

INSPECTION REPORT

THE THOMAS COWLEY HIGH SCHOOL
DONINGTON, Nr SPALDING

LEA area: LINCOLNSHIRE

Unique Reference Number: 120662

Headteacher: Mr A. M. Hallett M.A.

Reporting inspector: Mr Cedric Sander
4151

Dates of inspection: 27th September – 1st October 1999

Under OFSTED contract number: 708195

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Modern [Non-Selective]
Type of control:	Voluntary Controlled
Age range of pupils:	11-16
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	The Thomas Cowley High School School Lane Donington Spalding Lincolnshire PE11 4TF
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Appropriate authority:	The Thomas Cowley High School Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs J.E. Pearson
Date of previous inspection:	February 5 th – February 8 th 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members	Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Mr Cedric Sander Registered inspector		Characteristics of the school Attainment and Progress Teaching Leadership and Management Efficiency of the school
Mr James Griffin Lay inspector		Attitudes, behaviour and personal development Attendance Support, guidance and pupils' welfare Partnership with parents and the community
Mr Lionel Farraway	English	Staffing
Mr Barry Juxon	Mathematics	Assessment
Mr Graham Carter	Science	The Curriculum
	Equal Opportunities	
Mr Neil Cowell	Geography	Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development
	Special Educational Needs	Learning resources
Ms Renee Robinson	Design and Technology	
	Information Technology	
	Health and Social Care GNVQ	
Ms Lynne Bappa	History	
	Religious Education	
Mr Michael Lafford	Modern Foreign Languages	Accommodation
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The Registrar
The Office for Standards in Education
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London WC2B 6SE

REPORT CONTENTS

Paragraph

MAIN FINDINGS

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

KEY ISSUES FOR ACTION

INTRODUCTION

1-6

- Characteristics of the school**
- Key indicators**

PART A: ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Educational standards achieved by pupils at the school

7-36

- Attainment and progress**
- Attitudes, behaviour and personal development**
- Attendance**

Quality of education provided

37-69

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

The management and efficiency of the school

70-89

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

PART B: CURRICULUM AREAS AND SUBJECTS

English, mathematics and science
Other subjects or courses

90-113
114-182

PART C: INSPECTION DATA

Summary of inspection evidence
Data and indicators

183-189
189-193

MAIN FINDINGS

What the school does well

- It implements with a high degree of success its aims, values and major policies to create a very positive ethos.
- It achieves in comparison with schools with pupils from similar backgrounds, good and improving standards by the age of sixteen in many subjects.
- It provides much good teaching to support good progress, particularly in physical education, art, music, drama, science and some aspects of design and technology.
- It expects, promotes and achieves very high standards of behaviour.
- It identifies accurately and promptly pupils' special educational needs.
- It administers its finances most carefully and uses its available resources effectively.
- It establishes and sustains close links with parents.

Where the school has weaknesses

- I. Statutory requirements are not at present met fully in information and communication technology for pupils between the ages of fourteen and sixteen.
- II. Standards are not high enough in information technology between the ages of fourteen and sixteen.
- III. Standards are inconsistent across subjects, in part owing to pupils' weaknesses in literacy and numeracy that are insufficiently remedied through the adaptation of teaching methods, including the modification of printed materials.

The Thomas Cowley High School has many more strengths than weaknesses. It is a good school that successfully supports the good progress of its pupils. Their overall attainment by the age of sixteen in GCSE examinations[1998] is well above the national average for modern schools. The school supports pupils' personal development well and has very good arrangements to promote high standards of behaviour, positive discipline and good levels of attendance. The headteacher leads the school well, teamwork is strong and many members of its community make significant contributions to its successful management. Parents who responded to the questionnaire, a small number of whom also attended a meeting prior to the inspection, are very pleased with the standards of education provided by the school. The majority views expressed by parents are confirmed by this inspection.

The school is a united community with a strong commitment to moral values and a very good learning atmosphere. Whilst appreciative of its history, it is increasingly alert to the future needs of the work place and of society. It instills confidence in the vast majority of its pupils and successfully achieves its aim of "total care" in guiding them through school and thence to continuing education.

How the school has improved since the last inspection

The school has achieved a satisfactory degree of improvement since the last inspection. The headteacher has been in post for five terms and one of his two deputies for just one year. Several heads of department have joined the school during the last two years. Several members of the governing body and the third member of the senior management team have provided a good degree of continuity to support the implementation of the action plan linked to the last inspection of the school. It is against this background that this satisfactory rate of improvement should best be viewed.

- IV. Satisfactory improvements have been made to provide more opportunities for cultural education and to broaden pupils' horizons. This has been helped by the increased, good quality provision for drama, the very good teaching of art and the good teaching of music between the ages of eleven and fourteen. Provision for religious education has also been increased but standards remain below national expectations. Pupils still require more opportunities to reflect and use their imaginations and more opportunity to appreciate the multi-ethnic nature of their wider world and the wider faith community.
- V. There have been satisfactory improvements in carrying out national curriculum assessments but the school needs to examine why there are recurring inconsistencies in English. Assessments at the age of eleven are still used insufficiently to identify what each pupil knows, understands and can do in English, mathematics and science and too great a readiness in some other subjects to assume no prior knowledge, understanding or skills at the age of eleven.
- VI. Satisfactory steps have been taken to improve pupil's skills in information technology. The recently appointed head of information and communication technology has created a useful scheme of work for pupils between the ages of eleven and fourteen. Provision beyond the age of fourteen does not meet statutory requirements fully. There has been some use of staff training days to raise awareness in this area but opportunities within music have been particularly limited.
- VII. The school has improved very successfully its links with the further education sector. Through its compact with De Montfort University Boston College of Further Education and a comprehensive careers guidance programme, pupils' aspirations have been raised so that, in 1998, 83 per cent of Year 11 pupils went on to some form of further education or training on a full or part-time basis.
- VIII. There have been improvements in the level of books within the library so that these now significantly exceed nationally recommended levels but provision of fiction titles has not increased in line with the growth in size of the school and remains unsatisfactory. The ratio of pupils to computers (1:5) is well above the national average now. These are increasingly well used by the pupils.
- IX. There have been some initial improvements in raising teachers' awareness about how to enable pupils to work more successfully on their own and also how to provide more challenging tasks for higher attaining pupils. There remains much to be done in the planning of lessons to ensure that this happens consistently across all years and all subjects.
- X. The attainment levels of boys have improved in several subjects and in design and technology and art in particular.

