflects the hard work and commitment of teachers and the positive response of the pupils.

## Religious education

145. The previous inspection found average attainment in both key stages. The present inspection findings are broadly similar. In 1998 and 1999, there were no candidates for the religious studies examination at GCSE. Resources and learning objectives for the different units of study have improved since the last inspection, but the time given for the subject is insufficient in Key Stage 4.

146. Pupils make satisfactory overall progress through Key Stage 3. They make satisfactory progress in knowledge and understanding of the subject, and in learning to express themselves clearly in discussion and writing. Pupils of all levels of attainment make good progress when teaching methods are well adapted to their needs. For example, in a class discussion, a Year 9 group of lower attaining pupils showed that they had made good progress in a series of lessons on Judaism because they could give clear explanations of the difference between Orthodox and Reform Judaism, and most of the class used technical words accurately when describing religious ceremonies. Pupils also make satisfactory progress in developing their literacy skills. By the end of Year 9, most pupils write in considerable detail and use their own words instead of copying directly from textbooks and other sources. Above average pupils select and use information effectively, and lower attaining pupils express themselves clearly in short sentences. The majority of pupils have a sound knowledge and understanding of the main beliefs and practices of Christianity and other major world religions, and they use their knowledge effectively. For example, in class discussions, pupils show that they understand the concept of a covenant, and they can relate it to the story of Abraham and Isaac in the Old Testament, and to present day agreements such as the home-school contract. They know the purpose of baptism and confirmation in the Christian Church and use religious terminology accurately when describing prayer rituals in Hinduism, Islam and Judaism. Pupils' written work is satisfactory. It includes interpretations of the parables, descriptions of different religious ceremonies, personal viewpoints on moral issues and individual research. Work is generally well presented, often with the use of information technology, and enhanced with informative and lively illustrations of religious symbols and artefacts. Many pupils also take pride in designing attractive covers with religious themes for their exercise books. However, spelling of familiar words is sometimes inaccurate, and there are examples of homework which has been sketchily done or left unfinished. By the end of the key stage, an average proportion of pupils reach the expected standards set out in the local Agreed Syllabus.

147. Time given for the subject in Key Stage 4 is insufficient to do full justice to the syllabus. Given their limited opportunities, pupils make satisfactory progress in deepening their knowledge and understanding of Christian attitudes to basic moral issues, in developing their debating skills, and in putting forward their viewpoints in a logical way. By the end of Key Stage 4, pupils' overall attainment is again broadly average. Most pupils have a satisfactory knowledge and understanding of Christian teachings on the fundamental questions of existence, and they discuss in a mature way moral issues such as the purpose of punishment, the justification for wars, and the care of the environment. Although written work is carefully done and neatly presented, the standard is not as high as it could be because responses are limited to short paragraphs, and little extended writing.

148. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress towards the targets set for them in each key stage. They make good progress when they have support in the classroom and when learning materials are well matched to their needs, such as writing frames and lists of key words.

149. Pupils' attitudes are good overall, and where lessons are lively and well prepared, pupils respond very well. They behave very well. Most pupils enjoy good working relationships with their teachers. In lessons they listen attentively, and both boys and girls are keen to contribute to discussion and to read aloud when given the opportunity to do so. Religious education makes a good contribution to pupils' personal development. The nature of much of the material which pupils read and talk about helps them to develop their spiritual and moral awareness, and many pupils express thoughtful opinions on the importance of respect for life. The present take-up rates for the optional GCSE course in religious studies are low.

150. Teaching is satisfactory overall. There were no unsatisfactory lessons and teaching was good in half of all

lessons visited. Teachers have good knowledge and understanding of the subject, and use their resources well. This was particularly apparent in a Year 10 lesson on crime and punishment in which the teacher's confident approach and effective use of video showed pupils the reaction of young offenders when faced with the formal proceedings of a magistrates' court. As a result of this teaching, pupils became aware of the way in which a lack of moral awareness can lead to irresponsible behaviour and cause unhappiness to the families and friends of the culprits. Teachers manage older pupils well, encouraging them to sustain concentration, and thus enabling them to make good progress in appreciating different points of view in class debates. Homework is well used to consolidate work done in the lesson and departmental worksheets are clearly and attractively presented.

