

INSPECTION REPORT

SALTASH COMMUNITY SCHOOL

Saltash

LEA area: Cornwall

Unique reference number: 112040

Headteacher: Miss Janet Morris

Reporting inspector: John Powell
3174

Dates of inspection: 13 – 17 March 2000

Inspection number: 186836

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

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Terms used in this report

*Pupils in Years 7 to 9 are at **Key Stage 3**, having transferred in most cases from their primary schools at the end of **Key Stage 2** after Year 6. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 are at **Key Stage 4** of their education. Those students who remain at school after the compulsory period of education are in the **sixth form**, in Years 12 and 13. Pupils at Key Stages 3 and 4 follow courses and Programmes of Study set out in the National Curriculum. A course of religious education is a requirement for pupils and students of all ages at school.*

*At the end of Key Stage 3, pupils aged 14 take national tests in English, mathematics and science. In all subjects of the National Curriculum, teachers also make their own assessments of what the pupils know, understand and can do at age 14. At the end of Key Stage 4, pupils aged 16 may take examinations in the General Certificate of Secondary Education (**GCSE**). Others may follow courses leading to the award of the General National Qualification (**GNVQ**) or the National Vocational Qualification (**NVQ**). Sixth form students may take further courses leading to these awards, or to those of the General Certificate of Education at Advanced level (**A-level**).*

*Inspectors judge the **standards** reached by pupils by comparing their attainments with national test and examination results, or by the levels of performance expected for pupils of the same age nationally. The pupils' **achievements** reflect the standards that they reach in relation to their earlier performances; the judgements take account of the educational **value added** over time.*

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 11 to 18

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Wearde Road
Saltash
Cornwall

Postcode: PL12 4AY

Telephone number: 01752 843715

Fax number: 01752 845853

Appropriate authority: Governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mr K S Martin

Date of previous inspection: 5 February 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
John Powell	Registered inspector		What sort of school is it?
			The school's results and achievements
			How well are pupils taught?
			How well is the school led and managed?
			What should the school do to improve further?
James Griffin	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development
			How well does the school care for its pupils?
			How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
Bernard Treacy	Team inspector	English (incl. English as additional language)	
Andrew Bird	Team inspector	Mathematics	
Ray Woodhouse	Team inspector	Science	
Sue Kearney	Team inspector	Design and technology; information technology	
Anne Looney	Team inspector	Modern languages	
Lynn Bappa	Team inspector	History	
Ian Stuart	Team inspector	Geography; religious education	Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
Don Gwinnett	Team inspector	Art, music	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
Roger Moyle	Team inspector	Physical education	
Cliff Blakemore	Team inspector	Personal and social education	Sixth form
Don Parkinson	Team inspector	Special educational needs; equality of opportunity	The special educational needs unit

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

This mixed comprehensive school in the east of Cornwall is larger than average, with 1393 pupils. The size of the school is slightly above that at the time of the last inspection in 1996, with the sixth form some 10 per cent larger, in spite of an additional sixth form opening in the area. The sixth form offers a traditional range of A-levels; vocational courses are not offered because of the close proximity of two further education colleges. The school's intake is affected to some extent by the presence of selective schools, two for girls and one for boys, in neighbouring Plymouth. There are fewer girls in the school than boys. Overall, the attainments of pupils at entry are broadly average, as measured by the pupils' Key Stage 2 test scores at the end of their primary schooling and the results of other tests administered by the school. With a unit on site dealing with a range of special educational needs, there are 288 pupils (21 per cent) on the school's special needs register, an average figure. However, 73 pupils (5 per cent) have Statements of Special Educational Needs, a well above average figure. The school is predominantly white; only three pupils come from homes where English is not the first language spoken. The school draws its pupils from the four primary schools in Saltash itself, as well as from three more in the rural parts of the catchment area. In addition pupils come from some 18 schools further afield, including Plymouth. There are substantial variations in the levels of disadvantage from ward to ward in the area served, but overall, the levels of disadvantage are broadly average.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is an effective school. When pupils leave the school, they do so with results that are, overall, above average at the end of Key Stage 4, and well above average at the end of the sixth form. Over time, therefore, educational value is being added to pupils whose attainments at entry were broadly average. Behaviour is generally good, and the pupils have positive attitudes to learning. The quality of teaching is good, and improves as pupils move through the school. Overall, the leadership and management provided by governors, senior and middle managers are satisfactory in terms of creating a climate where academic success is encouraged, and where broad strategies for improvement are identified. However, there are weaknesses in following initiatives through, particularly in terms of how well the implementation of plans and policies is monitored. The school provides good value for money, both for the school as a whole and in terms of its sixth form. Given that there are vocational courses available at a nearby college for students aged 16 to 18, the school has decided to concentrate on A-level provision.

What the school does well

- The pupils achieve higher GCSE and A-level results overall than would be expected from their attainments at entry.
- The overall level of teaching is good, and leads to good learning.
- The school's provisions for personal development promote very good behaviour, good relationships and an enthusiasm for learning; social development is very good.
- There are good opportunities for extra-curricular activities.
- There is good personal support for pupils

What could be improved

- The work given to pupils in Year 7 does not always match their needs and abilities, in part because of the lack of setting.
- Although the school collects information on pupils' attainments, it does not analyse it or use it sufficiently well to set them clear targets for improvement.
- There are still problems in linking development priorities for the school as a whole to those within subjects.
- The school does not do enough to monitor how well plans and policies are being implemented, or evaluate how well it is doing.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in February 1996. Since then, it has made satisfactory progress. Test and examination results at all levels have continued to compare favourably with national patterns, and have improved at rates that are similar to those seen nationally. The overall picture of strengths identified at the last inspection has been maintained. The governors drew up a suitable action plan to tackle the issues raised by the inspection. There have been improvements in the centralised collection of assessment information, which is now supplied to all departments. However, the information is still not being used sufficiently well to guide what, and how, pupils should learn, although there are good practices in some subjects. Marking still shows inconsistencies from teacher to teacher. The school has now set out guidance on how literacy and numeracy should be promoted across the school; satisfactory progress has been made on literacy, but numeracy development is at an early stage. School development planning provides a firmer basis for the allocation of funds to priorities, but whilst departments now identify action points within their own areas, the way in which these are to be carried through is still not identified sufficiently clearly. Spiritual development is now sound overall, and the school meets fully statutory requirements for religious education at Key Stage 4. Whilst provision for the subject in the sixth form has been extended, this is not enough to meet, fully, statutory requirements. Nor does the school yet meet requirements for collective worship. There have been substantial improvements to accommodation and learning resources. At subject level, there has been very good progress on issues identified at the last inspection in mathematics, with good work also being seen in art, history, physical education and religious education. Improvement in other subjects has been satisfactory.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1997	1998	1999	1999
GCSE examinations	B	B	B	C
A-levels/AS-levels	A	A	A	n/a

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

Over the past four years, the mean overall points score obtained by pupils in national tests at the end of Key Stage 3 has been above average, and rising in line with the national trend. In 1999, the mean overall points result obtained in the tests is in line with the national average for all schools, but below that for similar schools. The mean points in 1999 are also in line with the national figures in English and mathematics, and above average in science. Unusually, boys perform better in the tests than do girls; to some extent, this reflects the effect of higher attaining girls from the catchment attending grammar schools in Plymouth. In 1999, pupils obtained test scores in science that are in line with the level expected from their earlier Key Stage 2 scores; those in English and mathematics are slightly below expected levels.

At the end of Key Stage 4, the mean overall points scores of pupils in the GCSE examinations have been above the average for all schools nationally over the past four years, rising at a similar rate to the national pattern. The 1999 mean points score obtained is above the national average, and in line with that for similar schools. Boys outperform girls in these examinations. In the 1999 examinations, the proportion of pupils gaining at least five passes at grade C or above is above the average for all schools. The proportion gaining five or more, and one or more, passes at grade G or above are in line with the all-schools average. At the lower grades, these results reflect the high proportions of pupils at the school with Statements of Special Educational Needs and, to some extent, the lack of suitable courses for lower attaining pupils. The 1999 results are significantly above the national average in double science, and average in English and mathematics. In 1999, pupils tended to do significantly better in art, double science, design and technology, English language and literature, and

in French than in the other subjects that they took. Pupils tended to do significantly less well in history and food subjects. The value added between the pupils' 1997 Key Stage 3 results and their overall 1999 GCSE results is broadly average, as it is in English. The value added in mathematics is somewhat above average, whilst that in science is better still.

At the end of the sixth form, the average points achieved by students has been well above the national average in each of the years since the last inspection. The numbers taking individual courses are too small to allow reliable statistical comparison with relevant national averages. The school's own analyses of value added show that overall, students tend to do slightly better at A-level than would be expected from their earlier GCSE scores. Higher attainers are making better than expected progress; lower attainers do slightly less well than might be expected, in part because the range of courses offered is not wholly appropriate to the needs of some pupils who opt to remain at the school.

The school's targets are appropriate in that they take proper account of the pupils' earlier attainments, but also demanding in that they seek to add more value than the average.

In work seen during the inspection, standards in English are in line with expectations for the end of Key Stages 3, and above expectation for Key Stage 4; they are below expected levels in the sixth form. Speaking and listening are strengths of the school, and standards are above expected levels for all age groups. Reading and writing are in line with expectations at all levels. Standards in mathematics are in line with expectations at Key Stage 3, above expectations at Key Stage 4 and well above in the sixth form. At present, numeracy is not well developed across the whole subject range. Science standards are at expected levels for the end of Key Stage 3, and above this at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. Standards in information technology are in line with expectations for Key Stages 3 and 4, but below in the sixth form because of limited provision. Standards in religious education are above expectations at Key Stages 3 and 4. In other subjects, standards are at, or above, expected levels in all cases, except for design and technology at Key Stage 3, where shortcomings in textiles and food offset strengths in work in resistant materials. Overall, pupils with special educational needs make appropriate, and occasionally good, progress in relation to the targets set for them. Overall, progress in Year 7 is lower than it could be because work is not being well matched to the pupils' abilities.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. Most pupils like school and are proud of it. Pupils show interest in what they are doing, and most concentrate well.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. Behaviour in lessons is very good and creates a positive learning environment. Behaviour around the site is good, in spite of congestion within the buildings. There are fewer exclusions than average.
Personal development and relationships	Good. Pupils show consideration for others, and respect the school rules. They enjoy taking responsibility around the school.
Attendance	Satisfactory. Attendance levels are average, and unauthorised absence is well below average.

Attitudes and behaviour are at least satisfactory in 96 per cent of lessons, and good or better in three-quarters of them. The pupils' positive attitudes towards their work sometimes compensates for shortcomings in teaching. They are enthusiastic learners, and particularly enjoy work with a practical element. Pupils with special educational needs are also enthusiastic about what they do. Pupils report that bullying is rare, and they are confident that the school deals with recorded cases appropriately. Pupils respond well to the way that staff treat them as young adults; they respect one another's views. There is a strong culture of helping others in the school and the wider community.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Teaching is satisfactory or better in 94 per cent of lessons. It is very good or excellent in 23 per cent of cases, but less than satisfactory in six per cent of lessons. The proportion of teaching that is good or better improves steadily from Key Stage 3 to the sixth form. Teaching in English and science is satisfactory at Key Stage 3 and good at Key Stage 4. In mathematics, teaching is good at Key Stage 3 and very good at Key Stage 4. In the sixth form, teaching is satisfactory in English, good in science and very good in mathematics. Teaching is never less than satisfactory in science, information technology, German, religious education, geography, physical education, art and music. The only area with significant levels of unsatisfactory teaching is design and technology at Key Stage 3, because of weaknesses in work in textiles and food. Overall strengths of the teaching lie in the teachers' knowledge of their subjects, the quality of their planning, the expectations that they have of pupils, the range of methods used, and the way that they manage pupils. One weakness, but particularly at Key Stage 3, is the limited use that is made of information about the pupils' attainments. As a result, the needs of higher and lower attainers are not always being met, especially in the many mixed ability groups in Year 7. In other years, the pupils' needs are met more successfully. The overall standard of basic skills development is satisfactory, although numeracy lags behind literacy at present.

The pupils are enthusiastic learners, and work hard to make progress, acquiring good levels of knowledge, skills and understanding. They show interest, concentration and independence in most lessons. Pupils with special educational needs are also good learners. Because the school does not share targets with most pupils, they have an inadequate knowledge of their own learning.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory overall. The lack of grouping by ability in Year 7 impedes progress in some subjects. The curriculum at all levels meets the requirements of the National Curriculum.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Satisfactory overall. Such pupils receive appropriate support, for example through withdrawal lessons.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	The very few pupils make satisfactory progress; the school meets their needs appropriately.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good overall. Spiritual development is satisfactory, moral and cultural development are good, whilst social development is very good.
How well the school cares for its pupils	In pastoral terms, care is good. The school's arrangements for monitoring the academic performance of pupils are unsatisfactory because they do not make enough use of information about their attainments.

The school's partnership with parents is satisfactory overall; links with parents, communications and parental contributions to learning are all sound.

The curriculum at Key Stage 3 is satisfactory, but there are shortcomings because of timetabling and

the grouping arrangements in Year 7. At Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form, the overall provision is satisfactory, but the options available do not provide adequately for those pupils who would benefit from more vocational pathways. This is more important at Key Stage 4, since pupils aged 16 to 18 have access to such courses at the nearby college. The curriculum does not meet fully the requirement for religious education in the sixth form, nor that for the daily act of collective worship. The school provides strong pastoral care and support for pupils. Arrangements for promoting good behaviour and attendance are good, as are arrangements for monitoring the pupils' personal development. Academic progress is monitored less well because of the limited use being made in most subjects of data on the pupils' attainments.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Satisfactory overall. Leadership provides sound educational direction at all levels, with a commitment to maintaining and raising standards. There are shortcomings in strategic planning at department level.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Satisfactory. Governors play a suitable part in setting priorities for the school and have a clear picture of its strengths and weaknesses.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Unsatisfactory. Although the school collects suitable information on its performance, this is not widely used. Nor is there sufficiently frequent monitoring of how well plans and policies are being implemented.
The strategic use of resources	Satisfactory. Resources are targeted appropriately to match educational priorities. The school provides good value for money.

Provisions for staffing, accommodation and learning resources are satisfactory overall. In general terms, governors and managers at all levels are effective in promoting achievement, as can be seen from the improvement in the school's above average results since the last inspection. Whilst there are annual reviews of departments, the good practices going on in some subjects are not being promoted sufficiently to the benefit of all. The monitoring of the implementation plans, policies and procedures is also capable of improvement. Governors seek to promote best value in their spending decisions, and are generally successful in matching the below average funds available to needs.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school's high expectations • The progress made by pupils • The fact that pupils like the school • The personal development of the pupils • The way the school is led and managed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The quality of information provided to parents • Homework arrangements

Inspectors agree with the positive views expressed by parents, although they feel that some aspects of management could be more rigorous. Inspectors feel that the overall quality of information provided to parents is satisfactory, but note the loss of interim reports in all but Year 9. Inspectors feel that homework arrangements are generally satisfactory, but that the homework planners could be better used.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1. On entry to the school, the pupils' attainments show a broadly average pattern overall in recent years, but one which is rising year by year. However, there are differences in standards from subject to subject, and between boys and girls, which vary widely from one year to the next. This makes careful analyses of the standards at entry an important factor in ensuring that pupils continue to make appropriate progress when they join the school, and achieve at suitably high levels. The 1999 intake obtained Key Stage 2 test results at primary schools that are above average in English and mathematics, and well above average in science.
2. At the end of Key Stage 3, the overall mean points score of pupils in the national tests in English, mathematics and science has been above average since the last inspection, rising at a similar rate to the national trend. In the 1999 tests, the overall mean points score is in line with the average for all schools, but below that for similar schools. The standards reached in the science tests are above the national average for the mean points obtained, and in line with that for similar schools; in English and mathematics, results are in line with the national average, but below those of similar schools. The achievements of the pupils across Key Stage 3 may be judged by comparing their 1999 Key Stage 3 test results with those at Key Stage 2 in 1996. On this basis, their 1999 attainments are in line with expectations in science, but slightly below expectations in English and in mathematics. Since the last inspection, boys at the school have tended to achieve higher standards than have girls; this is contrary to the national pattern, and, in part, reflects the fact that more girls from the school's catchment area attend grammar schools in nearby Plymouth than do boys. Over the period 1996 to 1999, the boys' standards in national tests are well above average in English and science, and above average in mathematics. Girls' standards are above average in English and science, and broadly average in mathematics.
3. At the end of Key Stage 4, the mean points obtained by pupils in their GCSE examinations have been above average, and rising in line with the national pattern. As at Key Stage 3, boys have performed better than girls, with above average results between 1996 and 1999; over the same period, girls' results have been broadly average. In the 1999 examinations, the mean points score of pupils is above the average for all schools, and in line with that for similar schools. The proportion of pupils gaining at least five passes at grade C or better is above the national average and in line with that for similar schools. Those for at least five, or at least one, grade G or better are in line with the relevant national average, but below that for similar schools. This reflects, in part, the school's higher than usual proportion of lower attaining pupils with Statements of Special Educational Need. The achievements of pupils over time may be judged by comparing their 1999 GCSE results with their 1997 Key Stage 3 scores. This shows that the overall GCSE points score is in line with expected levels, whilst that in English is as expected; the score in mathematics is slightly better than expected, whilst that in science is above expectation. When the patterns of individual pupils' grades in the 1999 GCSE examinations are analysed, they show that pupils tended to do significantly better in art, science, design and technology, English language and literature, and in French than in the other subjects that they took. Conversely, they tended to do significantly

less well in history and home economics.