Standards in subjects

The following table shows standards achieved by 14 year olds in national tests in 1999 and by 16 year olds in GCSE examinations in 1998:

Performance in:	Compared with all schools	Compared with similar schools	Key
Key Stage 3 [1999]	C	A	<i>well above average</i> A <i>above average</i> B <i>average</i> C
GCSE Examinations [1998]	D	A	<i>below average</i> D

Many pupils within the catchment area of the school are selected and choose to attend local grammar schools. As a result, levels of attainment when pupils enter the school are below average. Their relative attainment at the age of fourteen and again at the age of sixteen, when compared with similar such schools, is a particularly strong indicator of the progress they make.

The percentage of pupils who attained the national expectation [level 5] in the 1999 statutory national tests at the age of fourteen was above the national average in English, slightly above it in science and in line with it in mathematics. The average points score indicates that attainment overall is broadly in line with the national average. More significantly for this school, results were well above average for modern schools in English and science and above average in mathematics. The percentage of pupils attaining the national expectation [level 5] was higher than in the previous year. This is another significant indicator of the school's continuing improvement. Girls are approximately one year ahead of boys in English by the age of fourteen but achieve similarly to boys in science and mathematics by that age.

The proportion of pupils attaining 5 or more A*- C by the age of sixteen in 1998 was below the national average for all schools, but, of more significance, was well above the average for modern schools nationally. Just over one third [36 per cent] achieved this standard in 1998 and a similar number did so in 1999 [33 per cent]. Apart from in religious education and English Literature virtually every pupil who was entered gained a grade within the range A*- G. This is above the national average and illustrates how pupils make overall satisfactory progress between the ages of fourteen and sixteen.

Since the last inspection there have been wide variations in the standards achieved by girls and boys in many subjects at the age of fourteen. In 1999 this variation was much less marked. In many subjects boys and girls attain a similar standard. However, girls continue to do better than boys in geography. Boys do very much better than girls in physical education. Significantly more girls than boys attain 5 or more A*- C grades in the General Certificate of Education [GCSE].

· **Quality of teaching**

	Overall quality	Most effective in:	Least effective in:
Years 7-9	Good	art, physical education, music, drama, history, aspects of design and technology and in science	Nil.
Years 10-11	Satisfactory	art, physical education, history	GNVQ health and social care.
English	Satisfactory	Several Year 7 classes	A Year 11 class and a Year 9 class
Mathematics	Satisfactory	A Year 10 class	Nil

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

The teaching of pupils between the ages of eleven and fourteen is good and of pupils between the age of fourteen and sixteen it is satisfactory. The overall majority of teaching is good. Teaching was at least satisfactory in 97 per cent of the one hundred and seventeen lessons seen. It was good or better in just over half of these lessons. It was unsatisfactory in 3 per cent of lessons. Standards of teaching were broadly similar to those observed in the last inspection.

The best teaching was seen in Year 7, which, together with Year 11, had the highest proportion of very good teaching [20 per cent.] There is a good level of specialist teaching in nearly all subjects. This is a strong feature in mathematics, science, design and technology, art, music and physical education. It is weaker in religious education.

Teaching was good in one quarter of English lessons, in just over a third of mathematics lessons, and good or very good in more than four out of ten lessons in science. Teaching in these subjects was never unsatisfactory.

Good teaching was observed in more than two thirds of lessons in music, drama, art, and physical education. In design and technology there was good teaching in nearly two thirds of lessons. There was good teaching in approximately half of the lessons in geography and in just under one half of the lessons in information technology and French. Teaching was good in one in five lessons in religious education.

The teaching of pupils who have special educational needs is satisfactory. It is very good when pupils are withdrawn for specialist help but sometimes unsatisfactory when no additional support is available within lessons.

There are some weaknesses in the teaching provision to meet the needs of the minority of higher attaining pupils.

· **Other aspects of the school**

Aspect	Comment
Behaviour	Very good. Pupils' positive attitudes frequently help them to make progress in lessons and to contribute to the life of the school generally.
Attendance	Good. Consistently above the national average. Unauthorised absence is below the national average.
Ethos*	Very positive. Frequently good attitudes in lessons. Very good relationships.
Leadership and management	The headteacher provides good leadership and teamwork is good. Planning is effective. There is a shared commitment to raise standards further.
Curriculum	Despite improvements in course provision for pupils beyond the age of fourteen and good extra-curricular provision, two weaknesses remain: statutory requirements are not fully met for information and communication technology between the ages of fourteen and sixteen and there is insufficient attention given to a literacy and numeracy strategy across the curriculum.
Spiritual, moral, social & cultural development	Good provision for pupils' moral and social development. Provision for some aspects of cultural and spiritual development remains too limited.
Staffing, resources and accommodation	Good provision of subject specialists and of learning resources – except in the library. Effective use of the increased provision for support staff. Accommodation is satisfactory with many recent improvements.
Value for money	The school gives good value for money.

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

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

What most parents like about the school

- XI. It promotes good standards of work and behaviour.
- XII. It encourages pupils to be involved in more than just their daily lessons.
- XIII. Homework is set regularly.
- XIV. It promotes strong moral values.

What some parents are not happy about

- XV. Some parents feel insufficiently informed school.

Only a very small number [12] of parents attended the parents' meeting prior to the start of the inspection. Approximately twenty-five per cent of parents returned the questionnaire. Those who expressed a view indicated that they are very pleased with what the school does to increase confidence and self-belief. Some parents expressed worries that the school might grow too large. The governors confirmed that the current admission levels will not be exceeded despite the schools' increasing popularity.