151. The leadership is effective and ensures that the teachers make the best use of resources and of the time allowed for the subject. Nevertheless, there is still room for improvement and teachers are aware of this. There is some lack of consistency in setting clear aims for the lesson which are shared with pupils at the outset and reviewed when activities have been completed. This results in missed opportunities for pupils to make an effective contribution to the lesson. For example, pupils do not have enough experience of discussing and preparing responses in pairs and groups, and teachers sometimes do not give sufficient time for pupils to read aloud and present their own reflections on what they have seen and heard. Although teachers mark written work regularly and make constructive comments, spelling errors and elementary mistakes sometimes go unchecked. Since the previous inspection, textbooks, other learning materials, and software for information technology have been improved in both quantity and quality.

## **PART C: INSPECTION DATA**

### **SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE**

152. The inspection was conducted by a team of 13 inspectors. The inspection covered all subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education in Key Stages 3 and 4, and optional subjects in Key Stage 4. The inspection also investigated the quality of personal, health and social education, careers education, sex education, registration, assemblies, extracurricular activities and matters raised by parents.

153. More than 50 inspector-days were spent in school, 184 lessons were inspected, and 161 hours were spent in lessons, in discussion with pupils and in examining their work.

154. Meetings were held with the governing body before and after the inspection. Interviews were held with the Headteacher and other senior staff, with all heads of department, and with other staff with posts of special responsibility. Four evening meetings of the inspection team were held during the week of the inspection and the conclusions of the report represent the corporate views of the team of inspectors.

155. Before the inspection, 566 parents completed and returned questionnaires sent to them by the school and the Registered Inspector held a meeting attended by 80 parents. Views expressed by parents in the questionnaires in writing, and raised at the meeting, were noted and fully taken into account by the inspectors.

.. **DATA AND INDICATORS**

.. **Pupil data**

|          | Number of pupils on roll (full-time equivalent) | Number of pupils with statements of SEN | Number of pupils on school's register of SEN | Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals |
|----------|---|---|--|---|
| Y7 – Y11 | 1150  | 31                                      | 142  | 172   |

.. **Teachers and classes**

.. **Qualified teachers (Y7 – Y11)**

|  |      |
|--|------|
| Total number of qualified teachers (full-time equivalent): | 63   |
| Number of pupils per qualified teacher:                    | 18.3 |

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

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| Total number of education support staff: | 8   |
| Total aggregate hours worked each week:  | 222 |

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes: 73.8

Average teaching group size:

|     |    |
|-----|----|
| KS3 | 27 |
| KS4 | 22 |

.. **Financial data**

Financial year: 1999

|  | £       |
|--|---------|
| Total Income                               | 2337707 |
| Total Expenditure                          | 2371396 |
| Expenditure per pupil                      | 2222.49 |
| Balance brought forward from previous year | -2582   |
| Balance carried forward to next year       | -36271  |

## PARENTAL SURVEY

Number of questionnaires sent out: 1150

Number of questionnaires returned: 566

Responses (percentage of answers in each category):

|   | Strongly<br>agree | Agree | Neither | Disagree | Strongly<br>disagree |
|---|-------------------|-------|---------|----------|----------------------|
| I feel the school encourages parents to play an active part in the life of the school           | 25                | 68    | 7       | 0        | 0                    |
| I would find it easy to approach the school with questions or problems to do with my child(ren) | 38                | 54    | 6       | 2        | 0                    |
| The school handles complaints from parents well   | 21                | 54    | 23      | 2        | 0                    |
| The school gives me a clear understanding of what is taught                                     | 24                | 64    | 10      | 2        | 0                    |
| The school keeps me well informed about my child(ren)'s progress                                | 31                | 53    | 14      | 2        | 0                    |
| The school enables my child(ren) to achieve a good standard of work                             | 37                | 58    | 5       | 0        | 0                    |
| The school encourages children to get involved in more than just their daily lessons            | 37                | 53    | 8       | 2        | 0                    |
| I am satisfied with the work that my child(ren) is/are expected to do at home                   | 30                | 63    | 2       | 5        | 0                    |
| The school's values and attitudes have a positive effect on my child(ren)                       | 30                | 60    | 9       | 1        | 0                    |
| The school achieves high standards of good behaviour  | 30                | 59    | 11      | 0        | 0                    |
| My child(ren) like(s) school  | 36                | 55    | 8       | 0        | 1                    |

### Other issues raised by parents

A number of parents said that their children have no personal locker or other place to put their heavy bags which they must carry around school all day.