4. At the end of the sixth form, the average points score obtained by students since the last inspection has been well above the national average, including the 1999 A-level examinations. The school has carried out detailed analyses of individual students' A-level results in relation to their earlier GCSE performances. These show that, overall, results are slightly better than would be expected. However, whilst higher attainers achieve at above average rates, lower attainers tend to do less well. In part, this reflects the fact that students who wish to remain at the school may only follow A-level courses; there is no provision for more vocational pathways that would be more appropriate for those with more modest GCSE results. The numbers of students following courses are too small to allow reliable statistical comparisons to be made against national figures.
5. The school has set overall targets for improvement that are demanding, yet realistic in that they take account of the variations in attainments from year to year. However, the lack of consistently rigorous systems of analysis and target setting at subject level means that not all teachers are aware of what pupils should achieve. Moreover, it is school policy that targets are not shared with the pupils themselves, although some teachers do so.
6. In work seen during the inspection, standards in English are in line with expectations for the end of Key Stage 3, in part because of there is now some grouping of pupils by ability in Year 7, so that work may be more closely matched to their needs. Standards are above expectations for the end of Key Stage 4, but are below expected levels in the sixth form because of the relatively modest GCSE profiles of the English students currently in the sixth form. Achievements in English are satisfactory in relation to the pupils' earlier attainments at Key Stage 3 and in the sixth form, and are good at Key Stage 4. At all levels, speaking and listening standards are above expected levels, and are strengths of the school, aided by work in drama. Pupils are confident speakers; higher and middle attainers are able to draw upon their sound vocabulary range to use language in a manner that meets different circumstances. Pupils of all ages read in a satisfactory manner, although only middle and higher attainers do so with expression, or good understanding of content. Writing at all levels is matched appropriately to the intended purpose, but whilst higher attainers write with accuracy, the work of many middle and lower attainers is marked by inaccuracies of spelling, punctuation and grammar.
7. Standards in work seen in mathematics are broadly in line with expectations for the end of Key Stage 3. Recent changes introduced by a new head of department are beginning to raise standards and achievements above the levels seen in national tests in earlier years. Pupils at Key Stage 3 receive a sound grounding in most areas of the subject, although algebra could be used more widely. Standards seen at Key Stage 4 are above expectations; once again, recent improvements have had a positive effect on achievements at all ability levels. Pupils perform well in the more open-ended work that characterises GCSE courses. Standards seen in the sixth form are well above expectations; the work being done demonstrates that the students are becoming young mathematicians in their approach to problem solving. The achievements of pupils are satisfactory at Key Stage 3, and good at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. The pupils' progress in Year 7 is hampered by the fact that all teaching is done in mixed ability groups, and this limits achievements, particularly for higher attainers. Once they are taught in setted groups from Year 8, progress improves, but some momentum has been lost because of the Year 7 arrangements.

Standards of numeracy across all subjects of the curriculum are broadly satisfactory. The school's numeracy policy is starting to draw upon, and to enhance, the pupils' mathematical abilities in some subjects such as science and geography, but at present, provision elsewhere is patchy.

8. Work seen in science shows standards to be in line with expected levels for the end of Key Stage 3, and above expectations for the ends of Key Stage 4 and the sixth form. As with mathematics, the use of mixed ability groups in Year 7 limits achievements, particularly amongst higher attainers. This contributes to the no more than satisfactory progress made across the key stage as a whole. However, work is not always well matched to the pupils' abilities even in setted groups. In contrast, achievements at Key Stage 4 are good, reflecting the better quality of teaching at this level. In the sixth form, achievements are sound overall, but vary from class to class; sometimes, progress is limited by the over-directive style of the teaching.
9. The standards achieved in information technology are in line with expectations for the ends of Key Stages 3 and 4, but below expected levels in the sixth form. The standards in the discrete specialist lessons at Key Stages 3 reflect sound achievement. The pupils now entering the school have a competence in the subject that is higher than in previous years; the school's provisions reflect this, to ensure that progress is maintained. At Key Stage 4, some work in presenting and handling information is carried out at above expected levels. The limited access that pupils have to computers means that they do not use them as widely as they should in other subjects of the curriculum. In the sixth form, standards and achievement are both below expected levels because there is no planned provision for teaching, and restricted access to equipment.
10. Standards in religious education are above expected levels for the ends of Key Stages 3 and 4 because of good teaching, but especially so at Key Stage 4. Achievement is good at both levels because experienced teachers plan lessons well and deliver them effectively. In the sixth form, the religious education content of the general studies course is too restricted to ensure that students have suitable opportunities to make sufficient progress in the subject.
11. In other subjects, standards are above expectations for the end of Key Stage 3 in physical education, where pupils make very good progress and achieve at well above expected rates compared to their attainments at entry. In all other subjects, standards at Key Stage 3 are in line with expectations, apart from design and technology. Here, overall standards are below expected levels because of unsatisfactory work in textiles and food; in contrast, work in resistant materials is in line with expected levels. This imbalance between the strands of the subject is a reflection of the teaching quality. At Key Stage 4, standards are above expectations for the end of the key stage in art, geography, music and physical education. Standards in all other subjects at Key Stage 4 are in line with expected levels, although again, in design and technology there is a marked difference between the good work in resistant materials area and that which is of lower standard in food and textiles. Standards in the sixth form are above expectations for the ends of courses in art, general studies, modern languages, music, politics and sociology; they are in line with expected levels in other subjects.
12. In other subjects, the achievements of pupils are good or better at all levels in art, history and in physical education. Achievement is also good in modern languages in the sixth form, and in geography at Key Stage 4. These are the subjects, together

with mathematics, where planning is focusing more on learning outcomes than on teachers covering course content. In most cases, this is also accompanied by increasingly rigorous use of assessment information, including analyses of examination and test data, to plan lessons and the overall direction of the curriculum. For example, the very good achievement in physical education at Key Stage 3 reflects very good teaching that provides different tasks for pupils of different prior attainment levels. This ensures that all pupils are presented with appropriately demanding work. In all other subjects, achievement is satisfactory, although in design and technology, there are weaknesses in textiles and food areas of the subject.

13. Pupils with special educational needs generally make satisfactory progress to achieve at levels appropriate to their individual learning targets. In some cases, the progress made is good. Pupils with Statements of Special Educational Need benefit from the support of learning support assistants attached to them, as well as being taught individually and in small groups by members of the special educational needs department. These groups generally operate alongside English and mathematics lessons, and focus appropriately on raising standards in literacy and numeracy.
14. Even in lessons where achievement is broadly satisfactory overall, not all pupils progress as well as they might. In Year 7, this is most marked amongst both higher and lower attainers because of the lack of grouping of pupils by ability. Teachers are not always planning sufficiently well to match the work set to the needs and interests of the pupils concerned. For example, even in setted subjects from Year 8 onwards, work is not always well planned for the range of abilities present in the groups. Given that the school has generally appropriate systems in place to support lower attainers who have special educational needs, underachievement is more common amongst higher attainers. Once again, this reflects the school's generally inadequate use of assessment data in most subjects to diagnose areas of potential weakness in provisions, and to monitor the progress that pupils are making.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

15. Overall, the pupils' attitudes and behaviour are at least satisfactory in 96 per cent of lessons; they are good or better in 75 per cent of cases, and very good or excellent in 30 per cent. The good standards of behaviour and positive attitudes towards work noted at the last inspection have been maintained.
16. The pupils' attitudes to learning are good overall and improve as pupils move up through the school; they are very good in the sixth form. Nearly all pupils like school and are proud of it. Almost all pupils show interest in their work during lessons; most listen attentively and volunteer answers or suggestions enthusiastically. Most pupils show good concentration and perseverance during activities, but especially so when these include a practical element, as is the case in many physical education lessons. Well planned teacher demonstrations to explain difficult concepts, such as the difference between longitudinal and transverse waves in Year 11 science, are also effective in enlivening lessons, thereby deepening the pupils' learning. A minority of pupils loses interest and attention in a few lessons. This is particularly noticeable in lower ability mathematics sets at Key Stage 4, where pupils' low levels of basic numeracy adversely affects their ability to cope with more advanced work. Pupils, especially in Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form, show well developed skills in personal study and research skills. Across the school, pupils confidently use the

Internet to find information on a wide range of subjects, and routinely send e-mail. In contrast, routine use of the library is more limited. Pupils with special educational needs generally respond well in lessons. They are keen to learn and listen attentively to their teachers.

17. The pupils' behaviour is good overall. In lessons, behaviour is very good, and this has a markedly positive effect on achievements; the working atmosphere is a productive one. In a small minority of lessons, usually when pupils are not able to grasp the lesson content because work is poorly matched to their needs, a few pupils, usually boys, become restive, noisy and occasionally disobedient. The behaviour of pupils around the school site is good; there is often congestion in corridors or on narrow stairways, but this is handled with good grace and consideration by most pupils. Pupils in all year groups confirm that incidents of bullying or other antisocial behaviour are rare, and that they are dealt with quickly when brought to the staff's attention. The rate of exclusions is below average; cases are dealt with appropriately. Nearly all pupils' take good care of property and equipment, and help to keep the school in attractive condition; there is little litter. Pupils with special educational needs behave well overall; some need focused guidance from learning support assistants, and where this is provided, it is effective. On isolated occasions, where such support is not provided, behaviour problems can occur.
18. Relationships between adults and pupils, and among pupils, are good. Adults in the school act as good role models, and most pupils aspire to treat others in a similar way. Teachers treat pupils as responsible young adults; most of them are effective in praising effort and good work. The pupils respond in a positive manner. The great majority of pupils show caring and considerate attitudes towards each other, and towards adults in the school community. Almost all pupils work well in pairs and small groups, and readily collaborate when opportunities arise. Special educational needs pupils are fully accepted into the school community.
18. The pupils' personal development is good overall. Nearly all pupils listen to the views of others with consideration, and there is no teasing of pupils who are experiencing difficulties with the material covered in lessons. Nearly all pupils show respect for school rules. Most pupils enjoy speaking with visitors, and do so with confidence. In the range of their questions, many show curiosity, interest in others and awareness of the wider world. Pupils respond well to the opportunities to help and take responsibility in the day-to-day running of the school. At lunchtimes, many pupils work calmly and responsibly on homework, especially when using computers, or attend a range of clubs. Many pupils, in all year groups, are members of school music or sports teams, developing discipline, personal application, team spirit and a sense of fair play. Personal development is very good among sixth form students, who make a significant contribution to school life. They help in a variety of ways in the rest of the school. For example, up to 50 students help with physical education, mathematics, science and on school sports day. They also provide information for Year 9 pupils on GCSE courses and help organise the mock interviews for Year 10 pupils. Up to 40 students take part in the Community Service Initiative and Community Sports Leaders Awards. These schemes provide pupils with good opportunities to develop their leadership, organisation and communication skills. Year 13 students provide the leadership for the school council, which is proud of its role in contributing to the school code of conduct, providing drinks machines and choosing the charity to benefit from the proceeds of the non-uniform day. Pupils also organise a variety of social events and take part successfully in the Young

Enterprise scheme, which provides pupils with a good opportunity to sample the excitement and uncertainty of running a real business.

20. Attendance is satisfactory. The attendance level is broadly in line with the national average in recent years. Unauthorised absence is rare and well below the national average. Punctuality is good. Nearly all pupils come to school on time and get to their lessons promptly during the day. This positively contributes to pupils' progress, by creating an orderly and calm start to lessons.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

21. The overall quality of teaching is good; the standards reported at the last inspection have been maintained. Teaching is at least satisfactory in 94 per cent of lessons; it is good or better in 69 per cent of cases, and very good or excellent in 24 per cent. Teaching is satisfactory at Key Stage 3 and good at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. The 10 cases where teaching is less than satisfactory are mostly in Years 8 and 9. Teaching is never less than satisfactory in science, information technology, German, geography, religious education, art, music, personal and social education, and in physical education. There is a strong link between the quality of teaching and how well pupils learn; unsatisfactory progress is usually, although not always, a feature of lessons where teaching is unsatisfactory. Overall, learning is satisfactory at Key Stage 3, and good at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. Most pupils of all ages demonstrate good intellectual effort, but especially so in the sixth form. On occasions, this compensates for weaknesses in teaching, so that the overall pace of learning is good at all levels.
22. Teaching is very good in physical education at Key Stages 3 and 4, in mathematics at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form, in religious education at Key Stage 4, and in sixth form work in history, politics and sociology. Good teaching is found in music at all levels, in Key Stages 3 and 4 in history and information technology, and at Key Stage 4 and sixth form work in geography and science. Teaching is also good at Key Stage 3 in mathematics and religious education, at Key Stage 4 in English, and in the sixth form in art and in design and technology. In all other areas, teaching is sound, apart from Key Stage 3 in design and technology, where the level of unsatisfactory teaching in food and textiles work fails to offset the stronger teaching in resistant materials areas.
23. Overall strengths of the teaching are the good subject knowledge of most staff, the effectiveness of their planning of lessons, the good range of methods used, and the good way in which classes are controlled. Overall, these factors result in the pupils demonstrating good interest and concentration at Key Stage 3, becoming very good at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. In A-level government and politics lessons, teaching is particularly effective in setting challenges through questioning and promoting group discussion. Good subject knowledge and lesson planning lay at the heart of an excellent Year 10 religious education lesson. Here, the teacher's very interesting introductory work on Hindu beliefs, and their impact on believers, was skilfully linked to the concept of the Christian Trinity. The pupils listened with rapt attention; they learned well because their interests had been captured. The pupils were being challenged at every turn, leading to a very good cultivation of intellectual curiosity. Challenge and high quality lesson planning were key features of an excellent top set mathematics lesson in Year 8, where pupils used computers to solve an algebraic and geometrical problem involving matchboxes. Here, a high

quality opening exposition, using the board and suitable models, left the pupils in no doubt what was expected of them; their understanding of basic principles was checked by careful questioning. Once they started work on the main problem, groups were consistently challenged by open-ended questioning; the pace of learning was thus kept very high and the room buzzed with excitement at what was being achieved and understood. Another good example of effective planning occurred in a Year 9 geography lesson, which made very good use of a game to establish principles of world trade. The potential risks of this approach were minimised by the teacher identifying what the intended learning outcomes were to be. As a result, the interest generated by the game meant that the pace of learning, and the depth of understanding, were high. The teacher then reorganised groups for post-game discussion work, providing worksheets that were tailored to different levels of attainment, in order to consolidate what had been achieved.

24. Overall, the teachers' use of time and resources is satisfactory, as are the use of homework to promote learning and the expectations that teachers have of the pupils in general. Whilst the use of assessment to improve standards is broadly sound overall, there are weaknesses, particularly at Key Stage 3. This results in rates of learning that are satisfactory at Key Stage 3 in terms of the value being added to the pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding, rather than the generally good picture at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. Although the school has provided departments with detailed information on the pupils' attainments, these data are not being used well to ensure that work matches the needs of the range of pupils, particularly in mixed ability groups, for example in mathematics and science in Year 7. As a result, pupils at the ends of the ability range, but particularly higher attainers, do not always make sufficient progress, especially as many groups at this level are large. The good work now being done in mathematics and history shows what can be achieved with proper analysis and target setting. The school has a policy of not telling pupils what targets are set for them. This means that the pupils' knowledge of the impact of their own learning is unsatisfactory at Key Stages 3 and 4; it is sound in the sixth form, where there is a greater understanding of the links between GCSE performance and A-level outcomes. Overall, marking is satisfactory in terms of frequency, but written comments do not always give sufficient guidance on improvement. Good examples were seen in the A-level sociology course, where evaluative marking helped students to recognise where they need to improve, and in science, where there is consistent use of school and departmental grading systems.
25. Where teaching is unsatisfactory, there are some common threads. Lesson planning is usually weak because the work is not being well matched to the needs of the pupils present; nor is there a suitably wide range of learning methods. This means that pupils are not being stretched appropriately. In some cases, the work set is too demanding for lower attainers; in others, it expects too little of higher attainers. In several cases, the teacher talked for far too long, and provided few, if any, opportunities to be involved in the work. On occasions, pupils were required to copy large amounts of work. In some lessons, pupils who sought to contribute were firmly discouraged from doing so. Weaker teaching is also more tolerant of misbehaviour and relatively high background noise levels; this has the effect of reducing concentration and the efficiency and pace of learning.
26. The overall standard of basic skills development is satisfactory, including that of pupils for whom English is an additional language. For example, a Year 12 history lesson on Tsarist Russia made good use of sample essays to promote learning about examination criteria, and to improve the effectiveness with which the students

communicated historical information. The well planned lesson provided students with a framework for future improvement in the subject; by the end of the lesson, students could identify clearly the importance of key words and the central place of analysis rather than description in A-level work. For the most part, teachers in all subjects are making satisfactory contributions to the development of the pupils' literacy skills, particularly in terms of the range of writing styles being employed. Work with pupils who have special educational needs focuses effectively on developing their literacy and numeracy skills, drawing upon targets in individual education plans. However, work remains to be done elsewhere in the curriculum in ensuring that pupils, especially in the lower part of the ability range, are accurate in their use of grammar, punctuation and spelling. Speaking and listening are generally well developed, with most teachers having a proper insistence on accurate use of language, including technical terms, for example in a Year 10 science lesson on solubility. Here, pupils showed evident pride in being able to use scientific terms and spell them accurately. Speaking and listening are also key reasons for the success of sixth form general studies work, leading to a deepening understanding of the issues covered. Reading is less well promoted; many schemes of work and lesson plans do not yet contain sufficient opportunities for reading development within subjects. Numeracy skills are not yet being promoted sufficiently across the subject range; recent guidance on numeracy development is intended to improve provisions, and to ensure that all subjects approach numeracy as thoroughly as does the geography department. The limited access that subjects have to information technology resources mean that the potential power of computers, for example in improving writing through drafting, is not being harnessed to best effect across the school.

27. Overall, pupils with special educational needs show good learning skills. When pupils are withdrawn for specialist work with special needs staff, whether in small groups or individually, the teaching at all levels is focused and effective. Teachers take account of the pupils' individual needs and work is structured well to meet them. Challenge is not the preserve of the most able. For example, a very good special needs unit physical education lesson involved pupils from Years 7 to 11 in work on spatial awareness. The work was very well planned to meet the wide ranging abilities and ages in the group, and learning support assistants were briefed and deployed very well. The work led to good and appropriate progress being made by all pupils; they were keen to improve their performances, not least because of the warm encouragement from staff to strive for success. Where lessons last for the full one-hour period, there is often too much emphasis on mundane tasks and the range of teaching and learning strategies is too limited. This reduces the progress that is made. Where pupils with special educational needs are taught in larger mainstream classes, the quality of teaching and support is more varied. In the best lessons, individual needs are met through careful lesson preparation and good use of learning support assistants, who have been involved in lesson planning. In such cases, the pupils are interested in their work, participate appropriately and make suitable gains in knowledge, skills and understanding. However, on occasions, teaching is less effective, for example where reading materials are pitched at too high a level, or where there is insufficient support staffing available. Here, the pupils make less progress than they could.