KEY ISSUES FOR ACTION

To continue to raise standards of attainment the governors, headteacher and senior management team should:

Key Issue 1: Continue to raise attainment in information technology.

Such action might include steps to:

- XVI. **Audit** levels of current provision, including, in particular, strengths and weaknesses in teaching methods and learning styles.
- XVII. **Create** a fully costed improvement plan.
- XVIII. **Establish** precise benchmarks at the ages of eleven and fourteen so that targets can be set and progress measured.
- XIX. **Provide** a full programme of staff development where subject knowledge or other aspects of teaching expertise are unsatisfactory.
[see paragraphs 8, 49,140,141]

Key Issue 2: Improve further the effectiveness of teaching by ensuring that all pupils have the necessary literacy and numeracy skills to make consistent progress in all their subjects. Such action might include steps to:

- XX. **Establish** a whole-school policy for literacy and numeracy.
- XXI. **Identify** the literacy and numeracy requirements and opportunities in each subject of the curriculum, building on the national literacy and numeracy strategies.
- XXII. **Build** in objectives and targets for literacy and numeracy at all stages of subject planning.
- XXIII. **Consider** teaching methods which make use of media other than the printed or written word when pupils' language difficulties prove insurmountable. Modify texts and tasks to ensure they match pupils' abilities.
- XXIV. **Increase** pupils' mathematical thinking skills and improve further the provision of fiction titles in the school library.
[see paragraphs 15, 21,22,23,43,45,49,50,78,82,83,84,85,88,89,168]

Key Issue 3: Review curriculum provision to ensure that statutory requirements are fully met for information technology. Such action might include steps to:

- XXV. **Make more explicit** the progressive development of knowledge, skills and understanding in information technology in subject schemes of work.
- XXVI. **Decide** the most efficient and effective arrangements to ensure that statutory requirements are fully met.
[see paragraphs 49,64]

In addition to the key issues above, the following weaknesses should be considered for inclusion in the action plan:

- Pupils' reflective and imaginative responses within spiritual awareness and the broadening of their multi-ethnic awareness within cultural education.
[see paragraphs 56, 57]

- teaching of the minority of higher attaining pupils in religious education, geography and art.
[see paragraphs 45, 121, 139, 141, 179]

- assessment arrangements to inform curriculum and lesson planning in English, religious education, geography and information technology.
[see paragraphs 9, 42, 45, 75, 101, 128, 133, 141, 154, 165, 182]

- inclusion of all legally required items with the governors' annual report to parents.
[see paragraph 76]

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INTRODUCTION

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Characteristics of the school

- 1 The Thomas Cowley High School is an 11-16 voluntary controlled mixed, modern school [non-selective]. It is situated in a small village, some ten miles from Boston and Spalding. Whilst it is designated an all ability school, many of its potential higher attaining pupils are selected to attend several grammar schools in the area. There is no evidence to identify precise numbers but they are sufficiently large to have a very significant effect on the ability profile of the intake, skewing it downwards.
- 2 There were 512 pupils on roll at the time of the inspection; 212 were girls and 300 boys, an increase since the time of the last inspection. Although the school has increased in size significantly since the last inspection it remains much smaller than other secondary schools nationally. The number of pupils eligible to receive free school meals [13.9 per cent] is broadly in line with the national average. There are currently no pupils at the school for whom English is an additional language. This is low by national comparisons. The percentage of pupils who have identified special education needs [26 per cent] is above the national average [15.4 per cent]. Although the percentage of pupils with Statements has reduced to 4 per cent, it remains above the national average [2.4 per cent]. There is a Sensory Support Unit, where numbers have decreased recently, and a General Learning Difficulties Unit. There is no marked social deprivation in the area. The majority of pupils come from four local census wards: Donington, Five Village, Gosberton Village and Swineshead. An increasing number of pupils travel a considerable distance to attend the school.
- 3 As standards have risen the school has grown in popularity. It is now oversubscribed. Since the last inspection in 1996 the school has increased in size by over 80 per cent. There is some evidence that attainment on entry has declined in the last two years but the number of statemented pupils has reduced by more than half. There has been a rise in the percentage of pupils [46 per cent] who go on to further education whilst the number of pupils [7 per cent] entering some form of training in the last year for which statistics are available [1988] is well below that found at the time of the last inspection [26 per cent].
- 4 The school has a clear set of aims. Its stated primary purpose is “to encourage each and every one of its students to realise his or her full potential”. To that end it provides a relevant and frequently challenging curriculum and a wide programme of extra-curricular activities. Personal development is a school priority. All students are expected to master basic skills but

weaknesses in school -wide provision for literacy and numeracy and insufficient provision for information and communication technology between the ages of fourteen and sixteen are currently restricting the fulfilment of this aim. The school very successfully promotes the traditional values which are at the heart of its ethos.

- 5 Raising attainment is a priority aim within the school development plan 1998-2001. Following the appointment of a third member of the current senior management team a sound start has been made to establish systematic monitoring and there is some useful analysis of data that is starting to inform decision making. Processes of evaluation remain at an early stage of development.
- 6 The School Development Plan also contains challenging targets to raise attendance to the very good level of 95 per cent. Targets for attainment have been agreed with the local education authority. By next summer [2000] the aim is that 40 per cent of pupils will achieve five or more grades A*- C and all pupils will achieve one or more grades A*- G.

6 Key indicators

Attainment at Key Stage 3¹

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for latest reporting year:	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1998	36	35	71

6 National Curriculum Test Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Number of pupils at NC Level 5 or Above	Boys	15	19	23
	Girls	23	22	17
	Total	38	41	40
Percentage at NC Level 5 or above	School	54(57)	58(60)	56(60)
	National	65 (56)	60 (60)	56 (60)
Percentage at NC Level 6 or above	School	25(23)	23(37)	30(39)
	National	35 (23)	36 (37)	27 (29)

6 Teacher Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Number of pupils at NC Level 5 or Above	Boys	21	17	18
	Girls	30	16	24
	Total	51	31	42
Percentage at NC Level 5 or above	School	76(42)	60(53)	59(64)
	National	65 (59)	71 (63)	48 (61)
Percentage at NC Level 6 or above	School	35(25)	38(23)	44 (37)
	National	31 (28)	37 (37)	31 (29)

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

Attainment at Key Stage 4²

Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year: 1998

Year	Boys	Girls	Total
1988	34	32	66

GCSE Results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A* to G	1 or more grades A* to G
Number of pupils	Boys	10	32	33
Achieving	Girls	14	32	32
standard specified	Total	24	64	65
Percentage achieving	School	36.4(34)	97.0(94)	98.5(100)
standard specified	National	44.4 (45.1)	89.6 (86.4)	95.1 (94.0)

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

Attendance

Percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year:			%
	Authorised absence	School National comparative data	7.8 7.9
	Unauthorised absence	School National comparative data	0.4 1.1

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6 Exclusions

Number of exclusions of pupils (of statutory school age) during the previous year:		Number
	Fixed period	17
	Permanent	2

6 Quality of teaching

Percentage of teaching observed which is:		%
	Very good or better	13
	Satisfactory or better	97
	Less than satisfactory	3

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

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

6 **Attainment and progress**

7 The standards achieved by all pupils need to be seen in the local context of selection by ability at the age of eleven. Nearly all of the more able pupils go to grammar schools in Spalding and Boston. The number of pupils who have special educational needs when they enter the school is rising and reached 26 per cent in September 1999. The profile of attainment is thus skewed significantly towards lower attaining pupils and is below average on entry. The school has started to develop measures to define the profile of ability on entry. Reading and numeracy tests administered immediately upon entry to the school indicate that many pupils have a low reading age. In 1997, for example, 70 per cent of pupils had a verbal reasoning score below the average for the test and two-thirds of pupils entered the school in 1998 with a reading age below their chronological age.

8 Overall attainment is, as a result, below the nationally expected standard for all schools at both the age of fourteen and sixteen. There are, however, significant variations across subjects, and attainment in many subjects compares favourably with the national average for modern schools. In a small number of subjects, attainment, either at the age of fourteen or sixteen, is not high enough. The school needs to continue to raise standards in information technology and to monitor closely levels of attainment in those subjects where pupils over several years have attained lower standards by the age of sixteen than in their other subjects, for example in geography.

9 In the statutory national tests for all pupils at the age of fourteen in English, mathematics and science, in 1998, attainment was below the national average for both boys and girls in English, but close to the national average in mathematics and science. The percentage of pupils attaining above the national expectation was close to the national average in science but below it in mathematics and English. Teachers' assessments of the percentage of pupils' reaching the national expectation [level 5] were generally consistent with test results in mathematics and science but more generous in English. Teacher assessment of the percentage of pupils attaining above the national expectation was more generous in all three subjects. When attainment is compared with all modern schools, pupils' performance in the statutory national tests for 1998 was close to the average in English but above average in mathematics and science. Pupils' combined attainment in these three core subjects was above average. In 1998 girls attained a significantly higher average level than did boys in the statutory national tests in English and slightly higher average levels for those in mathematics. The average level of boys' attainment in science was higher than that of the girls but not significantly so. Overall, girls did better than boys in these three subjects.

10 The percentage of pupils attaining the national expectation in English, mathematics and science in 1999 was higher in all three subjects. The percentage of pupils attaining the national expectation in English [78 per cent] was above the national average for all schools. The percentage attaining the national expectation in mathematics [64 per cent] was in line with the national average and the percentage in science [60 per cent] was just above the national average. The improvement in English was striking and well above teachers' own assessments. An examination of a representative sample of pupils' work and their completed test scripts suggests that caution should be exercised in using the well above average results as a benchmark for this year group when setting targets for GCSE. There is limited data available

currently within the school to evaluate the progress made by these pupils over the last three years. However, a comparison between national curriculum test results at the age of eleven with attainment at the age of fourteen suggests that pupils improve in all three subjects over time.

- 11 The overall trend of improvement in English, mathematics and science since the last inspection has been steady in English and mathematics when expressed in terms of the average test level achieved by all pupils. It has fallen over time in science whilst the percentage achieving the national expectation has risen. This suggests that the gap between higher and lower attaining pupils is widening but there was no school analysis available to confirm this.
- 12 Since 1997 teachers have formally reported levels of attainment at the age of fourteen in geography, history, modern foreign languages, design technology and information technology. They have also reported whether, in music, physical education and art, a prescribed standard has been reached or exceeded. In the year following the last inspection, attainment was below the national average in all these subjects. In some cases, in history, geography, information technology and design and technology, the profile was well below the national average. There have been massive improvements in several subjects since that time, strikingly so in art and design and technology. Improvements have been slower in geography and remained stubbornly well below the national average in French. History has reported highly fluctuating results, a significant feature also in music. Only in 1998 did a small percentage of boys reach the national expectation in information technology during the three years 1996-1999.
- 13 There is evidence within these assessments that the gap in attainment levels between boys and girls is narrowing over time. In design and technology in 1997, in terms of the percentage of boys and girls attaining the national expectation or better, the gap was in the order of 40 per cent. It was just one per cent in the 1999 assessments. It has halved in art and also narrowed in French from over 30 per cent in 1997 to just 7 percent in 1999. In 1999 there were significantly more boys than girls in the year group. This helped to boost further the percentage of pupils reaching or exceeding the prescribed expectation in physical education. In this subject boys' attainment regularly exceeds that of girls.
- 14 The levels of attainment at the age of sixteen in public examinations are analysed more fully in section B of this report. In summary, in 1998, attainment was below the national average for grades A*- C in English and mathematics and above the national average in science. It was close to the average for modern schools in mathematics, well above that standard in science, above in French [long course] and geography but below it in English art, history, music and religious education. It was well below the average for secondary modern schools in English Literature. The percentage of pupils gaining grades A*- G in these subjects was, broadly, close to or just above the national average for all schools. Some subject departments reported improvements in their 1999 results. Art improved by more than 20 per cent and design and technology reported a further improvement of 12 percent in the number of grades A*- C [yet further indicators of successful teaching within these now flourishing departments]; there was also an improvement of more than 10 per cent in the number of pupils gaining grades A*- C in music; drama achieved 42 percent grades A*- C, a result below the most recent national average but an encouraging indicator given that this course was being offered for the first time. Results slipped slightly by several percentage points in history and geography and were again well below the national average in religious education. The science department has analysed the factors that contributed to the dip in its results this summer. These relate to the particular circumstances of pupils, which are outside the control of the school. There was no evidence of similar analyses being carried out in other subjects. Overall attainment was broadly in line with all schools nationally for the percentage of pupils gaining grades A*- G in these subjects. The percentage of pupils gaining grades A*- C in those subjects taken by all pupils [English,