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

The curriculum

28. Since the last inspection, there have been improvements in curriculum provision. The support for numeracy and, particularly, for literacy across the school has improved, although the former is still at an early stage of development. Members of staff have received literacy and numeracy training, there has been an audit of provision in both areas and suitable policies have been developed. However, literacy and numeracy are not sufficiently promoted across all subjects. Provision for religious education has improved at Key Stage 4 with the introduction of a successful short GCSE course for all pupils. However, the school still does not fully meet the requirement to provide religious education for sixth form students, in spite of the work now being done within general studies, because this is too limited to meet in full the requirements of the Agreed Syllabus. Other curriculum matters in the previous report have been satisfactorily resolved. The amount of teaching time now exceeds the required minimum. Tutorial periods, which wasted some time, have been replaced by formal personal and social education lessons, and a well-structured homework policy now provides more systematic and regular provision that contributes to improved learning.
29. The quality and range of learning opportunities are satisfactory overall, with appropriate statutory provision for all National Curriculum subjects and suitable arrangements for the teaching of careers, health and sex education, and of drug misuse. The curriculum at Key Stage 3 is suitably broad and balanced. The Key Stage 3 curriculum contains all National Curriculum subjects as well as drama, personal and social education, and religious education. Information technology is taught as a discrete subject, ensuring that all pupils benefit from formally organised teaching. The balance between subjects is satisfactory overall, with most subjects having sufficient time for the required syllabuses to be taught. Whilst geography and history receive the same amount of time over the course of the key stage, they do not receive the same amount of time in each year. This results in discontinuity of learning, and may influence the numbers of pupils who opt for each subject for GCSE. Setting arrangements in Years 8 and 9 have a positive impact on learning and contribute to effective challenge for higher and lower attainers. However, Year 7 pupils do not benefit from setting, other than in a limited way in English, despite the increasingly reliable information from tests and from feeder primary schools on the pupils' prior academic and social skills. This has a negative effect on the progress that pupils make overall in Year 7, and thus across the key stage as a whole. The school is aware of this, and has plans to increase setting when funding allows for increased staffing levels. At present, the school spends more on staffing Key Stage 3 than is provided for in its budget. This is because the school targets the extra provision on pupils with special educational needs, who are taught in very small groups; this has a positive effect on the progress that such pupils make. However, most pupils in the key stage are still taught in relatively large groups. This, together with the lack of setting in Year 7, and an inadequate matching of work to abilities, means that the impact of the increased spending at this level is not having sufficient effect in terms of improved progress for the majority of pupils.
30. The curriculum at Key Stage 4 is suitably balanced but lacks sufficient breadth. At present, the curriculum at this level has an academic character. There are no opportunities for pupils to follow alternative curriculum pathways, for example

leading to GNVQ or NVQ awards. Whilst a number of new GCSE courses are introduced, these do not include options such as business education. All pupils at Key Stage 4 take accredited courses in English, mathematics, science, design and technology, modern languages and religious education. In addition, they take courses in physical education, personal and social education, and information technology. Pupils then follow further optional courses. Some optional subjects have two periods per week in Year 10 and three in Year 11, and vice versa in other groups. This discontinuity of provision, which complicates planning and assessment procedures, has an adverse affect on pupils' learning. The school is aware of these problems, and plans to introduce a two-week timetable from September 2000, which will improve continuity of provision.

31. Curriculum provision in the sixth form is, as at Key Stage 4, largely academic in character, and is limited to A-level courses. However, students have access to alternatives such as GNVQ courses or Vocational A-levels at the nearby further education college. The range of courses offered includes sociology and politics, but again, there is no provision for more work-related courses such as business education. The curriculum is enhanced by a structured programme of general studies, which incorporates a religious education module. However, there is no provision for physical education or information technology. The sixth form costs less to run than is provided for in the school's funding, in spite of the small size of some groups. The lower than usual value being added amongst lower attainers suggests that the curriculum on offer, as a whole, does not fully meet the range of the students who choose to remain at the school after GCSE. Whilst it is financially efficient, it is therefore not fully effective in educational terms. At present, the school's planning for the new sixth form curriculum from September 2000 is at an early stage of development in terms of how key skills are to be delivered.
32. The school provides satisfactory equality of access to the curriculum, with no pupil being denied access because of sex, social circumstances or prior attainment. There is equality of access to all aspects of school life for pupils with special educational needs; provision for these pupils is satisfactory at all levels. Only one pupil has been disapplied from the full National Curriculum in order to follow extra life skills classes. Selected pupils are withdrawn for additional help with literacy and numeracy so that they cope more satisfactorily in mainstream classes on their return. There is no evidence that withdrawal of pupils for additional help in literacy and numeracy places them at a disadvantage. Rather, it supports their learning by helping them to cope more satisfactorily with the demands of normal classwork.
33. Arrangements for personal and social education are capable of improvement at key Stages 3 and 4. The subject is blocked against others in rotation, and this leads to discontinuity in learning. The school's revised curriculum plans for 2000/2001 will remove this problem. Careers education is good overall. Advice on Key Stage 4 option choices for Year 9 pupils is helpful. They receive informative career packs and there is regular advice over a full range of possible careers and option choices. Careers education at Key Stage 4 is less secure; although some arrangements exist, they do not consistently provide sufficiently detailed advice and information. However, planning for next September is better; with much improved provision. Pupils at Key Stage 4 are able to have impartial interviews from outside staff. Parents and students comment positively on the quality of careers and higher education advice in the sixth form, which is good. There are satisfactory links with higher education institutions, and with outside agencies providing career guidance and support.

34. There are good and well established links with the wider community, and these successfully broaden the experience of students. Year 12 students participate in work experience, some of which is undertaken in France and Germany. The annual industry day, the Young Enterprise scheme and business competitions provide further beneficial opportunities. There are visits to places of educational interest, such as galleries and museums and field courses. Visiting instructors extend provision within physical education; such opportunities have a positive effect on learning. Links with primary schools are effective in pastoral terms, but do not build sufficiently on information about the pupils' attainments.
35. The provision of extra curricular opportunities is good, with a wide range of sporting, musical and dramatic activities. Of particular note are the Young Enterprise and Community Awards schemes that promote leadership skills. However, the short lunch hour, and the need for pupils who live some distance from the school to use school transport, limits access to the full range of activities for some.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

36. The previous report presented a generally positive picture of provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. However, a key issue was to provide, in all areas of the school, opportunities to nurture spiritual development and to provide a daily act of collective worship. There have been considerable improvements in provision for pupils' spiritual development, and, generally, a maintenance of areas of strength. Overall provision for personal development, including pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is now good. However, some elements are better than others, and, because there is no overall direction nor monitoring of the school's work in this area, provision is uneven within the school and within subjects; too much depends on chance or the commitment of individual teachers.
37. Provision for spiritual development is satisfactory. The school now has a good co-ordinated programme of assemblies, many of which incorporate an act of worship and have a spiritual dimension. Assembly leaders from inside and outside the school deliver many high quality assemblies which give pupils opportunities for reflection and are usually of a broadly Christian nature. However, pupils only attend two assemblies a week, one of which is normally an administrative year assembly. Therefore, the school does not fulfil the statutory requirement to hold a daily act of collective worship for all pupils; it states lack of space and staffing as the reasons for non-compliance. Religious education at Key Stages 3 and 4, and to a more limited extent in the sixth form, makes significant and very good contributions to pupils' spiritual development, providing many occasions to consider fundamental questions about God, creation and the nature of human existence. Physical education also makes very good contributions, especially in dance, through which pupils can express their inner feelings and thoughts. There are other good examples, such as a Year 11 English lesson on *The Crucible*, when pupils discussed the part religion plays in people's lives and how it affects their behaviour. Elsewhere, provision is uneven, and many opportunities are lost to develop a sense of curiosity and wonder. The lack of any whole school audit of what is done, or could be done, means that this area remains a relative weakness.
38. Provision for moral development is good. Teachers are good role models, and they expect pupils to behave well, care for others and to have a clear sense of right and

wrong. Pupils are generally trusted and respected, and were involved, through the school council, in developing the behaviour and anti-bullying policies. In religious education and assemblies, moral issues are emphasised, and they are discussed appropriately in some geography and science lessons in topics such as the environment and conservation. Virtues such as honesty and fair play are emphasised in physical education, and the caring ethos of the school contributes to the moral nature of the school community.

39. Provision for social development is very good. In many subjects, pupils are encouraged to work co-operatively, and there is a wide range of sporting and other activities which promote social development. Pupils with special educational needs are integrated fully and successfully into the life and work of the school. Opportunities in physical education are particularly good for pupils to work together, take responsibility and show initiative, with many benefiting considerably through the Community Sports Leaders' Award. Events such as the Year 8 orienteering challenge and many activities during enrichment week allow pupils to develop socially with themselves and with adults. Such activities provide experiences that, for many pupils, will be life-long. The school council is generally well regarded by pupils, most of whom think it gives genuine opportunities to participate in aspects of running the school. Many sixth formers give community service in and out of school, and the Young Enterprise scheme is strong. Charity work is a contribution to citizenship, and major events such as the carol service take the school into the community. School productions, musical events, foreign exchanges, and visits to galleries, theatres and concerts contribute well to social as well as cultural development.
40. Provision for cultural development is good. As well as the external opportunities referred to above, work in English, music and art has a firm cultural dimension. Work on world religions in religious education is put in a clear cultural context, as is work in geography, where detailed case studies of different areas are taught. The lack of guidance to teachers about promoting aspects of multi-cultural education, and the multi-cultural nature of Britain today, is a relative weakness. Despite this, there are examples of very good and excellent practice, including lessons in religious education at Key Stage 4. Here, Hinduism was well chosen as the religion to be taught alongside Christianity as a way of widening pupils' perspectives of Asian cultures very different to their own. In dance, one module focuses solely on the multi-cultural dimension; some work in music and art features Indian music and Papuan art respectively, and the languages department fosters a European dimension. With many examples of good practice in the school, there is a good foundation to develop more opportunities for the pupils' cultural development.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

41. At the last inspection, the arrangements for promoting the welfare of pupils, including matters of health and safety, were good overall. This position has been maintained in general terms, although there has been less progress than might be expected in terms of using assessment information to promote effective progress.
42. Procedures to ensure the pupils' health and safety are satisfactory overall. The health and safety policy adequately defines responsibilities in school. Health and safety issues are overseen appropriately by the premises committee of the governing body. Teachers make pupils aware of health and safety issues in

practical lessons, such as in physical education and science. In design and technology, however, less emphasis is placed on health and safety, both in the teaching and signage around machines. For example, in a workshop there were no hazard lines around machines. There are also problems with uneven flooring in art. Suitable termly fire evacuation drills are carried out. Fire alarm testing and the inspection of portable electrical equipment are routinely carried out in an appropriate manner. The arrangements to deal with any incidents or accidents are well established and appropriate. The use of separate outdoor areas for different year groups makes the school an inherently calmer and safer place.

43. Child protection procedures are satisfactory. Linked to local area guidelines, the school's arrangements and responsibilities are defined clearly. There are two trained and experienced designated staff members; these arrangements are well known to staff. The school plans to ensure that all pupils get appropriate opportunities to develop an understanding of these matters as part of an updated personal and social education curriculum from September 2000.
44. The procedures to monitor and promote good behaviour and discipline are good. As a result, the school's positive and purposeful atmosphere provides good conditions for learning. A clear policy on behaviour and discipline is applied consistently across the school. The main emphasis is on recognising and rewarding good behaviour, and nearly all pupils have responded positively. A clear and suitable range of rewards and sanctions is in routine operation. In lessons, most teachers use praise effectively, and maintain clear and consistent boundaries between acceptable and unacceptable behaviour. For the small minority of pupils with significant behaviour difficulties, parents and outside support services are effectively involved. Individual behaviour plans are put in place until behaviour improves.
45. Procedures for monitoring and eliminating oppressive behaviour, including bullying, are satisfactory overall. There is an anti-bullying policy and the school holds an annual anti-bullying day for Year 7 pupils. A range of outside agencies and work in art and drama are used to provide added impact to the day. The active involvement of pupils in helping to address bullying is not a prominent part of the school's measures. As a result, preventative measures are not as strong as they might be. The school does not yet keep a separate file on bullying incidents, and the measures taken to address them. As a result, the school is not readily able to monitor the frequency and effectiveness of its measures. However, the pupils say that bullying incidents are rare and that such incidents, once disclosed to staff, are usually handled effectively.
46. Procedures to monitor and improve attendance are good. Registers are completed correctly; notes from parents are sought for all absences. Pupils with an attendance level below 80 per cent are identified and monitored carefully. Attendance data are updated on a monthly basis. Measures to monitor and address lateness and truancy are also good; the Educational Welfare Officer is involved where appropriate. Parents are clear on the need to inform the school when pupils are absent and are well aware of the school's views and rules about holidays during term-time. Recognition and rewards are not given for full attendance, as this is the expectation for all pupils.
47. The monitoring of the pupils' academic performance is unsatisfactory overall. Procedures for assessing the pupils' attainments are satisfactory. Statutory requirements for the assessment and recording of pupils' academic performance

are being met. A satisfactory range of information is collected, sufficient to give a good measure of the attainment of pupils when they join the school and as they move through it. Several subject departments gather sufficient information about the attainment and progress of each pupil in their subject. These data, however, are not yet used by most departments in a methodical way to analyse and predict individual or group performance. The history department provides an exemplar of good practice in the school, linking this information closely to the data about attainment on entry and then making a variety of predictions and targets to guide future progress. As a result, standards in the subject are improving rapidly. The mathematics department is making effective use of assessment data to monitor progress, and to review the curriculum. However, there is no systematic whole-school monitoring of the use that individual departments make of assessment data to ensure consistency of approach. The school, therefore, makes unsatisfactory use of assessment data to improve curriculum planning, or to monitor the progress of individual pupils, classes or subjects. The English department, for example, does not use base-line or other information to measure performance against targets or to review the curriculum. The science department is attempting some value-added analysis; however, there is no target setting in Key Stage 3, although the relevant information is available to teachers. Very few subjects produce annual comparative measures of their work or use assessment to review the curriculum or their teaching and learning approaches.

48. Although some subjects make use of assessment data and other information to set targets for pupils in Key Stage 3 and beyond, pupils are not actively engaged in the target setting process, nor are they informed of their individual targets. This is unsatisfactory. There are no academic interviews by form tutors or other staff to provide a focus for target setting. There is insufficient use of National Curriculum levels by subject departments; hence heads of year cannot use this information to track pupils' progress.
49. In contrast to the wider picture, the impact of assessment on the progress of pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory. The school has effective assessment procedures in place, both prior to a pupil joining the school as well as after transfer. These ensure that pupils' needs are identified at an early stage. Individual education plans are maintained on all pupils on the school's special needs register. These contain a manageable number of achievable and appropriate targets. In the best lessons, they are used to good effect, but in a small number of cases they are not effectively used and thus individuals' needs are not always being met. There are structures for the flow of information on individual pupils between the special needs and mainstream departments, and some subjects make good use of this in their planning. However, their lack of use by some departments suggests that overall monitoring of the use of individual education plans is not fully effective.
50. Procedures to monitor and support the pupils' personal development are good. Good work and attitudes are regularly celebrated in assemblies. This recognition and reward provides pupils with frequent and public confirmation of what is good in their lives, and helps raise their self-esteem. The assemblies also provide pupils with good opportunities to reflect on the lives and needs of others. . A well used health education drop-in zone provides pupils with a confidential means of discussing a wide range of health and social issues. This facility is particularly well used by pupils in Years 8 to 11. Parents value highly the rounded education provided, and consider that the work on the pupils' personal development is an important part of school life.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

51. Overall, the partnership with parents makes a satisfactory contribution to the quality of education provided and the standards achieved. However, there has been a deterioration in the quality of reporting, as interim progress reports on the pupils' academic progress are no longer issued for most pupils.
52. About one-third of parents replied to the pre-inspection survey and 38 attended the pre-inspection meeting. Parents are broadly satisfied with what the school provides and achieves. Most feel comfortable approaching the school with questions or concerns. Based on survey returns, most parents agree that the school is well led and managed, has high expectations, helps pupils become more mature and responsible and feel that most teaching is good. They confirm that most pupils like school and make good progress, with an interesting range of activities outside lessons. However, based on the survey returns, over a quarter of parents think that the school does not keep them sufficiently well informed about how pupils are getting on; parents note, correctly, the loss of interim reports as a retrograde step.
53. The quality of the school's links with parents are broadly satisfactory, as may be judged from the questionnaire responses, but there are some areas that could be improved. The quality of information provided for parents is satisfactory overall, in spite of the loss of interim reports. Written annual reports to parents comply with requirements. The reports provide clear information on what has been studied, and detailed comments on the pupils' work. However, not all subjects refer to National Curriculum levels in reports, and comments do not always make sufficient reference to what pupils have done well and what they need to do in order to improve. There are appropriate opportunities for parents to meet with teachers to review each child's progress. The quality of information in the prospectus, regular newsletters and the governors' annual report is satisfactory overall. Newsletters keep parents well informed on school life and raise important issues, such as the taking of holidays during term time. The most recent prospectus and governors' annual report did not comply fully with the most recent requirements on the format in which results are to be presented. Whilst inspectors found that subjects made suitable provision for homework, parents feel unclear about homework expectations, despite the publication of a homework timetable. The homework diaries are not being systematically checked by all tutors. However, the use of commendation and misdemeanour slips keep parents effectively informed about the pupils' progress.
54. The quality of information and other links with parents of pupils with special educational needs are good. The good liaison with parents starts before pupils join the school, as the special educational needs co-ordinator visits primary schools and meets parents. There are also regular meetings after pupils join the school. Parents are involved fully in annual reviews, and files show good evidence of a regular flow of information between home and school.
55. The parents' involvement with the work of the school makes a satisfactory contribution to learning and the life of the school. Nearly all parents have signed the home-school agreement. Discussions with pupils indicate that most parents check that homework is done, and provide help where appropriate. Parents' consultation evenings are well attended, particularly in Years 7 and 9. School productions and open evenings for prospective Year 7 parents, and for GCSE and sixth form

choices, are also well attended. All parent governors' positions are filled, sometimes after elections, which is an indication of parents' interest in supporting the school. About half the governing body are parents of pupils. There is an active Friends of Saltash Community School Association, which works well with the school, and which organises and runs a good range of fundraising and social events. The Association also provides valued help at some of school's community events. Recent fundraising events have helped provide a sound system for the school hall, carpets and curtains for the music block, and additional software for the special educational needs department.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

Leadership and management

56. Following the last inspection, the governors drew up an action plan containing appropriate targets to tackle the various key issues raised in the inspection report. The fact that there has been only limited progress towards meeting some aspects of these targets is symptomatic of a wider lack of systematic monitoring within the school to ensure that things happen as intended. There has been marked improvement in the quality of accommodation and learning resources. At subject level, there has been at least satisfactory improvement in all subjects; the developments in some of them have been good, and offer examples of what could be done in other departments.
57. Overall, the leadership and management provided by the headteacher and other staff with key management responsibilities are satisfactory. This is evident from the fact that the outcomes achieved by the school have remained at, or above, average levels, and have improved in line with national patterns since the last inspection. Overall, the pupils' achievements when they leave the school are higher than would be expected from their attainments at entry. Leadership at all levels ensures a satisfactory broad educational direction for the school. There is a clear commitment at all levels to improvement in academic standards, as is seen from the targets that the school has set for itself; these are realistically demanding. The priorities set out in the school's development plan are appropriate ones, and reflect the wider educational scene. For example, there has been a greater focus on identifying ways in which literacy and numeracy should be promoted. There has also been a marked increase in the quality, if not the quantity, of the school's provisions for information technology. Day to day routines function smoothly, and reflect the school's stated aims in a satisfactory manner. The range of policies to guide the school's work is an appropriate one; all required policies and procedures are in place, although there is some inconsistency in how they are implemented, for example over matters of literacy or marking. However, some long-standing issues of staff illness remain; this is having a negative effect on the pupils' progress in some subjects. Nor has there been sufficient action to restructure the relatively high levels of senior staff.
58. The governors discharge their responsibilities in a satisfactory manner overall. Statutory requirements are met, except that the school still does not fully meet the requirement for a daily act of collective worship for all pupils, and the provision for religious education in the sixth form does not meet, in full, the requirements of the Cornwall Agreed Syllabus. The non-compliance with requirements for religious education at Key Stage 4, noted at the last inspection, has now been tackled satisfactorily. The governors play a satisfactory role in guiding the school's

development, particularly through the work of committees, and have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. There are no systematic arrangements for governors to see the work of the school at first hand, but they receive annual reports from all subjects.