mathematics, science, design and technology, English Literature and religious education] has risen from 35 per cent in the year of the last inspection to 42 per cent in 1997. It slipped back to 30 per cent in 1998, mainly owing to the very poor results in English Literature that were caused by particular staffing difficulties that have now been fully resolved. In the option subjects where pupils have a choice at the age of fourteen, the percentage of pupils gaining grades A*- C rose from 22 per cent in the year of the last inspection to 30 percent in the latest reporting year, 1998. Standards in the 1999 GCSE examinations rose in English Literature, music, French [full course], art and design technology.

- 15 Overall, where pupils are less reliant on the printed word, they frequently do well, for example in art, in design and technology, in physical education and also, to a lesser extent, in music. In the lessons seen during the inspection there was a striking correlation between the best teaching, the highest attainment and the greatest progress. Also, in subjects such as history and geography, where pupils are required to do a significant amount of reading and writing, when visual and audio aids were used effectively, pupils' understanding increased and they made better progress. At other times, where teaching styles were more limited standards of work were below expectations and reflected standards in recent examination results.
- 16 The overall standard of pupils' work was below national expectations in two thirds of the one hundred and seventeen lessons seen during the inspection. More lessons for pupils between the ages of eleven and fourteen were observed than those for pupils between the ages of fourteen and sixteen. Standards of work completed by pupils between the ages of eleven and fourteen were below expectations in nearly one third of lessons. In almost half of lessons for pupils between the ages of fourteen and sixteen, standards were below national expectations. Standards in art were above expectations in more than three quarters of the lessons seen and similar high standards were evident in half of the physical education lessons. Attainment was higher in science than in English and mathematics, confirming the validity of the statutory national tests and GCSE examinations. Pupils' work was in line with national expectations in nine out of ten lessons whereas in English and mathematics this was the case in half of the lessons seen. In the vast majority of lessons in design and technology attainment was in line with national expectations.
- 17 By the age of fourteen, standards in speaking, listening and reading are broadly in line with expectations. They continue to be lower in writing. Pupils' games' skills are in line with expectations in physical education. In two thirds of lessons in art and in half of the physical education lessons there were high standards of work. There has also been an improvement in music since the last inspection so that now in nearly two thirds of lessons the standard of pupils' work is in line with national expectations. Almost half of the pupils reach the national expectation in geography by the age of fourteen. This is slightly below the national average. Standards are in line with national expectations in design technology, in drama and also in information technology. In history, religious education and also in French standards remain below national expectations by the age of fourteen.
- 18 By the age of sixteen, overall standards of work were below the national expectation in nearly half of the lessons seen in English and below expectations in one third of mathematics lessons. Standards were in line with national expectations in science but never above them. Pupils achieve high standards in art and in graphics and resistant materials within design and technology. Standards are in line with expectations in drama, music and physical education and they are improving towards that level in history. Overall standards are below national expectations in geography, information technology and French. In lessons seen during the inspection, standards in art were always above expectations with very high standards in a quarter of lessons. Similar high standards were frequently evident in physical education. Attainment was below national expectations in three-quarters of French lessons, in half of the

religious education lessons and in two thirds of geography lessons between the ages of fourteen and sixteen.

- 19 There was limited evidence of the overall relative standards of boys and girls in each year group but where setting based on ability occurred, which was in the majority of lessons seen, higher sets contained significantly more girls than boys. The standards of work by girls was thus higher than that of boys, a point also confirmed when previous and current work was examined in detail and discussions held with pupils themselves. There was some variation between subjects, particularly within the core subjects between the ages of fourteen and sixteen. Overall, evidence from pupils' work completed both during and prior to the inspection confirms the patterns of attainment by boys and girls in the statutory national tests. There has been some fluctuation in the relative performance of boys and girls in GCSE examinations. In 1998 the average points score of the boys was close to the national average whilst girls' points score was below the national average. Over the last three years, the points score of both boys and girls has been below the national average.
- 20 The standards of work evident in lessons and also in that completed prior to the inspection supports the judgement that the GCSE results provide a broadly accurate reflection of current standards. 1998 is the latest year upon which valid national comparisons can be made. At that time 36.4 per cent of pupils gained five or more A*- C. This was below the national average for all schools but above the average for modern schools. Pupils' average points score, together with the percentage of pupils gaining five or more A*- G and 1+ A*- G indicate that attainment at GCSE in 1998 was well above the average for modern schools. A significantly higher percentage of girls [43.8 per cent] achieved this standard than did boys [29.4 per cent]. The proportion of pupils attaining this standard has remained steady over the past three years. The average point score per pupil shows a rising trend since the last inspection and the rate of improvement is much faster than that nationally. There was a broadly similar number of boys and girls entered for examinations in 1998 and a higher percentage of boys [74 per cent] gained one or more passes at grades A*- C than did girls. The percentage of pupils gaining five or more A*- G has remained steady since the last inspection. It was above the national average in 1998 and based on an average for the past three years it has been well above the national average.
- 21 Information provided by the local education authority indicates that in the 1999 GCSE examinations pupils do significantly better in art, music and design and technology than they do in other subjects and significantly worse in history and geography. They do relatively less well in mathematics. Boys also do less well in music and girls less well in food technology and English Literature than in their other subjects. Similar information for 1998 indicates that girls and boys did significantly better in science and in design and technology than in their other subjects. Girls did significantly less well in history and boys did significantly less well in English literature than they did in their other subjects.
- 22 Standards of literacy are below the national expectation in each year group. The school has not formulated a whole-school literacy policy and literacy is not promoted consistently throughout the school. There are some good features in current practice but this issue needs to be addressed over a sustained period of time if standards are to rise further. Where policy and practice are currently weak, standards of attainment are also low. There are some planned opportunities for pupils to undertake basic research in most subjects. Most departments promote the use of information technology. These facilities support research and the development of word processing skills. However, in many subject areas, poor writing skills affect attainment and reduce the degree of progress. For example, in geography, there are insufficient opportunities for writing at length, there is too much copying of text and the range of written tasks is too narrow. There is insufficient opportunity for class discussion in order to