59. The last inspection report noted shortcomings in the procedures used for planning the school's development. There have been improvements in that whole-school priorities now carry more detail of how they are to be realised, and there is now a good linkage between whole-school priorities and the allocation of funds. However, the link between whole-school targets and those of departments remains poor. Whilst all subjects have brief statements of priorities, and most of these reflect whole-school intentions, few departmental plans contain sufficient detail of how plans are to be converted into action. Some good examples exist, for example in history and mathematics, where there is a clear identification of targets, success criteria, responsibilities, timescales, costs and training needs. Overall, however, most planning at departmental level lacks such rigour.
60. The main reason that plans and policies are not being implemented in a consistent manner is because there is no systematic programme for monitoring the work of the school beyond the annual reviews of subjects by senior managers. Overall, therefore, the arrangements for monitoring and evaluating the school's performance are unsatisfactory. For example, whilst the school has made progress in collecting a range of relevant information on the pupils' attainments, these data are not being analysed in a widespread and rigorous manner to identify potential problems. The good start on such analyses made by staff in science, history, mathematics and the sixth form is not being promoted across all subjects. There are no school-wide systems to observe teachers at work in the classroom. Thus the best practice, which certainly exists in many areas, is not being identified and promoted effectively across all subjects. At subject level, some departments are successful in reviewing critically the work of staff in the classroom, and in making future plans on the basis of detailed analyses. Effective work being done in mathematics, history, and geography, for example, could be used to good effect across all subjects.

Staffing, accommodation and learning resources

61. The school has sufficient appropriately qualified teachers to meet curriculum needs. There is a high proportion of experienced staff and a good range of expertise. Initial qualifications are generally well matched to the subjects taught and, where they are different, teachers have appropriate experience of teaching the subject so that there is no adverse effect on standards. There are some problems of long-term illness which are adversely affecting the progress of pupils in science, the special needs unit, some aspects of design and technology, and in personal and social education. The proportion of teachers on higher allowances is greater than usual, as is the age profile of the teaching staff as a whole. All of the teachers who receive higher allowances are men. The school has made limited progress in reducing the number of staff who receive higher allowances, but changes to pension regulations made shortly after the last inspection have reduced the opportunities to carry out further restructuring. Overall, the level of support staff is good, and it is satisfactory in relation to support for pupils with special educational needs. However, technical support for art is insufficient.
62. There are satisfactory arrangements for the induction and support of newly qualified teachers, and of teachers new to the school. New teachers have mentors to help

them with induction, and there is a satisfactory programme of links with the local education authority. Although the guidance received is appreciated, the programme is not sufficiently monitored to ensure that it meets everyone's needs. The relationship between the school development plan and the provision of staff development is weak, as also is the link between staff development and appraisal; the school's appraisal arrangements are in abeyance pending new guidelines. There is no whole-school monitoring of teaching and learning that involves regular observation of lessons by senior or middle managers.

63. The school's accommodation is broadly satisfactory for its curriculum needs, although there are some pinch points. Since the last inspection, a block of four extra history classrooms has been provided. Additional accommodation for science and information technology has improved appreciably the provision in these areas, which is now good. A further block of four classrooms will shortly be built, and will help to overcome the continuing pressure on accommodation caused by rising pupil numbers. Accommodation for the sixth form continues to be inadequate. Facilities for private study are poor, with many students resorting to studying at home at the beginning and end of the school day. The social area is small for a sixth form of 200 students, and this reduces opportunities for social engagement and personal development. The provision for design and technology is unsatisfactory. The textiles room is too small for many classes, and pillars hinder the monitoring of the safe use of sewing machines. Workshops are adequate, but the need to use work benches for written work at Key Stage 3 is unsatisfactory. Access to rooms for people with physical or visual impairment has improved through the installation of lifts and additional ramps. The accommodation for indoor and outdoor physical education is very good, and makes a significant contribution to the range of experiences that pupils receive, and to the overall standards of their work.
64. Resources to support learning are satisfactory, and there have been suitable improvements since the last inspection. Spending on learning resources has been markedly above average since the previous inspection. Provisions in religious education, physical education and geography are good; in English, mathematics, science, modern foreign languages, history, design and technology, art and music they are satisfactory. However, provision in information technology remains unsatisfactory. Whilst there has been a substantial programme of spending in this area, which has had a major positive effect on standards in discrete information technology lessons, much of the money has been spent on replacing very old equipment with a similar number of more modern computers and software. The school therefore still has far fewer computers than average for its size, and this is limiting learning opportunities across the whole curriculum. Although the library is relatively small, it offers a pleasant environment for study. The number of books available is just in line with the national average, but the quality of them is good. The library staff provide helpful guidance to pupils; access to the library's resources, including at lunchtime and after school, is good.

Efficiency

65. Overall, the school receives slightly less income per pupil than average in its basic budget. Although income is brought up to average levels by the substantial extra funds for pupils with special educational needs, this additional money cannot be used for other purposes. The school uses such special grants appropriately. The school made an unsuccessful bid for Technology College status; it has decided not to make another bid because of the perceived effects on staff morale. This is

somewhat surprising given the school's tight funding and the need to enhance, substantially, its information technology equipment. The governors play a key part in ensuring that the funds provided are targeted appropriately to educational priorities. Since the last inspection, they have made more use of information provided in the whole-school development plan to do this. The school spends less on the sixth form than is provided for in its budget; spending on Key Stage 3 has been increased. Governors have used principles of best value appropriately for the sixth form, since there are other colleges nearby that offer alternatives to the school's A-level based courses. However, the impact on Key Stage 3 pupils is less evident, as the additional spending is focused mostly on providing very small groups for lower attaining pupils. The majority sees little benefit from the decision.

66. Given that funds are tight, the governors are generally successful in seeking to obtain best value from their spending decisions. However, their room for manoeuvre is limited by the current age and allowance profile of the staff. Spending on teaching staff is kept to broadly average levels because there are fewer teachers than usual for the size of the school, and they spend somewhat more of their time in the classroom compared to the national figure. The relatively high level of cases of long-term sickness absence means that spending on this area is above average. Given the numbers of pupils with special educational needs, spending on education support staff is well above average. In the light of the shortcomings in accommodation and learning resources noted at the last inspection, governors have increased spending in these areas. Apart from the below average level of computers, in spite of a major re-equipment programme, provision of learning resources is now satisfactory. At the time of the last inspection, the school had a substantial reserve fund; this has now fallen to average levels, having been used to finance improvements.
67. Although there are shortcomings in terms of how the school monitors its work in educational areas, the monitoring of spending is good. Overall, the school adds educational value over time, so that pupils who entered the school with broadly average attainments leave with above average results at the end of Key Stage 4, and well above average grades in the sixth form. The pupils behave well, and show positive attitudes to learning. Pupils with special educational needs make appropriate progress, and are well integrated into the school. Overall, teaching is good. Since this is achieved with slightly less income per pupil than average, the school is judged to offer good value for money.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

68. The governors and senior managers should note the following key issues for action when drawing up their action plan following the inspection. The numbers in brackets refer to the relevant paragraphs of the report. Where a key issue is followed by an asterisk, it means that elements are contained in the current school development plan.

- (1) Improve the progress that pupils make in Year 7 by matching the work that they do more closely to the range of their needs and abilities, both in the planning of lessons and through the grouping arrangements that are used.* (7,8,14,29,79,85)
- (2) Improve the use that is made of assessment information throughout the school to guide the learning process, paying particular attention to:
 - a. improving the rigour of analyses of data to identify possible areas of strength and weakness at whole-school, subject and classroom levels;
 - b. setting clear targets for all pupils based upon these analyses, and sharing them with pupils; *
 - c. providing clear guidance through written comments when marking work so that pupils know what they must do to improve further; and
 - d. monitoring regularly and frequently the systems put in place to ensure that they are followed by all staff as intended. (5,14,24,47,48,52,85,92,94,105,111,128,133,149)
- (3) Improve further the linkage between whole-school and departmental development plans, with particular reference to:
 - a. taking a view beyond one year of developments;
 - b. ensuring that departmental plans show, clearly, how whole-school planning priorities will be delivered, as well as identifying department-specific priorities;
 - c. ensuring that the whole-school and departmental plans contain clear indications of targets, costs, timescales, responsibilities, success criteria, costs and staff development needs, and that these should be quantified wherever possible; and
 - d. ensuring that the implementation of whole-school planning targets is monitored frequently and regularly by governors and senior managers, and that of departmental planning targets is monitored in the same manner by senior and middle managers. (59,62,77,94,99,113,129,145,149)
- (4) Develop robust and rigorous systems to monitor the implementation of policies and procedures at all levels of the school, and to evaluate the work of the school, in a manner that:
 - a. provides continuity of contact between senior and middle managers; *
 - b. ensures that middle managers are accountable for improvements in their subject areas; and
 - c. in the short-term, focuses on the consistent development of literacy and numeracy.* (6,7,26,56,60,75,76,77,84,94,99,106,107,124,134,145,149)

In addition to the key issues identified above, the governors may wish to include other areas of weakness in their action planning. These are identified in paragraphs 28, 30, 31,36, 37,42, 51, 61, 65, 66

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	197
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	106

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
1.0	21.8	37.1	34.5	5.1	0.5	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	1192	201
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	117	n/a

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	71	2
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	281	7

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	3

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	31
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	44

Attendance

Authorised absence	%
School data	92.8
National comparative data	91.0

Unauthorised absence	%
School data	0.1
National comparative data	1.1

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	117	109	226

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	60	69	73
	Girls	83	74	73
	Total	143	143	146
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	63	63	65
	National	63	62	55
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	26	35	24
	National	28	38	23

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	52	65	76
	Girls	70	77	74
	Total	122	142	150
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	54	63	66
	National	64	64	60
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	27	32	31
	National	31	37	28

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4

Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	113	111	224

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	55	103	108
	Girls	58	105	108
	Total	113	208	216
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	50	93	96
	National	46.3	90.7	95.7

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	40
	National	37.8

Attainment at the end of the sixth form

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A-level or AS-level examinations	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	39	37	76

Average A/AS points score per candidate	For candidates entered for 2 or more A-levels or equivalent			For candidates entered for fewer than 2 A-levels or equivalent		
	Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
School	21.6	18.5	20.1	4	n/a	4
National	17.7	18.1	17.9	2.7	2.8	2.8

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	
Black – African heritage	1
Black – other	4
Indian	
Pakistani	
Bangladeshi	
Chinese	5
White	1383
Any other minority ethnic group	

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage		
Black – African heritage		
Black – other		
Indian		
Pakistani		
Bangladeshi		
Chinese		
White	22	3
Other minority ethnic groups		

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7-Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	75.6
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	18.4

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y7-Y13

Total number of education support staff	43
Total aggregate hours worked per week	354

Deployment of teachers: Y7-Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	79.0
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Average teaching group size: Y7-Y13

Key Stage 3	26.4
Key Stage 4	21.3

Financial information

Financial year	1998/1999
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Total income	3034687
Total expenditure	3045195
Expenditure per pupil	2287
Balance brought forward from previous year	92055
Balance carried forward to next year	81547

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	1393
Number of questionnaires returned	438

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	36	53	8	2	1
My child is making good progress in school.	36	56	7	1	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	23	61	8	1	7
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	20	58	14	5	3
The teaching is good.	28	65	3	1	3
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	22	50	22	5	2
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	45	44	7	3	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	49	47	3	1	1
The school works closely with parents.	20	54	19	2	5
The school is well led and managed.	39	50	3	1	8
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	32	58	6	1	4
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	35	45	8	0	11

Other issues raised by parents

The 53 written comments received from parents reflected similar strengths and weaknesses to those shown above, and provide further information for their responses.

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

ENGLISH

69. The attainments of pupils on entry to the school, measured by the results of the Key Stage 2 national tests taken in primary schools, have been broadly average in recent years, but rising steadily. The most recent intake shows above average attainments. In the 1999 National Curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 3, the mean score obtained by pupils is in line with the national average for all maintained schools. When compared to the same pupils' earlier Key Stage 2 scores, the 1999 results are slightly lower than would be expected. The mean points score attained in 1999 is similar to that attained in mathematics, but below that attained in science. Results in 1997 were similar to those in 1999, but in 1998 they were substantially better than in the two other years. Since the last inspection, the overall performances of boys have been well above the national average; those of girls have been above average.
70. In the 1999 GCSE examinations taken at the end of Key Stage 4, the proportion of pupils attaining grades A* to C in English language is slightly above the national average, but not significantly so; that attaining grades A* to G was just above the national average. In English literature, the proportion attaining grades A* to C is in line with the national average; that at grades A* to G is just above average. In 1999, pupils tended to do significantly better in these subjects than in the others that they took. Results in English language in 1999 are better than in the two previous years, whilst results in English literature have been consistent over the past three years. The 1999 results are in line with those that would be expected from the pupils' Key Stage 3 test scores two years earlier. At the end of the sixth form, the 1999 results at A-level are well below the national average. In 1997, results were just below average and in 1998 they were well below average. These variations reflect the variations in the abilities of the students concerned from year to year; overall, attainments at A-level are broadly in line with expectations in relation to the students' previous GCSE results.
71. Evidence gathered during the inspection shows that attainments are in line with expected levels for the end of Key Stage 3, and above expectations at Key Stage 4; standards are below expectations for the end of the sixth form. The slightly better standards at Key Stage 3 relative to recent test scores reflect the school's policy of now providing limited grouping by ability for English in Year 7. The pupils' achievements in relation to their earlier attainments are satisfactory in Key Stage 3 and the sixth form, and good at Key Stage 4.
72. The pupils' skills in speaking and listening are above expectations at all levels, and are a relative strength of the school. Most pupils enjoy taking part in oral work and do so confidently. Higher and middle attainers possess a sound vocabulary and can use language flexibly. As they progress through the school, pupils learn how to take part effectively in group discussion. This was seen, for example, when a class of higher attaining pupils in Year 11 discussed the presentation of religion and morality in *The Crucible*. Pupils spoke in turns, listened carefully to each other and were eager to relate the issues to their own lives and experiences. Achievement is enhanced by participation in drama lessons, where pupils are able to explore new social roles through improvisation, and are able to improve their powers of non-verbal expression, such as mime.

73. Standards in reading are in line with expectations at Key Stage 3, and above at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. By the end of Key Stage 3, pupils read novels and plays that are mostly appropriate for their age group. Higher attaining pupils read aloud with good expression and pace, as was seen, for example, when Year 9 pupils read well from *Romeo and Juliet* on their first acquaintance with the play. By the ends of Key Stage 4 and the sixth form, pupils go on to read more complex literature. In this, they examine in some depth the social issues and themes which arise, and many pupils display good understanding of how writers create character. This was seen, for example, when a Year 11 class displayed a good knowledge of the plot of *Lord of the Flies*, and an awareness of the values represented by the contrasting characters. However, only the highest attainers have developed the capacity to analyse in close detail the effectiveness of language. Lower attainers confine themselves to the gist of what they read rather than engaging directly with the text.
74. Standards of writing are in line with expected levels at Key Stage 3, and above at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. Pupils at all levels learn to write appropriately for a variety of audiences. By the end of Key Stage 4, they are able to write a suitable range of poems, narratives and reports. By the end of the sixth form, students extend the range of their work to include, for example, discursive writing or writing for a closely defined readership. Thus good quality work was seen on media topics and in preparing items of a specific length which might be suitable for inclusion in an encyclopaedia for children. By the end of the sixth form, most students produce good quality summaries, but only the highest attainers analyse linguistic features successfully. A weakness amongst many middle and lower attaining pupils of all ages is that work is marred by inaccuracy in spelling, punctuation and grammar. The extent to which pupils re-draft their work is variable.
75. The overall quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory in Key Stage 3 and the sixth form, and is good at Key Stage 4. Some examples of very good teaching were also seen, but also isolated examples where it was less than satisfactory. When teaching is most effective, teachers display good subject knowledge, as was seen in the teaching of Shakespeare at all levels. This leads to pupils having confidence in their learning, and thus to ask appropriate questions. Examples were seen of well planned lessons, which fully took into account the prior attainment of pupils. A very good drama lesson was seen with a group of low attaining pupils. The planning showed awareness of the need to introduce a number of varied tasks and to have available resources to be used in improvisation. This led to pupils becoming fully involved in the lesson, and making a fine creative effort to portray their characters realistically. The management of pupils is mostly good, and this leads to a secure environment in which learning can take place. When teaching is less effective, the work is not sufficiently challenging, and pupils do not learn higher level skills to the extent that might be expected. Learning support assistants are not deployed to full advantage in lessons, and so the learning of some lower attaining pupils is not fully supported. In less successful lessons, the teachers' subject knowledge is also less secure, and this leads to pupils' having a more limited understanding of technical terms than might be expected. The extent to which basic skills are taught is variable. When teachers require pupils to re-draft their work, pay attention in their marking to accuracy at the word and sentence level, and provide full and diagnostic comments, pupils take a pride in their work and pay attention to quality. When teachers do not require pupils to re-draft work, or their marking is superficial, pupils do not pay sufficient attention to detail. During the inspection, lessons were seen in which good

use was made of information technology. However, insufficient use is made of it for all pupils to develop their skills to the extent that might be expected. In particular, pupils do not routinely use information technology to re-draft their work. Pupils' attitudes to learning are good. They mostly behave well and are co-operative both with their teachers and each other.