consolidate, develop and apply pupils' geographical knowledge and understanding. Sometimes the style and vocabulary of printed resources are beyond the pupils' understanding and there are insufficient opportunities to discuss these misunderstandings and uncertainties. In design and technology, pupils' range of expression is limited. In their writing, many pupils make spelling mistakes that indicate insufficient concentration on the written word. Only a minority of pupils use appropriate technical language. The literacy strategy in the music department is more effective. In all lessons, pupils read and understand technical vocabulary. Key words are displayed in the classroom and regularly learned for homework. There is a good range of written tasks in history and planned opportunities for extended speech, for example when making a presentation about events leading up to the second world war. However, there are insufficient opportunities to develop research skills in reading. Opportunities for discussion and debate are more restricted in religious education. The ranges of written tasks is limited and sometimes lack challenge, evident, for example, in the requirement that older pupils write only half a page on the topic of euthanasia.

- 23 The majority of pupils enter the school with below average numeracy standards. They are helped to improve by good quality support staff when available. By the age of fourteen the majority of pupils have attained a sound basic standard. A significant number, however, still have difficulty and this limits their progress in some other subjects. For example, in science, pupils perform calculations and measurements of distance, velocity and time by the age of fourteen and solve equations between the age of fourteen and sixteen. Good number skills assist the learning of most pupils but the progress of others is sometimes limited by inadequate numeracy. This was particularly evident in a Year 10 physics lesson on power where the least numerate were unable to manipulate the necessary equation. In technology most pupils calculate accurately using mental and pencil/paper methods. In geography pupils construct and interpret a wide variety of graphs and diagrams including bar charts, line graphs and tables. Pupils have fewer planned opportunities to apply the knowledge and understanding of number in history and English where there is limited opportunity to interpret and write about information presented in numerical forms. Pupils use calculators confidently. Pupils' numeracy continues to improve as they move through the school. By the age of sixteen, almost all pupils have acquired basic skills in number, measurement, data handling and graphs.
- 24 Standards in information technology have improved since the last inspection and are currently in line with national expectations when pupils reach the age of fourteen. They remain below expectations by the age of sixteen. Most pupils are fluent in the basic operations when using a computer. By the age of fourteen they can complete simple word processing tasks, use desk top publishing to illustrate text and can create simple spreadsheets and can complete mathematical functions within them. Some pupils can program using Logo and also use the research facilities of the Internet.
- 25 The overall pattern of attainment at different ages confirms that pupils make good progress between the ages of eleven and fourteen and satisfactory progress between the ages of fourteen and sixteen. Progress is judged to be good overall in the school because there are more pupils between the ages of eleven and fourteen than between the ages of fourteen and sixteen. During the last year more managerial attention has been given to monitoring attainment and a start has been made to establishing a profile of pupils' attainment when they enter the school at the age of eleven through a range of commercially available tests. There is currently insufficient data and incomplete procedures to inform a more thorough evaluation of progress. Although teaching is monitored regularly by a deputy headteacher and heads of department there is insufficient attention given to evaluating the effect this is having on the progress of boys and girls of differing abilities.
- 26 Observed progress was satisfactory or better in nine out of ten lessons. Between the ages of

eleven and fourteen pupils of all abilities, both boys and girls, make never less than satisfactory progress. They make good or very good progress in two out every three lessons. Within the core subjects, progress in lessons was greater in English than in mathematics and science and overall progress was good in over half of these lessons. Pupils were seen making very good progress in developing skills in physical education. Good progress was evident in the majority of design and technology lessons and in many history lessons for this age group. Good progress was evident in three-quarters of the small number of information technology lessons seen. This is encouraging, given the low levels of attainment to date. Progress was unsatisfactory in fourteen per cent of lessons for pupils between the ages of fourteen and sixteen. Where teaching is good, pupils of all abilities make progress. Where work takes insufficient account of pupils' language weaknesses, particularly in reading and writing, their limited confidence in applying number or where the pace of the lesson is slow, then progress is unsatisfactory. A loss of concentration and an occasional tendency to chatter, particularly towards the end of lessons for lower attaining pupils, result in unsatisfactory progress.