76. The overall standard of literacy across the whole curriculum is in line with the national expectation. Pupils possess good skills in speaking and listening and are provided with ample opportunities to develop their skills by participating in whole class and group discussions. They are able to provide brief answers to questions, or fuller answers, as circumstances require. Pupils are taught, and use, correct subject-specific vocabulary. The standard of reading aloud is generally satisfactory, with higher attainers being able to express further their understanding by using good expression and a varied pace. The recently introduced procedure for allowing some degree of grouping by ability in Year 7 has been successful in supporting pupils' individual needs. The introduction of a compulsory weekly reading session across the whole school has created some clear benefits. All pupils must engage in silent reading for a sustained period at least once in the week; pupils take responsibility for their choice of reading material and borrowing rates from the library have increased significantly. However, reading, particularly extended reading, is not yet sufficiently incorporated into all schemes of work to ensure that it is an integral part of all pupils' learning in all subjects. Pupils are able to write for a variety of audiences. In English, history and religious education, for example, they are provided with suitable opportunities for personal, reflective and discursive writing. In other subjects, such as mathematics, geography and music, pupils are able to write effective reports. In most subjects, pupils have suitable opportunities to produce extended writing. However, the work of many middle and lower attaining pupils is marred by inaccurate spelling, punctuation and grammar. The need to address this issue was noted in the previous report, but the school has not yet developed strategies which do so successfully. The number of pupils in the school for whom English is an additional language is very small. Such pupils make satisfactory progress and are well assimilated into the school community.
77. Progress since the previous inspection, in both the teaching of English and in developing a literacy strategy, has been satisfactory. At Key Stage 3, standards have remained in line with the national average and at Key Stage 4 they have improved. At A-level, the school has maintained an above average A-E pass rate, but the proportion of students attaining grades A and B has fluctuated as a result of their prior attainments. Teaching remains good at Key Stage 4 but is satisfactory at Key Stage 3 and in the sixth form rather than good or very good. It remains the case that the department has yet to undertake planned monitoring and evaluation of teaching and that there is further scope to extend the range of work to suit the needs of more able pupils. The departmental development plan could be more detailed. The literacy strategy has achieved some success, particularly with respect to the place of reading in the curriculum. However, as the school recognises, further action needs to be taken, particularly with regard to improving the level of basic accuracy in pupils' written work.

Drama

78. The results in GCSE drama in 1999 are below the national average for the proportion of pupils attaining grades A*-C, and just above that for grades A*-G. Over the last three years, results have fluctuated from above the national average to

below it. No pupils were entered for A-level in 1999. On the basis of evidence seen during the inspection, standards are in line with expectations for the ends of Key Stage 4 and the sixth form. The drama department makes a good contribution to the extra-curricular life of the school.

MATHEMATICS

79. The results of the Key Stage 2 tests taken at the end of the pupils' primary schooling have varied from year to year, but are generally at, or above, the national average. The 1999 results are above average. At the end of Key Stage 3, the mean points gained in the 1999 national tests results are broadly in line with the national average, but slightly below the level that would be expected from the pupils' Key Stage 2 scores three years earlier. This reflects the negative effects on progress of mixed ability classes in Year 7. Since the last inspection, results at Key Stage 3 have been broadly average; overall, boys have achieved results that are above the national average, whilst those for girls have been in line.
80. At the end of Key Stage 4, the proportions of pupils achieving grades A* to C and A* to G in the 1999 GCSE examination are broadly in line with the national averages for all schools, with girls performing less well than the boys. The mean points score is broadly in line with the national average for all schools, but with boys performing better than girls. The examination results are somewhat higher than would be expected from the pupils' Key Stage 3 test results two years earlier. In 1999, pupils tended to achieve similar results in mathematics to those in the other subjects that they took. Since the last inspection, the trend in results closely matches the national pattern. At the end of the sixth form, the 1999 A-level results are broadly in line with the national average. The pattern of results since the last inspection matches the national trend. Results for A-level further mathematics over the past two years are above average, with most students gaining A and B grades. The results achieved are higher than would be expected from the students' earlier GCSE standards. At AS, students generally achieve results that are in line with those expected from their performance at GCSE.
81. In work seen during the inspection, the standards achieved by pupils at the end of Key Stage 3 are broadly in line with expected levels. Pupils develop suitable strategies for solving problems and conducting investigations through planned exercises that are now included in the revised scheme of work. Pupils use and apply mathematics, extend a concept and articulate their thinking through set tasks. For example, Year 7 pupils of average ability understood probability of single events when comparing experimental and theoretical results; they used the correct terminology and reinforced their appreciation of number. In Year 8, high attaining pupils used their knowledge of information and computer spreadsheets well to optimise the study of an open box with a fixed surface area, tabulating and graphing their findings. The pupils' literacy skills are enhanced when required to summarise the study using a writing frame. However, there are insufficient opportunities to practise literacy skills, and the skills of using and applying mathematics across the other attainment targets on a daily basis. Numeracy is reviewed at the start of most lessons across the key stage. The pupils' numerical skills are satisfactory, but pupils sometimes rely too much on calculators for the most basic computations. For example, in Year 7, the use of the calculator is not sufficiently discouraged when mental skills could be applied. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress; those with subject specific numeracy targets make

satisfactory progress with the help of learning support assistants. However, better use could be made of learning support assistants not attached to specific pupils. In Year 9, pupils have a good understanding of shape, space and measure and produce neat and accurate diagrams to support learning, for example, in their work on transformation geometry including the reflection and rotation of regular polygons. At Key Stage 3, knowledge of the rules of algebra is not widespread, although high attainers use algebra as a tool, from formulating expressions from simple data to solving equations and applying all the appropriate skills for checking the results. Pupils understand the different representative values when handling data, which provides further reinforcement of the use and application of number.

82. In the work seen at Key Stage 4, the standards achieved by pupils are above the national expectation for the end of the key stage. This is higher than recent examination results would indicate because of the recent changes to the department's schemes of work and far closer monitoring of results. Pupils work well with the open-ended task requirements for GCSE, although opportunities for extended work in day-to-day lessons are infrequent. High and average attainers in Year 10 make good use of information technology to support algebraic work on graphs, quadratic and simultaneous equations, thus reinforcing skills, knowledge and understanding. Lower attaining pupils can simplify and substitute into algebraic expressions derived from examining the properties of simple mathematical figures. Pupils continue to develop a good understanding of shape, space and measure with high attainers applying Pythagoras' Theorem and solving complex three-dimensional problems involving trigonometry. The level of attainment when handling data is good, and pupils compare experimental and theoretical probability applied to real information. High attainers can compare between discrete and continuous data applied to cumulative frequency. Low attainers in Year 10 made very good use of statistics as a vehicle for reviewing course work procedures.
83. In work seen at sixth-form level, standards are well above expectations, with work of high challenge demonstrating good levels of skill and understanding in the subject. For example, Year 12 students responded well to their second piece of coursework on kinematics, establishing hypotheses, conducting analyses, interpreting and validating their findings, working initially as a whole class and then continuing the set task individually.
84. Across the curriculum as a whole, standards of numeracy are broadly satisfactory. The school is committed to improving standards further with a numeracy policy that has been shared with other departments. Mathematics teachers reinforce numeracy skills well in lessons, but this work is not sufficiently co-ordinated across other departments. There are some good examples to build upon. In geography, opportunities to promote numeracy are identified clearly in the scheme of work, with better than usual teaching of basis skills in areas such as data interpretation, graphs, ratio and proportion. Work on statistical analysis provides a good foundation for the use of statistics in sixth form individual studies.
85. The quality of teaching is good overall with many very good lessons. Teaching is good at Key Stage 3; it is very good at Key Stage 4 and particularly so in the sixth form, where it leads to very effective learning taking place. Specialist teachers' knowledge of the subject is very good and a strength of the department, leading in many instances to a confident interactive teaching style, motivating particularly the high attainers at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth-form. Teachers have high expectations of work and behaviour and often make good use of probing questions,

challenging the pupils to think and reflect on what they have learnt previously. The use of time is effective, particularly for the lower attaining pupils, where work is broken down into bite-sized activities, reflecting their more limited capacity to concentrate. The relationships between pupils and teachers are very good. The teachers' support of pupils is good, maintaining a positive brisk pace; the focus is on work for the whole of the lesson. There is a strong work ethic and positive ethos in the department. Learning is enhanced when teachers understand the way the subject topic develops and is related to other work, for example where a task is related to the pupils' own experiences. Work in Year 9 on reflection and rotational symmetry was developed through observation and by reference to everyday events. The teacher then made good use of specially prepared resources to reinforce understanding. Good learning also occurs where intellectual effort is demanded of the pupils so they acquire new knowledge, practise new skills and broaden their understanding of the subject. Good use is made of information technology at Key Stage 3. Where teaching is less successful, it is a result of poor lesson planning focusing more on covering content and less on promoting conceptual understanding. In these instances, teaching methods can lack variety. Mixed ability teaching in Year 7 is having a negative impact on standards, since classes are taught as a whole and work is not matched to the range of attainments within groups. As a result, the progress made in Year 7, particularly by the gifted and talented pupils, is lower than it should be. Once setting begins, from Year 8, pupils make far better progress. The pupils are interested in the subject. Their attitudes and responses to mathematics are good, leading to good progress being made, particularly at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. Written work is generally of a high standard, with accurate diagrams, detailed examples and full exercises aiding understanding and progress. Where progress is less secure, it is the result of poor written work, which lacks sufficient explanation. The marking of the pupils' work is inconsistent at Key Stage 3, with a variety of schemes being applied. There is insufficient diagnostic and evaluative comment by teachers in exercise books and annual reports. Assessments are accurate; regular assessment records are kept centrally, and these guide curriculum planning. Many lesson plans take little account of individuals' strengths and weaknesses, and there is insufficient provision for pupils to take more responsibility for their own learning. The use of information technology to support teaching and learning across the whole department is good at Key Stage 3, but poor at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form.

86. Since the last inspection, progress has been very good, particularly since the appointment of the new head of department. There are clear improvements in educational standards at GCSE, helped by the revised scheme of work. The department has made significant progress against the key issues raised by the last inspection report, and continues to make a good contribution to the overall standards of numeracy in the school through its well-constructed development plan. Whole-school guidance on numeracy has been introduced, and opportunities for strengthening the pupils' numeracy skills have been included in the mathematics department revised scheme of work. The very large class sizes at Key Stage 3 inhibit a variety of teaching and organisational strategies being employed. The department is led and managed well, providing effective educational guidance and support. Teaching, pupils' work, schemes of work and policies are monitored and evaluated regularly, drawing upon proper analyses of pupils' attainments.

SCIENCE

87. The attainments of pupils at entry to the school fluctuate from year to year, but are generally at or above the national average. The 1999 intake has above average attainments in the Key Stage 2 national tests taken in primary schools. At the end of Key Stage 3, the mean points score in the 1999 national tests is above average, but is lower than in any of the three previous years. However, the 1999 results are in line with expectations from the pupils' attainments on entry to the school. Pupils tend to perform better in science tests than they do in English or mathematics. Since the last inspection, results have been above the national average; boys' results have been well above average whilst those for girls have been above average. The teachers' own assessments of pupils' attainments are in line with test results.
88. At the end of Key Stage 4, the 1999 GCSE examination results show a significantly above average proportion of pupils gaining grades in the range A* to C; that for grades A* to G is also above average. These results are above those that would be expected from the pupils' test scores two years earlier. The results have shown an upward trend since the last inspection. Boys perform better than girls at examination, especially in terms of the proportion obtaining the higher grades. Pupils tend to achieve better results in science than in the other subjects that they take. The small number of pupils in the year group taking the Certificate of Achievement course all obtained a pass award.
89. In the 1999 A level results at the end of the sixth form, the proportion of students obtaining grades A or B was very high in physics compared with the national figure, but below average in biology and chemistry. However, the average points scores in biology and chemistry were broadly in line with the national averages, and well above in physics. Overall, the students' performances in the three science subjects at A level are at or above expectations when compared with their results at GCSE. The number of girls taking chemistry and physics has been low in the last two years, so comparisons with boys' results are unreliable. In biology, boys' and girls' results were comparable in 1999, but girls obtained better results in 1998.
90. In work seen during the inspection, standards are in line with national expectations for the end of Key Stage 3, and above expectations for the end of Key Stage 4. In the sixth form, standards overall are above expected levels, although they vary significantly from class to class, depending on teaching methods. At Key Stage 3, a high standard of work was observed in a Year 9 lesson on inheritance, where pupils discussed those factors in a person's characteristics which are affected by their environment, compared with those factors controlled by genetics. A lower attaining group showed a high level of interest in a demonstration of the waste products formed during the burning of a cigarette, and discussed the dangers of smoking. In Key Stage 4, higher attaining pupils in Year 11 understand the principle of wave motion, and discuss the difference between transverse and longitudinal waves. A lower attaining group of pupils also showed interest in discussing their work; they can describe the results of tests to ascertain the causes of rusting, and how these help us to prevent its occurrence. Whilst high standards are seen in all Attainment Targets, they are particularly high in lessons on physical processes, where teachers create high levels of pace and challenge. In the sixth form, A-level physics groups show a high level of understanding and are fully involved in their work on parabolic motion, and in the principles of measuring blood pressure, and how it varies in different parts of the body. In these lessons, the style of teaching demands a high level of student involvement. There is less successful teaching in those sixth form lessons that are too dominated by the teacher, and where teaching methods are

more akin to lecturing than teaching.

91. Pupils' practical skills are satisfactory, but there is insufficient opportunity to carry out longer term investigations in Years 7 and 8. Teachers stress clearly the meaning of key words in order to assist pupils' understanding; most pupils learn to use their own words to describe their observations, and any conclusions that can be drawn. The use of lists of key words, however, is not standard practice across the department. There is some use of number in Key Stage 3, and pupils are able to draw graphs and interpret the meaning of the data. By Key Stage 4, the use of formulae is more frequent, and pupils gain more confidence with their calculations. In the sixth form, particularly in physics, students tackle calculations enthusiastically, with a minority only taking insufficient care with units. They use calculators quickly and mostly accurately. There has been insufficient increase since the last inspection in the use of information technology by many science teachers, but in those lessons where it is used, pupils show a high level of competence.

92. The overall quality of teaching is satisfactory at Key Stage 3; it is good at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. Teaching is never less than satisfactory, and in two thirds of lessons, teaching is either good or very good. Teachers have a good command of their subject, and this gives pupils confidence; interesting background information is often provided to enhance the pupils' interest. Teachers plan their work thoroughly and liaise effectively with the laboratory technicians, so that the lessons proceed smoothly. When planning lessons, there is insufficient consideration of the range of attainment in each class, particularly in Year 7, but also in those classes where pupils are setted by ability. For example, in a Year 7 lesson on static electricity, the link with current electricity was not developed sufficiently well. There were too few practical groups in a lesson on reflection of light in Year 8, so that it was difficult for all pupils to play a suitably active part in the learning process. In the best lessons, learning objectives are clearly outlined to pupils at the start, and there is a good mix of teacher input and pupil activity, resulting in a sense of discovery and enjoyment. Teachers use praise wherever possible to encourage pupils. When a summing up takes place at the end of a lesson, it helps to consolidate learning, as in a Year 11 lesson on asexual reproduction of plants. Here, the lesson finished with a clear review of what had been learned in both theory and practical tasks. All teachers have sound classroom management skills, and management of pupils is positive, and largely effective. Teachers make appropriate use of the school system of commendations and sanctions. In a minority of lessons, pupils indulge in social chatter while undertaking practical or written work, which detracts from learning. Lessons start promptly, they occupy the full hour, and pupils are dismissed in orderly fashion; this helps to create a positive ethos for work. There are some very good examples of the day-to-day marking of pupils' work, with extensive use of constructive comments to encourage pupils to improve. The majority of teachers use the school marking policy, but there is inconsistency across the department in both the frequency and the depth of marking, and in the grading of work. The regular assessments of pupils' work are standardised across the department, and these provide details of individual pupils' progress, and a measure of the performance of each class. These results, and those in national tests at the end of Key Stages 2 and 3, are not yet used to the full in order to obtain a measure of the value added in each cohort, and thus of the work of the department. The frequency with which homework is set is satisfactory, but the tasks often lack variety, interest and challenge for higher attaining pupils. The short- and long-term absences of some teaching staff have caused a lack of continuity, and thus progress, in the work of some classes. In such cases, books are largely unmarked, pupils show less interest

in their work and their basic knowledge and skills are less secure. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress; they are provided with effective help by support assistants in many classes.

93. Pupils' attitudes to their work are generally good. They are polite and co-operative, they arrive on time expecting to work, and their relationships with teachers are also good. When involved in practical tasks, pupils work well in groups. The working atmosphere in class is often very good, as in a Year 11 class observing a demonstration of the potential fire danger when heating a chip pan. Pupils generally listen carefully to their teacher, and also to one another during class discussions. They do not, however, ask sufficient questions when having difficulty with understanding. Pupils show pride in their work in science throughout the school. Their books and folders are carefully presented, and there is a general improvement in the quality of work as they move through the school. This is particularly noticeable in Key Stage 4, where classes are smaller, and pupils have clearer targets. In a small minority of books, there is too much incomplete work.
94. The leadership and management of science are satisfactory overall. There is a commitment to the improvement of provision and standards throughout the department. The monitoring of work within the department is, however, unsatisfactory. There is a need for all those with management responsibilities within the department to become more involved in monitoring teaching, the pupils' work in exercise books and folders, and the consistency of implementation of policies. At present, there is inconsistency of practice, for example in the use of information technology, of key words, and in the marking of work. Furthermore, teaching skills are given insufficient discussion time at departmental meetings. Although the overall standard of teaching is good, all teaching would benefit from greater consideration of the key elements of good teaching. The department development plan has identified immediate needs, but contains insufficient detail about the projected costs of priorities, and of staff development needs. The department makes a satisfactory contribution to the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education, but opportunities are missed to encourage pupils to wonder at the world of science, and the origins of life. However, the department enhances the curriculum by organising a good range of scientific visits as pupils move through the school.
95. Overall, the department has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection. There has been an increase and an improvement in accommodation, with the provision of two new laboratories. Funding has also been increased, so that the level and standard of the equipment has also improved. There has been a general improvement in standards at GCSE, but Key Stage 3 results were lower this year, and students in the sixth form obtained above average results at the higher grades only in physics. The revised marking policy has been introduced, but has yet to be implemented consistently by all teachers. Some additional investigations have been developed involving the use of sensors, but in general there has been insufficient progress in the integration of information technology into schemes of work, in spite of the expertise within the department. The need for greater monitoring of provision was also indicated to be a priority in the last report, but little progress has been made in this important aspect of management.

ART

96. In the teachers' own assessments of the pupils' attainments at the end of Key Stage 3 in 1999, the proportion of pupils attaining or exceeding the national expectation

matches the national average. In the 1999 GCSE examinations at the end of Key Stage 4, the proportion gaining A* to C grades is significantly above the national average, as it was in 1998. There has been very good improvement in GCSE performance since the last inspection, when results were well below average. At that time, there was a significant gap between boys' and girls' results, with boys attaining well below girls. Whilst a small gap still exists, this has narrowed significantly. In the 1999 and 1998 GCSE examinations, both boys and girls tended to gain better grades in art than in their other subjects. In the A-level examination at the end of the sixth form in 1999, all five students passed the course with A or B grades. This is a cause for pride and clearly shows that students and teachers worked very hard. The proportion gaining A or B grades has exceeded the national average in each of the last four years, and there has been considerable improvement since the time of the last inspection when the proportion was less than half the national average. Improvement in the GCSE and A level standards has resulted from clear, well communicated expectations that build up pupils' self confidence and motivation.

97. At Key Stage 3, standards in work seen during the inspection are in line with expectations for the end of the key stage. At the end of Key Stage 4 and at the end of the sixth form, standards are above expected levels. At all levels, pupils make good progress, so that achievements are above expectations. By the end of Key Stage 3, pupils have well developed skills in a range of two-dimensional media. Pupils in Year 7, for instance, make masks that are influenced by those made in Papua New Guinea. In doing this, they use a bold range of colours and various adornments to embellish the items in an imaginative way. By Year 9, pupils have completed precise water colour compositions as a preparation for surrealist, semi-abstract collages containing disconnected images that are visually intriguing. Pupils' work using three-dimensional media is less well developed. Whilst pupils in Year 9 have used clay to make miniature houses, they have not had regular opportunities to use a wide range of three-dimensional media, and so their skills are not fully developed. Whilst the pupils' literacy skills are effectively underpinned within art lessons through using art vocabulary, opportunities for a wider consolidation of literacy skills are lost because this aspect of provision is not consistently well planned for. There is effective use of an adjacent computer suite to develop pupils' information technology skills in Years 8 and 9, although lack of adequate provision of computers in the art rooms prevents pupils from developing satisfactory competence in using new technology. By the end of the key stage, most pupils have been well prepared for GCSE level studies, which an increasingly large number of pupils opt to follow. This reflects their confidence in their own skills. By the end of Key Stage 4, pupils in Year 11 have developed greater discrimination when completing observational drawings. For instance, pencil drawings of animals show sensitive use of tonal variation to create areas of contrast that bring depth to their pictures. Whilst pupils' artwork shows a good level of practical skill, there is insufficient background research into historical and social factors. Consequently, whilst pupils' final pieces are technically competent, they do not make sufficient links between their own work and that of other artists or art movements. This is the reason that, despite examination results being very high, the overall quality of work seen is above, rather than well above, expectations. By the end of the sixth form, A-level students' work is assured and attracts high examination grades. Students show clarity of perception in their understanding of a range of techniques. However, there is insufficient reflection of moral or social concerns in their work or an integration of the results of historical research into their emerging individual styles. Nevertheless, it is to the credit of the department that increasingly high standards year by year are

reflected in the proportion of students winning places on higher education courses in art and design.

98. The quality of teaching is satisfactory in Key Stages 3 and 4, and it is good in the sixth form. Certain aspects of teaching are very good, and these have a major impact on rising standards. The very thorough preparation and good use of well prepared graphic and written information sheets provide a clear focus for activities that have improved standards within each age group. However, teachers realise that they have had to be quite prescriptive in order to raise standards and, as a result, pupils do not show enough flair or individuality in their learning. Teachers are well qualified and experienced; their particular skills effectively complement each other, enabling pupils to benefit from a range of specialist teaching. Whilst teachers emphasise the use of correct vocabulary, there is insufficient emphasis on reflective or descriptive writing to enable pupils to articulate their intentions or critically evaluate their work. Whilst the teachers' high expectations are reflected in comprehensive planning, there is not sufficient recognition of the separate needs of lower or higher attaining pupils. Teachers manage the pupils' behaviour well and the sense of order in lessons has a beneficial effect on learning. Verbal feedback to pupils on the quality of their work is positive and sufficiently critical to help them improve. Homework is successfully used to support work in lessons. The pupils' attitudes towards learning are good. They listen quietly when being taught and settle well to practical activities. When given the opportunity, they collaborate successfully. There is little unsatisfactory behaviour in lessons. Pupils enjoy seeing their work displayed and are generally pleased with the efforts they make. Most pupils, and particularly those in examination groups, develop mature attitudes towards study and successfully complete homeworks and independent research when required. The pupils' positive attitudes and behaviour have a good effect on their learning.
99. The department is well managed. Procedures are very well defined, there are regular meetings for department staff and most aspects of the department's provisions are regularly reviewed and monitored to identify aspects for improvement. However, teaching is not regularly monitored by senior managers or by the head of department. Consequently, the reasons for good teaching are not being promoted more widely, and aspects requiring improvement remain undetected. There is little use of artists from beyond the school to enliven the teaching programme, and there are no vocational courses at Key Stage 4 or the sixth form for those whose interests and skills are not suited to the more traditional GCSE and A-level routes. There is no expectation that the department should plan in detail for new developments, and so there is no encouragement for teachers to display enterprise or innovation. The department has very well prepared resources for its planned programmes of work. Some aspects of the accommodation are unsatisfactory; the heating system is inefficient, the flooring is beginning to disintegrate in parts, some furniture is in poor condition and there is insufficient shelving. Neither of the main art rooms has blackout to facilitate projection. The lack of sufficient space for the sixth form to work in non-contact time results in their occupying space in full teaching rooms, causing congestion in younger classes. The combined effect of unsatisfactory accommodation, lack of monitoring and limited development planning has a limiting impact on standards that is particularly evident in Key Stage 3.
100. The issues for development in the previous inspection have been successfully addressed; GCSE results have improved dramatically, schemes of work are more detailed, there is good attention to the development of pupils' technical skills and work is now assessed regularly.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

101. In 1999, the teachers' own assessments of pupils' attainments at the end of Key Stage 3 are well below national patterns, especially at higher levels. In the 1999 GCSE examinations, standards achieved in design and technology by pupils at the end of Key Stage 4 are significantly above average. Standards achieved in graphic products are markedly higher than those in other material areas. There has been improvement in standards in graphic products and in textiles compared to 1998. Standards in food and resistant materials fell significantly compared to 1998. Pupils tend to obtain significantly higher grades in resistant materials than in the other subjects that they take. Boys perform better than girls, and also better than boys in other schools. Overall, across all design and technology areas, there has been an improvement in the average points score from 1998 to 1999. The number of students entered for A-level examinations in design and technology at the end of the sixth form is too small to make national comparisons statistically reliable.
102. At Key Stage 3, inspection evidence confirms that standards seen in food and textiles lessons are below expectations for the end of the key stage, but that standards are in line with expectations in resistant materials lessons. The achievement of pupils across Key Stage 3 is barely satisfactory overall, although the decision to group pupils by ability in Years 8 and 9 is starting to produce some improvement in standards. For example, a Year 9 group of high achieving pupils, a large number of whom are girls, was able to use a wide range of tools and powered machines with confidence when making lampshades. The finish of their products was of high quality, and they worked successfully in both wood and plastic; their craft skills were good. Similarly, weaker pupils who are well supported by classroom assistants and good teaching are able to make decisions about the design of their lampshades, working in a purposeful atmosphere which encourages collaboration between pupils in the improvement of their work. Middle ability pupils use information technology effectively in the design and manufacture of key fobs. They learn how to control the movement of a large model railway using computers, supported by printed booklets produced by the school which are very effective in developing their understanding of control procedures. Pupils in Year 7 are taught in mixed ability classes. In some groups, graphical skills are very well developed and some work shows a high standard of communication through sketching, the use of shading, colour and annotation. Few pupils choose to use information technology to enhance presentation. However, these skills are less well developed in older pupils, and Year 8 pupils struggle to hold a pencil correctly and drawings are very crude. The achievement of pupils in Key Stage 3 is severely restricted by weaknesses in the development of literacy. Although writing frames and key words have recently been introduced into some areas of the scheme of work, they are not being used effectively to improve standards of writing, and there are few strategies used by teachers to extend the oral skills of pupils during class discussions. For example, a Year 8 class with a large proportion of pupils with special educational needs learned about healthy eating and the need to reduce the intake of sugar. They responded to closed questions with single word answers and many were unable to read the text provided. Pupils with special educational needs make unsatisfactory progress in Key Stage 3 because teaching strategies do not provide them with sufficient support. However they do achieve well in some lessons where practical activities are the main focus of the lesson, and where they have good guidance from classroom assistants.

103. In work seen during the inspection, the standards at the end of Key Stage 4 are in line with expectations, and are better than expected in resistant materials classes in Year 11. Design folders are well organised and most are completed in time for the examination deadline. Design work is over-reliant on the presentation of information using sketches and collections of images from magazines. These are assembled to a routine which is strictly guided by checklists provided by the school, and which is sometimes reviewed at different stages throughout the project. The standards in graphic skills are inconsistent across Year 11 and range from very good free hand sketches, subtle shading and use of colour to crude stencilling, use of felt pens and minimal annotation. Writing skills are unsatisfactory in the pupils' folders in food and textiles. Information technology is seldom used to enhance presentation or to present design ideas in different forms in any material area. The GCSE examination work displayed in the corridor of the design section of the department indicates a very good standard of craft skill. Projects range from full-scale pieces of furniture to product models. The very best examples include sophisticated design ideas and are often produced by girls. For example, a coffee table with a glass top revealing an interesting assortment of beach debris has the curves of the table inlay reflected in the curve of the table legs. A vanity mirror made in wood has delicate leaf stencils surrounding the mirror and some cleverly designed containers offset either side of the mirror. Some of the product models include detail which shows use of a computer in the design and manufacture.
104. The standard of work seen in the sixth form is in line with expectations for the A-level course. A sample of reports from the examination in 1999 on studies of local industries indicates a very good level of writing, exemplified by good drawings and colourful and informative photographs. All reports use information technology very effectively. Students working on their final constructions in sessions after school talk enthusiastically and knowledgeably about the decisions they have made and the research they have undertaken. Many of the projects involve full-scale items of play equipment for younger children and are well constructed in wood. The best work shows significant improvement in the development of graphic skills across the two-year course.
105. The overall quality of teaching is unsatisfactory in Key Stage 3, but shows considerable variation from very good to unsatisfactory. The very best teaching is seen in lessons where pupils are working with resistant materials in practical sessions. In contrast, weaker teaching occurs more often in textiles and food work. The quality of teaching is satisfactory in Key Stage 4 and good in the sixth form. Teachers have good knowledge and understanding of their specialist areas and this enables them to have high expectations of pupils in the very best lessons. For example, a Year 8 group starting a new project which involves learning new skills in casting metal were introduced to the task in an exciting and interesting way. The teacher was secure in the processes required to teach the topic, and provided pupils with a skilled demonstration of casting metal. This was regularly interspersed with sensitive and challenging questions which both encouraged them and tested their understanding. Teachers manage the behaviour of pupils well and this means that pupils can develop their craft skills in practical sessions with confidence. The main weakness in teaching in both key stages is in the use of assessment. This is better in Year 11 than in any other year, but overall, teachers do not mark work sufficiently regularly or consistently, and assessment data are not used effectively to promote pupils' progress in lessons. In lessons in Key Stage 3, and particularly in food and textiles, teachers do not plan lessons sufficiently well to ensure important features

are included. For example, aids to literacy development, appropriate use of information technology, the integration of stimulating and varied activities and the effective use of time are insufficiently identified. This means that pupils are often bored, they do not learn to work independently and with enjoyment, and aspects of the course are sometimes given only cursory coverage, resulting in incomplete or low level work in pupils' folders.

106. The main restriction to the raising of standards in the department is the lack of regular and systematic monitoring of teaching, learning and the curriculum, particularly at Key Stage 3. This means that pupils have experiences as they move through the school and across different material areas that are different in quality. The development of pupils' skills across the department is not planned sufficiently well and monitoring is too informal and cursory. There are some concerns about the organisation of rooms in the design workshops, where health and safety is compromised because of clutter from projects and insufficient space to ensure the clear marking of hazard lines around machinery. In many lessons in these rooms, pupils sit at work benches to do their design work. This raises concerns about health and safety and has a negative impact on standards.
107. Overall, improvements since the last inspection are satisfactory. The previous inspection report only identified a few areas for development. They included too few opportunities to read and write extensively, and too little technician time available to the home economics department. The school reviews over the past two years have indicated others. The department has maintained examination results at Key Stage 4 and targets have been recently introduced in Year 11 to ensure a sharper focus on examination results and improving standards across all material areas. The curriculum in Key Stage 3 has been modified with particular regard to gender interests, and the development of skills in textiles and food. There has been a better integration of the two departments, with some male teachers assigned to classes in specialist areas such as food. Projects which focus on electronics and the use of information technology have been introduced to the Key Stage 3 scheme of work. Some discussion has taken place with local primary schools to ensure better continuity into Year 7, and assessment data are beginning to be collected with the intention of more rigorous analysis to track the progress of different pupils. Pupils in Year 8 and Year 9 are now grouped by ability. However, while some opportunities to introduce literacy aids has been considered, the weaknesses previously identified in reading and writing remain and are continuing to have a significantly negative impact on standards across the departments.

GEOGRAPHY

108. The teachers' own assessments of standards at the end of Key Stage 3 in 1999 show results somewhat below the national average, whereas, in 1998, they were somewhat above. Girls tend to reach a higher standard than boys, but, in neither year are the results, overall or by gender, significantly different from the national pattern. The GCSE results in 1999 at the end of Key Stage 4 are broadly average. Although girls' results are higher than those of boys, the gap between them is less than that found nationally. In 1999, pupils in geography tended to obtain results similar to those in their other subjects. In 1998, boys did better than both national and school results, as did both boys and girls in 1997. At the end of the sixth form, the A-level results in 1999 are lower than previous years, but they are in line with the national picture, and an analysis of their results in the students' other subjects

shows, in most cases, comparable or better performances in geography.

109. At the end of Key Stage 3, standards in work seen during the inspection are at the expected level; standards at the end of Key Stage 4 are above expected levels, whilst those at the end of the sixth form are in line with expectations. At Key Stage 3, diagrams of volcanic processes, for example, are a strength of higher attainers, and descriptive accounts from most pupils use a sound range of vocabulary. The range of writing is good, with pupils achieving standards of literacy appropriate to their ability. There are examples of extended writing on projects such as rain forests, and scripts for plays are of a high standard from higher achievers. In work on Japan, most pupils can analyse features of Japan's industry, and have a clear understanding of contrasts between rural and industrial areas. The quality of some project work is variable, depending on how suitable and how accessible the resources are for particular pupils, and how well the work is structured. Speaking skills and geographical understanding can be of a very high order; for example, in one Year 9 lesson, pupils enthusiastically and successfully played a world trading game in which they achieved much understanding of the economic and moral issues surrounding trade between different countries in the world. Achievement of pupils with special educational needs is variable. Sometimes, there are real glimpses of understanding, often following individual help from a teacher or a support assistant; on other occasions, despite much help, little is achieved.
110. At Key Stage 4, annotated diagrams are also a strength. Good diagrams and illustrations, along with methodical description, are ensuring good understanding of the work on population for most pupils. There is also a good understanding of the environmental impact of things such as acid rain and oil pollution, as well as issues of nuclear power and the decline of coal production in Britain. The best coursework studies are well written with evaluative analysis; annotated photographs are a notable strength. Weaker coursework tends to be superficial, with the analysis being speculative rather than based on the results of the questionnaire. A-level individual studies cover a broad range of topics, with the better ones showing a good amount of original research, careful analysis of collected data, and judgements about the appropriateness or otherwise of some of the data. Statistical analysis is a strength of much A-level work, and the subject's identification of opportunities to use numeracy throughout the scheme of work is raising levels of numeracy in the subject to above what is normally seen. There are some problems of access to computers and of the limited capacity of the equipment in the subject area, but increasing use is being made of information technology; standards are in line with expectations, and are better than in many schools both in use and achievement.
111. The quality of teaching is good; overall, it is judged satisfactory at Key Stage 3, and good at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. At Key Stage 3, in some lessons, teaching gives scope for pupils of different abilities to learn successfully, for example, in their research for a role play presentation. Sometimes, the nature of the project work is not entirely suitable for all abilities, adversely affecting learning because of some lack of direction in the activities. On the other hand, very good organisation and relationships with pupils meant that the very active lesson on the trading game went extremely well with a very positive impact on the learning of all pupils. Pupils are well managed, and teachers make effective use of time, and, therefore promote learning. Some extended pieces of work are thoroughly marked and most work in books is corrected. However, because few comments give details of the standard reached or how to improve, the impact of marking on learning is reduced. At Key Stage 4, there are several characteristics of teaching which aid

learning. Amongst these are good teacher knowledge and planning, so that lessons are broken up into manageable units and proceed at a good pace. The good resources used in teaching are progressively introduced, and their variety, including good use of video clips, helps to maintain interest and learning. In a minority of lessons, there is less to challenge the more able who do not, therefore, reach their full potential, and, sometimes, by solely concentrating on what is needed for examinations, some of the excitement and the wonder of the earth's natural features are not exploited. Teaching at A-level is characterised by expert knowledge, good planning and much enthusiasm.

112. The pupils' positive attitudes and nearly always good behaviour have a positive impact on their achievement; most show interest, and, when really motivated, are very positive. Hard work and good attitudes are particularly evident at A-level. The subject is well led with enthusiasm and commitment, and the team of four specialists, which undertakes nearly all the teaching in the subject, brings a wide range of strengths.
113. Overall, there has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection. The previous inspection report presented a positive picture of the subject. That is still the case; there have been some fluctuations in standards, but, broadly, standards of attainment, achievement, teaching and learning have been maintained, and, in some areas, improved. There is a commitment to the observation, monitoring and evaluation of teaching as ways of improving its quality, and there is a clear view of the priorities ahead. However, there is a need to strengthen development planning as a tool for improvement and evaluation. Assessment arrangements also need further development so that, at Key Stage 3, pupils have a clearer idea of the standards of their work, and of what they need to do in order to get better. At Key Stage 4, existing information needs to be used more systematically to monitor progress and to set targets.

HISTORY

114. Standards in history at the end of Key Stage 3 in 1999, based on assessments made by teachers, are above average. In the GCSE examinations at the end of Key Stage 4 in 1999, the proportion of candidates gaining grades A* to C is significantly below the national figure, and also below those achieved by pupils in the school for the previous three years. In 1999, pupils tended to obtain significantly lower grades in history to those in their other subjects; in previous years they had been broadly similar. However, a detailed analysis of examination results, including those of different groups, has taken place under the new head of department and strategies have been put in place which are already showing positive results. The results at A-level are very close to national averages, although numbers are too small to allow reliable statistical comparisons.
115. At the end of Key Stage 3, standards in work seen during the inspection are in line with the expected levels; standards seen at the end of Key Stage 4 and at the end of the sixth form are also in line with expectations. At Key Stage 4, observed standards are higher than the 1999 examination results because of improved teaching and learning approaches, which were identified as a result of the review of causes of examination underperformance. Pupils have knowledge and understanding of an appropriate range of historical facts, situations and characters. Most pupils are developing an appropriate range of key historical skills. They

understand that historical situations have both causes and effects. Most pupils communicate this knowledge and understanding in writing in a manner that generally does justice to their ideas. Pupils in Year 9, for example, have written children's story books on the sinking of the *Titanic*. Lower attaining pupils, and those with special educational needs, who find written expression difficult, understand key historical events and can explain them orally. Pupils are beginning to understand that events can be interpreted in different ways, so that pupils in Year 8 are able to reach different judgements on whether Oliver Cromwell was a hero or a villain. The successful balance in the department between imparting historical information and enabling pupils to develop their own skills enables pupils in the majority of lessons to make clear and steady progress in historical knowledge, understanding and skills. In a very small minority of lessons, however, pupils remain very dependent on the support of their teachers and are given very limited opportunities to find things out for themselves. In such lessons, pupils make limited progress. Written work by pupils in Key Stage 4 is logically constructed with satisfactory use of specialist vocabulary. All understand that it is important to use written evidence in order to justify their opinions, although lower attaining pupils fail to do this fully. Most pupils have been able to carry out research for their coursework and they use this well in planning and illustrating their answers. By the age of 18, sixth form students are producing mature work, confidently handling concepts and a variety of documents and other historical materials. Their essays show a good response to the high expectations of their teachers. Progression from GCSE to A-level work is achieved smoothly. Pupils with special educational needs progress at appropriate rates at all key stages. The department has made good progress in providing for higher attaining pupils, and they make good progress in historical knowledge, understanding and skills. Standards in literacy, numeracy and the use of information technology are in line with national expectations.