- 27 Between the ages of fourteen and sixteen good progress was observed in over half of the lessons. Within the core subjects, pupils made never less than satisfactory progress with occasionally good progress in English, occasionally very good progress by higher attaining pupils in mathematics and sometimes good progress in science. Progress was good or very good at all times in art and history and consistently good in the small number of lessons observed in music for this age group. Occasionally, pupils also made good progress in religious education and French. Unsatisfactory progress resulted from unsatisfactory teaching in the GNVQ health and social care course.
- 28 Pupils who have special educational needs make satisfactory progress. Strengths outweigh weaknesses in the quality of provision. Just over a quarter (26 per cent) of pupils have special educational needs and their progress is satisfactory. There are now fewer pupils (4 per cent) with statements of educational need than at the last inspection. Individual parents are very positive about progress with both reading and writing between the ages of fourteen and sixteen. Where Year 7 pupils receive individual tuition from a special educational needs teacher, as part of the school's well organised and structured reading recovery programme, they make good progress. Individuals progress at different rates but most pupils on the Register of Special Educational Needs improve their reading age year on year. Very detailed measurement and analysis of standards in reading and spelling show that pupils make steady improvement in reading but remain below the level expected of pupils of their age.
- 29 When supported between the ages of fourteen and sixteen, pupils with statements of educational needs and in the general learning difficulties unit continue to make sound progress. Pupils in the sensory support unit benefit from specialist one-to-one tuition and make good progress. In Years 10 and 11 two small groups, mainly of boys, receive support with their studies in other subjects through classes taught by the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator. This is helping to raise standards in public examination course work. Teachers are well informed about the requirements of individual pupils with statements of educational need and receive guidance from the special educational needs department, for example on how to help dyslexic pupils in the classroom. Where individual education plans are in use, and reflected in lesson planning and provision for individual needs, pupils make more progress. An example is in physical education where hand signals are used to assist hearing impaired pupils, activities are modified and alternative equipment such as yellow badminton shuttles are used to assist pupils with visual impairment. Where there are inappropriate teaching methods, absence of learning support staff or absence of well focused support material as in science, particularly between the ages of fourteen and sixteen, progress is slower and attainment lower.

29 **Attitudes, behaviour and personal development**

- 30 Overall, pupils have good attitudes to learning. Their personal development is good, they behave well and establish good relationships with each other and with adults. This has a strong impact on educational standards by making a major contribution to the school's positive climate for learning. Since the previous inspection, standards have been broadly maintained, with some improvement in pupils' personal development.
- 31 Nearly all pupils like school, arrive promptly and quickly settle to work. A majority of pupils show interest, good concentration and perseverance during activities and when they are listening and responding to whole class teaching. In the great majority of lessons, nearly all pupils listen attentively, ask questions confidently and volunteer answers or suggestions enthusiastically. Very good attitudes to learning were seen in lessons, across a range of subjects, for example in art, design technology, history and science, and particularly when pupils were actively engaged in practical activities. However, in a small minority of lessons, a growing number of older pupils lose interest and attention. This is particularly noticeable, in the lower ability GCSE sets in English and mathematics, where many pupils' attentiveness gradually falls, leading to a slow pace, some restlessness and more limited progress. Pupils, in all year groups, consider that the set homework deepens their understanding and sometimes stimulates curiosity. They also recognise that they learn new things by doing homework, such as the spelling and meaning of words, which are new to them. Attitudes of pupils who have special educational needs are good in lessons, but their progress is sometimes restricted, owing either to lack of support or underdeveloped basic skills, in either literacy or numeracy.
- 32 Behaviour in classrooms, during lunchtime and playtimes is very good. It is a feature commented upon by visitors to the school, including parents who value greatly the school's stance in these matters. In almost all lessons, pupils behave very well. In a small minority of lessons, where the lesson lacks challenge or classroom management is insecure, a few pupils become distracted and occasionally interrupt lessons. Pupils move about the school without any running or jostling. They hold doors open for visitors and for each other, even when there is no adult present. The atmosphere in the playground is impressively calm and relaxed. Pupils confirm that incidents of bullying or other anti-social behaviour are very rare. They appreciate the need to inform adults and provide peer group support in such an event. There were two permanent exclusions and nineteen fixed term exclusions during the previous academic year. There is no evidence of vandalism nor problems with litter on the school site. Pupils take care of property and resources and help keep the school in attractive condition.
- 33 Relationships between adults and pupils and among pupils are very good. Adults in the school act as good role models and nearly all pupils aspire to treat others in a similar way. Teachers value pupils' work and most effectively praise effort and good work. The pupils respond in a positive manner. Almost all pupils show caring and considerate attitudes towards each other and all adults in the school community. Pupils are courteous to each other and to adults by, for example, letting others speak first and answering politely when questioned. Almost all pupils work well in pairs and small groups and are willing to collaborate when opportunities arise. Special educational needs pupils feel fully included during lessons and playtime.
- 34 Pupils' personal development is good overall. They offer to help and respond well to the opportunities to take responsibility in the day-to-day running of their classroom. For example, about thirty Year 10 and Year 11 pupils help younger pupils with reading. Pupils have equal opportunities to be a member of school sports teams that help to develop discipline, personal application, team spirit and a sense of fair play. Twenty-four school prefects, from Year 11, monitor behaviour outside the classroom and assist at parents' consultation evenings by acting

as hosts and car parking attendants. Each form has a school council representative, a form captain, vice captain and sports captain. The three school houses have captains and vice captains who help with assemblies. Pupils help in the library and with the organisation and running of some school clubs. They are actively involved in fundraising for charities and they show good levels of responsibility on educational visits. Links with businesses and enterprises are weak. In lessons, the majority of pupils, particularly in the lower ability sets between the ages of fourteen and sixteen, still tend to be over-dependent on the teacher. In contrast, pupils in higher ability sets, where basic skills in literacy and numeracy are secure, need much less support.

34 **Attendance**

35 Attendance is good. The attendance level of 92.6 per cent for the 1997/8 reporting year is above the national average. For the 1998/9 reporting year, the figure of 91.8 per cent is similar to the year of the previous inspection. The unauthorised absence level is consistently below the national average.

36 Punctuality is very good. Pupils come to school on time and get to their classes promptly during the day. A number of pupils travel a considerable distance and arrive on time. The prompt and calm start to lessons contributes to pupils' progress, self discipline and time management.