116. The quality of teaching is good in Key Stages 3 and 4, and very good in the sixth form. There are many significant strengths in teaching which have a positive impact on both pupils' attitudes and the quality of their learning. However, there is some variability in the quality of teaching and a very small proportion of lessons in Key Stage 3 was judged to be unsatisfactory. This was because pupils were provided with no opportunities to learn actively and were simply expected to listen to the teacher. Teachers show a high level of planning and preparation for lessons. In most lessons, there are clear objectives which support pupils' learning as they are clear about what they have to learn. Teachers show good knowledge of their subject and, in the main, use questions and answers effectively to assess how much the pupils learn and understand. Pupils in Year 7, for example, were asked to come up with a series of questions they wanted answering about life in a Roman villa. In subsequent lessons, they will undertake research to find out the answers. There is scope to improve the consistency with which teachers provide pupils with opportunities to improve their speaking skills or develop more detailed verbal answers, especially in Key Stage 4. The needs of lower attaining pupils are well met through the provision of effective resources and tasks that match their needs. This was evident, for example, in a Year 10 lesson where pupils worked diligently on designing a turnpike road through Plymouth. Teachers have a thorough understanding of the nature of the problems in literacy experienced by some pupils and the range of methods that can be employed to support reading and writing skills. Excellent use is made of the assessment of pupils' attainment and progress in order to clarify what they need to do to improve and to help teachers monitor standards in the department. There is some variability in the quality of marking, however. Comments written in many exercise books are detailed and subject

specific, helping pupils to understand what they have done well and what they need to do in order to improve. A significant minority of exercise books, however, is marked with ticks and with only general comments on effort. Students in the sixth form are well prepared to meet the demands of the A-level syllabus. Very good use is made of the use of questions to help students clarify their judgements and to improve their skills in handling evidence. Revision strategies are effective and a model of good practice. Behaviour in lessons is good and pupils derive great benefit from the positive relationships that exist among themselves and with their teachers. Pupils show interest in their work and are eager to do well. They are very courteous to, and supportive of, each other and work productively in groups or pairs.

117. The subject is very well managed with a clear commitment to raising standards. The subject has made effective use of strategies to monitor its work, and to evaluate its outcomes. This approach, backed by a well detailed development plan, has been instrumental in raising standards. Departmental documentation is comprehensive and very helpful. Great thought has been put into making the curriculum interesting and relevant, especially in Key Stage 4, where effective measures have been taken to give the subject a more skills-based approach and to making it a more attractive option for those selecting their GCSE subjects. Display of pupils' work and other materials helps to create a positive learning ethos. Pupils are being provided with a rich diet of historical experience.
118. Overall, the subject has made good progress since the last inspection. Although examination results at GCSE have declined over the last three years, the subject has, under a new head of department, put into place a clear set of strategies, including changing the examination syllabus, which are having a positive impact on standards in history.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

119. At the end of Key Stage 3 the teachers' assessments of the standards of work in information technology in 1999 are in line with national expectations. This is confirmed by the work seen during the inspection. Standards at the end of Key Stage 4 are in line with expectations for the course studied and the proportion of pupils awarded distinctions has consistently increased over the last four years. This steady improvement is in line with targets set by the school. Inspection evidence confirms that while standards are broadly average overall at the end of Key Stage 4, a significant proportion of pupils reaches higher standards when communicating and handling information. Standards across the sixth form are below expectations, although some students use information technology regularly at a higher level in line with course expectations.
120. Pupils at Key Stage 3 achieve at satisfactory levels. They enter the school with skills that show steady improvement each year as their access to computers increases in primary schools. In work seen during the inspection, standards in Year 7 are already above expectations for pupils of that age. For example, Year 7 pupils are able to use information technology confidently to investigate the action of different components in a simulation of electric circuits, reinforcing their understanding of current and voltage. They develop their literacy skills by correcting the grammar and punctuation in a piece of text from a diary and they use desk top publishing software effectively to create posters and project pages for their work in other subjects. Pupils in Year 9 are able to use a wider range of equipment and software to create

good quality presentations that often include text, images and animation. For example, higher ability girls produced a PowerPoint presentation on the topic of volcanoes. They researched from the Internet, downloaded images, and superimposed voice over, animation and video to create a high quality presentation. Two boys with special educational needs produced a lively display on the same topic with text to support scanned images which they had selected themselves. Generally the achievement of pupils is better in the areas of communicating and handling of information than in the areas of control, measuring and modelling. The achievement of pupils with special educational needs is very good across all stages of the school because they have regular access to high quality equipment, classroom support and good teaching. All pupils in Year 9 are beginning to develop their skills in controlling and modelling through some projects recently introduced in mathematics and in design and technology.

121. Achievement at Key Stage 4 is also satisfactory. By the end of the key stage, pupils in Year 11 can use computers with confidence to investigate different types of images. The more able pupils can shrink, save, expand and make decisions about the selection of appropriate images, which they write up in report form. They are able to concentrate sufficiently to follow a presentation on the electronic board explaining the relationships between image resolution and pixel count from a variety of different digital cameras. Attitudes to learning are good and most are prepared to persevere and explore the software options to produce a good result. All pupils value the high quality equipment, which is well used during lunchtimes and after school. Weaker pupils are able to follow routine instructions and move around the keyboard and screen with confidence. They are less able to solve problems which arise when they make a mistake, such as overloading files with high memory images. All pupils in Key Stage 4 benefit from the structure of the commercial course which they follow and which leads to external awards on completion of the course of study. In contrast, achievement in the sixth form is unsatisfactory; students have no formal opportunity to develop their skills in information technology, and access to computers and specialist teaching is limited.
122. The development of skills in information technology in other subjects in the curriculum is unsatisfactory. Pupils have a sound knowledge and understanding of computers and their use, gained from the specialist information technology lessons provided in Years 7 to 11. Some subjects have opportunities to develop skills in information technology written into the schemes of work, and have teachers with appropriate skills to teach these aspects of the programme. However, the number of computers available is well below that expected for a school of similar size, and thus access to the available computer rooms is restricted by the lessons regularly timetabled in them. In many subjects, the National Curriculum requirements to provide pupils with opportunities to develop and apply their skills in information technology are not fully assured. The school has no policy for implementing this requirement, and there is no system for monitoring it across the school.
123. The quality of teaching in information technology lessons is always good, and often very good, at both Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4. No teaching was seen in the sixth form. Teachers are very secure in using the high quality equipment and the full range of software. This enables them to support weaker pupils who have difficulties, and to prompt more able pupils to improve their work. Teachers have high expectations of both behaviour and standards of work, and this is communicated clearly to pupils in such a way that intervention is mostly reserved for guidance and not for confrontation. For example, routines such as placing the mouse on top of the

monitor in order to ensure that all pupils are listening are a regular feature in lessons. Pupils respect the codes identified in the computer rooms and relationships in all lessons are good with regular use of humour, sensitivity and challenge. For example, a class with a high proportion of pupils with special educational needs learnt about image manipulation in Year 11. They were encouraged to persevere with difficult technical concepts in an atmosphere that supported collaboration in pairs, yet was continuously supervised by the teacher. Some aspects of the course promote the development of literacy and numeracy, but this is not a strength of teaching, with several instances of poor spelling seen even when a spell check is available. Report writing is not supported sufficiently by the regular use of writing frames, and computers are not used as a drafting tool; little annotation of printed drafts was seen in pupils' folders. However, a few more able pupils, often with computers at home, are able to write extensively about topics such as volcanoes, the environment and colour. They present their findings in reports of an exceptional quality. Spreadsheets are used, particularly with weaker pupils who calculate everyday problems such as weekly rent for houses. However, the skill of estimating is not developed alongside the computer skills. The pupils' progress is mostly assessed at the level of completion of tasks rather than in terms of skill development. The system to track the progress of individual pupils is not sufficiently well monitored to provide accurate information across all areas of the Programmes of Study. Marking of pupils' work is not consistent across the subject, and is not particularly helpful in encouraging improvement to standards. Although some tasks are set within the context of other subjects, pupils are not choosing to use their computing skills to improve their work in other areas of the curriculum, and so there is limited opportunity for them to consolidate their knowledge.

124. Although the leadership and management of the subject is good overall, there are some aspects of the curriculum and of teaching that are insufficiently monitored. The gains pupils make in lessons in Key Stage 4 are limited by the fragmentation of their learning caused by the rotation of information technology lessons with other subjects. In lessons taught in one of the main computer rooms, the layout makes access to individual pupils difficult and impedes the line of sight between the teacher and some pupils. This restricts the learning in a minority of lessons because of some unsatisfactory behaviour and lack of concentration from a small number of pupils. The scheme of work does not include a time plan for individual lessons and in some cases, teachers talk or demonstrate for too long, and pupils lose interest and become restless. Although standards at the end of Key Stage 3 are better for girls, some lessons seen indicate a lack of enthusiasm amongst lower and middle ability girls which is restricting the progress they make. The school does not monitor the rate of learning of different groups of pupils who are all taught in mixed ability classes.
125. There has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection. There are now three main computer rooms available for whole class teaching and they are all equipped with high performance machines. The décor and environment in these rooms is good. A more stable team of specialists teach discrete lessons of information technology in all years except the sixth form, although there is some discontinuity in how these lessons are arranged in Key Stage 4 which negatively affects the progress made by pupils. Standards at the end of Key Stage 4 have improved through the introduction of the more structured externally examined course. This course also provides a suitable assessment system that ensures better use of more reliable information about how well pupils are doing, and a more formal and secure benchmark against which the school can measure improvements. Pupils

with special educational needs are making very good progress and learning support assistants are used more effectively to support in lessons. Literacy skills are being developed in some parts of the course. For example, writing frames are used to improve the evaluation of work by pupils in Year 9.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

126. The teachers' own assessments in French in 1999 show standards to be well below national expectations for pupils attaining Level 4 and above and broadly in line for those attaining at least level 5. There was no formal standardisation process of pupils' work to support these judgements, so it is unclear how reliable these figures are. This also applies to 1998 and 1997. Standards at the end of Key Stage 4 in the GCSE in French in 1999 were broadly in line with the national average. Both boys and girls tend to perform better in French than in the other subjects that they take. After a year in 1997 where standards in French were significantly below the national average, standards improved to the present average position. Results in German at GCSE have been above average for both boys and girls over the last three years, but the small size of the entry make statistical comparison unreliable. At A-level in both languages in 1999, significantly more pupils attained grades A and B than is the case nationally. Results in French have been above the national average since the last inspection for grades A or B, as well as those attaining A-E grades.
127. At the end of Key Stage 3, standards in French in work seen during the inspection are in line with the expected level for 14 year olds. Standards at the end of Key Stage 4 in both French and German are also in line with expected levels, whilst those at the end of the sixth form are above expectations. At the end of Key Stage 3, the written work of average and higher attaining pupils is generally accurate. That of higher attaining pupils is more fluent, whilst that of other pupils is more often limited to structured exercises. With the exception of the higher attainers, recall of previously learned work is not good. There is insufficient evidence to comment on standards in the second foreign language, German, at the end of Key Stage 3. At the end of Key Stage 4, all pupils can understand a range of basic French and German instructions and the higher attaining pupils understand a wide range of questions. Reading skills vary enormously, with higher attaining pupils being able to extract details at speed. When speaking, some pupils can respond quickly and most adapt sentences from a pattern, but few pupils find it easy to move from this pattern, or to answer supplementary questions. Pronunciation is often not as good when pupils are reading as when they are speaking without looking at the written word. Although some pupils are confident moving from tense to tense, many find it difficult to pick out the signals which would help them decide which tense to use. Writing outcomes are very varied. There is considerable accuracy in the writing of the higher attainers, particularly when practising structures. Pupils do not write consistently enough at length. At the end of the sixth form, students have a very good understanding of complex and rapid French, and speak confidently, although with a range of fluency. Overall, all pupils including those with special educational needs make satisfactory progress over Key Stages 3 and 4, and those studying A-level German and French make good progress at the beginning of the sixth form, particularly in their listening skills. Few pupils have developed the skill of independent reading satisfactorily, and not all higher attaining pupils are developing sufficiently extended and more independent speaking skills.
128. The quality of teaching in modern languages is broadly sound at Key Stage 3,

although there is a significant minority of unsatisfactory teaching. During the week of the inspection, as a consequence of teacher absence, many classes were not taught by their regular class teacher; this has a negative effect on standards seen. At Key Stage 4, teaching is also sound, as it is in the sixth form. There is also a substantial minority of good or very good teaching at both key stages and in the sixth form. The teachers' subject knowledge is generally good, and there is appropriate use of French and German in the classroom. Some teachers resort too quickly to the use of English without trying other strategies first to ensure the pupils' comprehension. Teachers working in Key Stage 4 and at A-level show good knowledge of the examination requirements. Planning is very varied; there is some excellent short term planning which is also part of a broader plan. A good example of this was the Year 7 class when the teacher started her lesson by revising familiar language, but quickly moved on to new material, which was developed by a range of activities. The lesson then finished with a summary and a clear indication to the pupils what the next steps were. Lessons where objectives were not clear led to confusion or lack of attention. Expectations of accuracy are generally high, but not all teachers are consistently demanding longer utterances from their pupils. There is a generally good range of activities and methods used, but teachers do not always consider carefully enough how they might prepare their pupils for these activities. In such situations, it is remarkable how pupils concentrate to follow instructions, and this is a tribute both to the pupils' desire to learn and the relationships with their teachers. Pupil management is good. There is, however, a small number of lessons when pupils fail to concentrate because they do not understand, or they are not stimulated to learn by the work. Pace is generally good. In one Year 11 lesson, there was a remarkable amount of work completed in the hour-long lesson as a result of the teacher's organisation of a range of skill tasks. Occasionally, the pace of a lesson can be too fast, not allowing sufficient time for pupils to practise the structures orally and master the language. There is a range of resources in use, and particularly effective use of games to practise language at all levels. Most books are regularly marked, but the amount of feedback varies considerably from a tick to a detailed comment.

129. The pupils' attitudes to the subject are good at both key stages and very good in the sixth form. Behaviour in lessons is generally good and supports learning well. A particular strength is the positive attitudes that pupils show when allowed to work in groups on a structured task. Equally positive is the mature way in which pupils worked with the foreign language assistants, whose deployment is very effective. There are well supported exchanges with Germany and France, and a work experience programme for A-level German students which enhance the curriculum. Schemes of work are not detailed enough to support the range of skills of the Programme of Study of the National Curriculum. They do not include guidance on how independent reading or information technology might be integrated into the teaching and learning of languages. Pupils are assessed regularly, but there is no standardisation of pupils' work against National Curriculum levels at the end of Key Stage 3, and consequently, there are no data on their progress in all four skills on which to base targets for GCSE. The learning environment is good. Displays of pupils' work support learning and celebrate success. The head of department provides good guidance on procedures and has set up well-organised systems. Informal support is strong. There is, however, an unsatisfactory level of formal monitoring of the work of all members of the department. There is insufficient detail in the department's development plan.
130. Overall the subject has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection.

Standards at both GCSE and A-level have been maintained, and there is now more guidance given to pupils in marking at the end of Key Stage 4. There has been unsatisfactory progress in the development of extended reading and in the support given to pupils in Key Stage 3 in their exercise books.

MUSIC

131. In the teachers' own assessments of standards at the end of Key Stage 3 in 1999, the proportion of pupils attaining or exceeding the national expectation was a little below the national average. Boys performed less well than girls. At the end of Key Stage 4, the 1999 GCSE results show slightly above average results, but the small number of candidates means that statistical comparisons with national figures are unreliable. However, only a quarter of boys entered for the examination gained an A* to C grade pass compared to three quarters of the girls. The weaker performance of boys is noticeable in both key stages, and is a cause for concern. Boys' attainment is well below that of most boys nationally. There has been an improvement in performance at GCSE since the last inspection, when the proportion gaining top grades was significantly below the national average. Whilst the department now has a small number of students studying for A-level music, there were no candidates between 1997 and 1999. Results in instrumental examinations are satisfactory. However, the proportion of pupils learning an instrument is low compared with many schools. This means that fewer pupils with well-developed instrumental proficiency join examination groups.
132. By the end of Key Stage 3, standards in work seen are in line with national expectations; standards at the end of Key Stage 4 and the sixth form are above expected levels. By the end of Key Stage 3, all pupils develop satisfactory skills in performing, composing and listening to music. Most pupils play simple melodies on keyboards by Year 9, and higher attainers accompany the melodies with simple chords. For instance, in a Year 9 lesson, pupils played a sequence of chords in reggae style using a syncopated beat. Many worked out catchy melodic riffs above this chord backing, with some higher attainers improvising spontaneously. However, a lack of challenge for higher attainers limits their potential progress. In one Year 7 lesson, for instance, three able instrumentalists were completing the same composition task as the other pupils when they could manage something more ambitious. Most, however, are successfully challenged to use simple structures such as ostinato, variation and sequence. Pupils listen to a range of music and successfully use descriptive and subject specific vocabulary to comment on it. Good quality written work supports developments in the pupils' literacy. By the end of Key Stage 4, most pupils perform to an appropriately advanced standard, with those who have received instrumental lessons presenting well rehearsed pieces that contain sensitive phrasing and dynamics. In lessons seen, most pupils are on course to gain an A* to C grade and there is a good potential to exceed the national average if current progress is maintained. Pupils, who are not all accomplished instrumentalists, still perform confidently as singers or on electronic keyboards. By the end of the course, pupils use the vocabulary of music with discrimination. For instance, in one Year 11 lesson, pupils confidently used the words 'counterpoint', 'renaissance' and 'improvisation' when describing various musical genres. In the sixth form, those studying A-level music comply satisfactorily with coursework requirements, and are all on course to attain good pass grades by the end of the course. Pupils in extra-curricular performance groups attain well on a variety of instruments. However, short lunch hours and the end of day bussing arrangements

severely restrict time for extra curricular work, and this has an adverse impact on standards of music making, particularly for those with musical potential. Pupils in Key Stage 3 do not use information technology to support their composition work because the department has only one computer. However, good use of the computer was seen in the sixth form.

133. The quality of teaching is good overall, with regular instances of very good teaching across the key stages. All teachers are well qualified and experienced specialists. They have a good grasp of the elements of music required in lessons and communicate these well, emphasising important points through expressive vocal tone and gesture. As a result, the pupils' learning is good and there are clear signs of constantly improving standards. The teachers' planning is sufficiently detailed, although does not always take account of the full range of ability that is found in classes. This is why higher attainers are not always given tasks that extend them. Teachers make effective use of available resources and space. They provide regular extra-curricular sessions that improve pupils' performance skills, although these are severely constrained by the time available. The teachers' management of pupils is good; pupils respect teachers and learning proceeds at a productive pace. Teachers provide useful verbal feedback that accurately identifies how pupils can improve. However, marking of written work is less detailed and does not always provide sufficiently critical advice. Visiting instrumental teachers are all well qualified specialists, and effectively support pupils' learning. The pupils' attitudes are good and nearly all behave well. Good relationships between pupils and teachers are a strength of the department. Most pupils collaborate effectively in small group work, and those who join extra-curricular and performance groups are a credit to the department and school when performing in public. Most pupils show some musical initiative in their performance and composition work, and older pupils in examination groups show maturity as they develop good independent learning skills.
134. The management of the department is satisfactory. A particular strength is the positive atmosphere in the department with pupils and teachers feeling valued and well supported. However, there is no formal monitoring of teaching and little attempt to plan systematically in appropriate detail for new developments. There are regular department meetings and routine administration is handled effectively. The visiting instrumental teachers are satisfactorily managed and the extra-curricular programme, that includes regular concerts and shows, reflects the commitment and hard work of staff.
135. There has been a mixed response to the issue from the last inspection. Whilst examination results are certainly improving, the performance of boys remains below that of girls. There is still insufficient consideration of the higher and lower attaining pupils and so these do not always reach their potential. The mixed ability groups in Key Stage 3 contribute to this lowering of standards at the two extremes of the ability range. The accommodation is satisfactory, providing rooms and corridor spaces for small group rehearsals. There are still not enough computers to help pupils appreciate the contribution of new technology to music.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

136. At the end of Key Stage 4, the proportion of pupils achieving GCSE grades A* to C in 1999 is not significantly different from the national figure. All pupils gained at least grade G. Pupils tend to achieve similar results in the subject to those in the others

that they take. The trend in results since the last inspection is broadly in line with the national average.

137. At the end of Key Stages 3 and 4, standards in work seen during the inspection are above expectations. Towards the end of Key Stage 3, pupils plan work and judge performance effectively. Teachers provide opportunities in a high proportion of lessons for independent learning. In the creative aspects, the pupils combine individual actions into sequences which show control and fluency. High attaining pupils perform movements characterised by originality and precision. A small minority lacks basic co-ordination in dance and gymnastics. In games, most pupils show good levels of skill and understand rules. Lower attaining pupils often achieve beyond expectations, due to teaching being adapted to meet their needs. Their main weakness in games is a lack of spatial awareness. Pupils undertake a well-structured health related fitness programme, and their knowledge of what constitutes a healthy lifestyle is good. For example, in a Year 9 lesson, pupils planned their own fitness circuits, and accurately measured and recorded pulse rates; high attainers linked intensity of exercise with rate of cardio-vascular improvement. Towards the end of Key Stage 4 most pupils have a detailed knowledge of the physiological effects of exercise on the body. They can plan and perform tactics to outmanoeuvre opponents in games. High attaining pupils can analyse performance and plan ways to improve it. For example, in a Year 11 football lesson, most pupils showed good tactical awareness thanks to their application of previously learned principles of attack and defence. Lower attaining pupils' standards of performance are affected adversely by below average fitness and the inability to apply individual skills effectively in the pressure of a game situation. The GCSE groups are on target to achieve beyond national expectations at the end of Key Stage 4. In all work seen, a good proportion of pupils has a detailed knowledge of the theoretical aspects. High attaining pupils research information, analyse data and draw accurate conclusions. They are well motivated and benefit from specialist teaching. The use of information technology skills is under-developed in written assignments. There is no timetabled physical education in the sixth form, but a small group of Year 12 pupils undertakes the Community Sports Leaders' Award. They take responsibility well, organise groups efficiently, demonstrate good safety awareness and confidently coach their peers. Standards of literacy are good. Opportunities are often provided for pupils across the curriculum to develop skills in speaking and listening. Pupils are articulate in discussion and very keen listeners. They listen carefully to their teachers and communicate very well when evaluating performance. The GCSE pupils' written assignments are generally well-presented. Most pupils confidently use number work in a range of contexts. At Key Stage 3, they accurately measure and record performance in both health related fitness work and athletics. The GCSE pupils extensively use number in fitness testing and the analysis and summarising of data. Information technology is evident in some lessons, but its use is under-developed.
138. The quality of teaching is very good at both key stages. It is a great strength of the physical education department and enables pupils to learn very well. Overall, learning across the attainment range is very good, particularly in Years 8, 9 and 11. The teachers' knowledge and understanding of the subject are very good, and enable pupils to make considerable gains in knowledge of health related issues, tactics, rules and aesthetic aspects. Teachers manage pupils extremely well and maintain very good relationships with their classes; they create an excellent learning environment. The pupils' attitudes to learning are good. They listen to instructions, communicate well in group work and confidently try new skills. As a result, they

make effective progress in lessons. The teachers' expectations are appropriately high, particularly with regard to performance, behaviour, kit and safety. Systematic progress is aided by well-planned and challenging teaching. For example, in a Year 7 dance lesson, the teacher created a stimulating atmosphere through use of appropriate music, work cards and well-informed and enthusiastic teaching. Opportunities were provided for pupils to plan, perform and evaluate performance, and most made progress beyond expectations. Pupils with special educational needs learn well, thanks to teaching being planned to suit their individual requirements. In a Year 9 gymnastics lesson, tasks and instructions were simplified, equipment modified and groupings carefully set. At the same time, high attaining pupils were challenged by demanding sequential work. Pupils involved in GCSE sports studies develop effective research, discussion and analytical skills. Whilst there is some evidence of pupils' use of information technology, it could be developed further. In a small proportion of lessons, there is a lack of provision for pupils to plan their own performance. Overall, however, both teaching and learning are purposeful and effective.

139. The head of department provides good leadership. All appropriate policies are in place, including health and safety. A dedicated team of well-qualified specialists provides excellent support. At Key Stage 4, there is insufficient curricular time to deliver adequately the National Curriculum programmes of study in sufficient depth. There is no allocation on the sixth form timetable for students to extend their previous learning in physical education. Good liaison with partner primary schools is considerably helping continuity and progression at the start of Key Stage 3. The pupils' learning is enhanced by the use of excellent indoor facilities and extensive, well-maintained sports pitches. The staff, together with a small number of other teachers, provide a successful extra-curricular sports programme. A good number of pupils uses this extension to their learning. Individuals and teams compete successfully at area, county, regional and sometimes, national level, in a wide range of sports. The subject makes a considerable contribution to the moral, social and cultural development of pupils.
140. Overall, the subject has made good progress since the last inspection. Standards at the end of both key stages, judged from work seen during the inspection, have improved. Teaching across the curriculum has improved from satisfactory to very good. Most issues arising from the last report have been successfully tackled. There is better provision for the more able; greater opportunities for pupils to judge performance; and teaching at Key Stage 4 is now consistently good. Non-participants are involved in both evaluative work and officiating. Monitoring procedures for learning have improved, but they are less well-developed for teaching.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

141. Virtually all pupils take the GCSE short course examination; in 1999, although girls do better than boys, results for both girls and boys are in line with the national average. As many schools tend to have a more selective entry policy for the short course examination, the results represent considerable achievement and are the best in Cornwall. Results in 1998 were similar. No course is taken in the sixth form, though religious education makes a contribution to the general studies course.

142. At the end of Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4, standards in work seen are above expected levels. At Key Stage 3, pupils demonstrate successful achievement in a number of ways. For example, across the ability range, there is above average achievement in project work on how human beings are different from the rest of the animal world. The best categorise clearly how humans' control of their destinies is different from animals. Higher achievers analyse clearly similarities and differences between Matthew's and Luke's accounts of events surrounding the birth of Christ, and many pupils present interesting drawings to illustrate the concept of light out of darkness. Basic knowledge of religious customs of different faiths is generally sound, but the quality of expression is low amongst lower achievers and those with special educational needs. Literacy levels are in line with expectations with a good range of opportunities for writing, reading and speaking. This means that interesting posters, group displays, newspapers, and other methods of presentation are produced, though, sometimes, some pupils are more interested in the mechanics of the task than the real reasons for doing it. At Key Stage 4, knowledge and understanding of the main Christian and Hindu beliefs are sound from the majority of pupils. In lower sets, achievement is high; pupils can express views coherently, and can justify what they have written when questioned by the teacher. Oral standards in classes are particularly high. The quality of group discussions shows much sensitivity, with boys and girls discussing openly, seriously and without embarrassment issues such as euthanasia. Some use is made of computers and there is occasional evidence of using numeracy skills; however, there is insufficient evidence to make judgements about standards of numeracy and information technology in the subject.
143. The quality of teaching is good at Key Stage 3. At Key Stage 4, it is very good, with some excellent teaching seen; there is some very good teaching at both key stages. The teachers have different styles of teaching, but good and very good teaching has a number of common characteristics. Very good classroom management promotes learning. Teachers are very knowledgeable in all aspects of the subject. This means that, in some lessons, for example, the teacher's introduction and explanations are very clear with high quality questioning which build on pupils' responses, taking their learning forward. In other lessons, the teaching is very lively with the lesson proceeding at a very brisk pace with very good use of resources. In one lesson which challenged pupils and extended their intellectual development, they discussed positive and negative aspects of personality and were asked to produce *Jekyll and Hyde* posters for their homework. The structure and planning of another lesson encouraged pupils to think and express their ideas in creative ways, producing a buzz of activity and positive learning. At Key Stage 4, lower ability sets are challenged, and the high expectations and meticulous planning help pupils to achieve at levels above what would be expected. In an excellent Key Stage 4 lesson, pupils listened with rapt attention, and developed their ideas about God and how people come to a view about God. Excellent teacher knowledge made for a very interesting presentation of the key ideas of Hinduism, splendidly linking earlier work on the Christian Trinity with Hindu concepts of Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva and how Hindus make sense of Brahman. It was highly challenging, but learning was helped by the excellent use of artefacts, textbooks, board illustrations, overhead transparencies and video extracts. The very fast pace, the range of resources, constant reinforcement and the continuous use of relevant religious terminology contributed to rapid learning.
144. The scheme of work at Key Stages 3 and 4 is now good. The previous report criticised the emphasis on moral and social issues at the expense of the religious

elements. This is no longer the case, and pupils receive a very well balanced programme that contributes very significantly to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. They tackle fundamental questions about spirituality within the contexts of Christianity and other religions, and consider moral dilemmas from a religious perspective. The choice of Christianity and Hinduism as the main religions studied at Key Stage 4 means that there is good scope for approaching a wide range of multi-cultural issues within religious education lessons. Although some religious education is taught within the sixth form general studies programme, this is insufficient to fulfil completely the needs of the Agreed Syllabus as is legally required. The subject is very well led with vision and commitment, with additional depth to the subject brought by the head of subject's experiences in other areas and as a member of the working party for the new Cornwall Agreed Syllabus.

145. There has been good progress since the last inspection, particularly in the development of the successful Key Stage 4 course. The quality of teaching has improved and standards are now above expectations; there is now some provision in the sixth form, but still not enough. There is a very committed and experienced team of good teachers; however, there is little systematic monitoring of the work of teachers. The department's development plan provides an insufficient basis for more rigorous evaluation of progress in the subject. With improvements to provision in the sixth form, the strengthening of development planning as a tool for further improvement, and the sharing of best practice through regular lesson observation, there is potential for still further progress in the future.

PERSONAL AND SOCIAL EDUCATION

146. A timetabled programme of personal and social education is taught at Key Stage 3 in half term blocks of time which alternate with drama and, at Key Stage 4, with information technology for one lesson per week. The programmes of study at Key Stage 3 consist of units of work covering personal development, relationships, health education and careers information. At Key Stage 4, these aspects continue to be addressed but also incorporate work experience and study skills.
147. The pupils' attainments at both Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 are in line with expectations. At Key Stage 3, the pupils improve their awareness of their feelings and attitudes to events in their lives and to concepts such as what constitutes attractiveness. In a Year 7 lesson for example, many pupils, girls more so than boys, discussed how the transition from primary school might be less stressful and produced extended written accounts of ideas as to how this might be achieved. Pupils with special educational needs make slower progress in the development of their literacy skills in the absence of close and frequent teacher support. On another occasion, pupils with special educational needs in a Year 8 lesson achieved well through group work, and with the help of additional in-class support. At Key Stage 4, higher attaining pupils show a good understanding of terms and moral issues about capital punishment. Many are able to evaluate the conflicting views presented in a video designed to review their own position on the issue. Although many pupils considered the moral aspects of the death penalty, few pupils showed appreciation of the importance of the spiritual beliefs of different cultures in formulating attitudes and policies on capital punishment. Good use was made of information technology in a Year 10 careers lesson, when pupils researched information on selected occupations and used it to contribute to the development of personal profiles.

148. The quality of teaching at Key Stage 3 is good. Lessons have clear aims that are shared with, and understood by, the pupils. Good progress is frequently linked to sound lesson plans, with clear strategies for learning development. In Year 8 for example, careful sequencing of tasks with set time-scales ensured that the pupils improved their awareness and understanding of what might constitute attractiveness of one person to another. On occasions however, teachers do not plan sufficiently carefully to meet the needs of pupils of different attainments. This is more so for lower attaining pupils, who make less progress without specific support, often in their writing development. At Key Stage 4, teaching is satisfactory. Teachers make effective use of resources to promote interest and learning. In a Year 10 lesson for example, good use was made use of information technology and in other lessons the use of film and reprographic materials provided the stimulus for debate and recording information. On a few occasions however, unsatisfactory progress in the lesson is due the failure of teachers to ensure that pupils sustain concentration on the task; instead, they allow them to engage in social dialogue.
149. The current curricular arrangements for personal and social education are unsatisfactory, and work against continuity of learning and the teachers' knowledge of pupils. In addition, the time allocation is insufficient to develop themes such as citizenship. These deficiencies are recognised by the school, which plans to make significant changes for 2000/2001. The schemes of work at both key stages are unsatisfactory. They lack coherence, do not show intentions to meet the needs of pupils of different attainment and lack policies and practices for the assessment of performance. The recently appointed head of department, however, has revised the planning for careers education and this is now satisfactory. Strategies for the monitoring of pupils' progress are not well developed and the cross-curricular practice for promoting the development of key skills and personal development are not effective. There is no department development plan and this results in a lack of clarity for priorities and spending proposals in the current and future years.
150. The subject was not provided at the time of the last inspection.

THE SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS UNIT

151. The special needs unit has an establishment of 12 pupils; currently there are 11 pupils with severe learning difficulties. All of them have Statements of Special Educational Need. The attainments of pupils attending the unit do not meet national expectations at either key stage. However their attainments have to be considered in the context of their learning difficulties and the progress they make towards the targets set for them. In this context, their progress is at least satisfactory at both key stages and some pupils make good progress. They attain good levels of literacy and are confident when holding simple conversations about the task in hand or their personal interests. Some are able to write words and simple sentences in an increasingly legible hand as they progress through the key stages. Their social development is particularly good, and they are confident in social situations as they move around the school. They are also confident and welcoming with strangers and readily introduce themselves or volunteer to act as a guide around the school.
152. The last inspection report noted that there was good provision for pupils attending the unit and a good learning environment within the unit, which contributed positively to standards of achievement. This situation has been maintained, despite significant staffing difficulties and the ongoing temporary staffing arrangements caused

through the long term absence of the teacher in charge of the unit.

153. Most teaching takes place in the unit, but some integration into mainstream lessons takes place. This is determined on an individual basis. Pupils are also taught music, physical education and drama by specialist staff. Pupils from the unit receive a good level of support from teachers and classroom assistants, and are able to have good access to all areas of the school curriculum. The unit group contains pupils from both key stages with a wide range of attainments and most of the time they follow the same curriculum. This presents a weakness in curriculum planning which has not been helped by the temporary staffing arrangements. Appropriately, the school is aware of this, and plans to reconsider curriculum arrangements now that more secure staffing arrangements are in place.
154. Arrangements for pupils at the end of Key Stage 4 are effective. Individual attention is given to pupils' post school placement. The Year 11 pupils are able to follow 'taster' courses at local further education colleges, and arrangements are in place for all leavers to transfer to college when they leave school. There are insufficient opportunities for pupils at Key Stage 4 to follow externally accredited courses. Appropriately, the school is planning to reconsider this aspect of the Key Stage 4 curriculum.
155. Teaching is consistently satisfactory and some is good. Teachers know the pupils well and plan effectively to meet their individual needs. They make good use of a range of resources and are well supported by good welfare assistants. There is a workmanlike but pleasant and good humoured atmosphere in lessons. The pupils enjoy their lessons. They are keen to participate and respond to teachers questions, try hard to succeed and have good relationships with their teachers, support staff and other pupils. They also integrate well socially with the rest of the school and are members of mainstream tutor groups. They attend registration and assemblies with their peers. Their presence has a beneficial effect on the whole school community. Liaison arrangements with primary feeder schools are good and staff from the unit visit primary schools to participate in annual reviews and meet with parents in order to ensure a smooth transition to secondary education. Comprehensive records including Individual Education Plans are maintained on all pupils in the unit. They are used as day to day planning documents by teachers and are regularly updated. The plans contain a manageable number of achievable targets. Regular reviews take place, and these are attended by staff from a number of the support services. Regular meetings with parents are arranged, and they are invited to attend annual review meetings. They also have regular contact with the school on an informal basis.
156. The current staffing arrangements for the unit are temporary because of the long term absence of the teacher in charge. For a whole school year, there was uncertainty about when the teacher would return and supply teachers were employed. Since the beginning of the current school year, part time special needs staff have agreed to have their contracts extended by a day a week in order to teach in the unit and provide continuity. In January, an acting teacher in charge was appointed. This arrangement has brought greater stability to the teaching and is working well. The long duration of the temporary arrangements has had an adverse impact upon planning for continuity of the curriculum for the full range of pupils in the class, and the maintenance of Individual Education Plans and assessment to inform planning. The staff are aware of this and good progress has already been made to ameliorate the situation. The unit has an attractive base which is integral to

the school and provides a good environment for teaching and learning. There are good levels of resources, which are well used to support the curriculum.