36 **QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED**

36 **Teaching**

37 The overall quality of teaching is good. It is good for pupils between the ages of eleven and fourteen. Strengths outweigh weaknesses in the satisfactory teaching for pupils between the ages of fourteen and sixteen. Current arrangements to monitor teaching regularly, led by one of the deputy headteachers and supported by heads of department, are helping to increase consistent practice. However, there is insufficient emphasis currently on identifying the link between teaching and pupils' progress and attainment. Parents' high opinion of the teaching at the school is largely confirmed, particularly the effective use of homework in many subjects and the high quality of support given to pupils who have special educational needs when they are withdrawn from lessons.

38 Standards of teaching in lessons seen were broadly similar to the last inspection, although the percentage of teaching that was very good or better was slightly less. No excellent teaching was seen. Strengths outweighed weaknesses in more than nine out of ten lessons. Teaching was unsatisfactory in only one in thirty lessons. The teaching was good or better in just over half of the lessons seen and very good in just over one in ten lessons. The best teaching was seen in Year 7. It was least satisfactory in Year 10. Years 7 and 11 had the highest proportion of very good teaching [20 per cent]. Where teaching was good, pupils invariably made good progress.

39 In the seventy lessons for pupils between the ages of eleven and fourteen, teaching was good or better in three out of every five lessons. There was very good teaching in 12 per cent of these lessons with no unsatisfactory teaching.

40 Forty-four lessons were observed for pupils between the ages of fourteen and sixteen. The teaching was good in nearly half of these lessons [43 per cent]. No very good teaching was

seen. In just over nine out of ten lessons, strengths outweighed weaknesses [91 per cent]. Teaching was unsatisfactory in approximately one in every ten lessons [9 per cent].

- 41 Despite the small size of the school, there is a good level of specialist teaching in nearly all subjects. This supports pupils' progress well. Several heads of department have been appointed since the relatively recent arrival of the headteacher. The growth in the size of the school has afforded opportunity to appoint further specialist staff. This good level of specialist knowledge informs good schemes of work in many subjects, for example in mathematics, science, design and technology, art and music. Although the level of staff commitment is high and the leadership supportive, there are some weaknesses in the teaching of religious education where limitations in specialist knowledge result in insufficient coverage of religions other than Christianity and limitations in teaching methods. Several teachers also teach more than one subject. This works well but there are some missed opportunities to develop links between these different subject areas.
- 42 The teaching has many strengths and a few weaknesses. Preparation is invariably thorough. Planning identifies clearly what will happen in lessons but is not always fully shared with pupils at the outset of lessons. Objective setting is good in French, satisfactory overall but too frequently, as in English, defines what the teacher and pupils will do, rather than what they will learn. As a result it is difficult for the teacher and the pupil to judge the success of the lesson in terms of what has been learnt. There remain some missed opportunities in many subjects, for example in geography, for pupils to support and learn from each other in smaller groups. Homework is set regularly and is particularly effective in science. Day-to-day assessment is unsatisfactory in English, religious education, geography and information technology. Satisfactory progress has been made to provide opportunities for pupils to be less reliant on their teacher for the answer to questions and problems but more remains to be done in this aspect of teaching. Pupils participate mainly by answering questions; only occasionally do they make decisions or propose solutions. Much of the teaching at the start of the inspection was over cautious but did become more adventurous in some subjects as the week progressed. This confirms that satisfactory progress has been made in response to criticisms made in the last inspection report.
- 43 At its best, teaching captures not only the interest but also the imagination of both the younger and older pupils in art, design and technology and some history and music lessons. In other subjects, for example in physical education, there is a strong emphasis on developing skills in games that encourages younger pupils' will to improve and not just to win. When well-planned and skillfully paced teaching creates an enthusiastic response, pupils make good progress. For example, in a Year 8 history lesson for lower attaining pupils the teacher made highly imaginative use of oriental spices to bring alive a lesson on Columbus. There is sometimes highly effective use of material resources in geography where audio visual aids are used particularly well to support the progress of both younger and older lower attaining pupils who frequently experience difficulty with the printed word. This was also a feature in science where visual resources were very well used to help older middle ability pupils to make progress in their revision of different energy forms. Many pupils in all years do find difficulty with the printed and written word. Thoughtful and imaginative teaching, as well as using resources other than print in several subjects, are supporting good progress in knowledge and understanding. Such good practice is not consistent. Very good instruction in physical education and guidance in art promotes well the development of skills in these subjects.
- 44 Nearly every lesson starts promptly and is well structured. Most proceed at a good pace. This is a recurring feature of lessons in art and music, and improvements in French have been made since the last inspection. In the best English teaching, speaking, listening and writing are well linked to support pupils' progress. Pupils are particularly well managed when withdrawn for

lessons to receive extra help, which is well linked to the main lesson. For example, on one occasion, it was emphasised to pupils how they must use their dictionary when they returned to class. Planning and careful preparation are particular strengths in many lessons in science and mathematics. In design and technology, technician support is particularly effective and classroom support assistants work in close partnership with the teacher to promote the progress of lower attaining pupils as well as those who have special educational needs. Teachers convey a good, usually appropriate, general level of expectation to their pupils at the start of lessons. However, these need to be more specific through a clear link to particular lesson objectives.

45 The main weakness concerns the matching of tasks and materials to meet pupils' individual needs. There was limited evidence of extension activities for the higher attaining pupils who comprise a small, but important, minority in art, geography and religious education. More significant is the absence of such arrangements for lower attaining pupils who comprise the majority. This is a recurring weakness in English, mathematics and in science. Setting is used well in several subjects but the ability range remains wide within these classes, particularly of middle and lower attaining pupils. Setting alone assures an insufficient degree of match between what a pupil is able to do, or expected to know and understand and what is asked of them by the teacher. This reduces the progress that they make. Insufficient attention is given in the setting of objectives to the quality of work expected by pupils of differing levels of attainment within the class. As a result, assessment by the teacher within the lesson is impressionistic and the pupils are unsure of how well they have done. Even in physical education, where teaching is invariably very good, such arrangements are insufficiently developed. In art, however, the very good teaching is further enhanced by the care taken to match tasks to the needs of pupils who have special educational needs.

46 Overall, strengths outweigh weaknesses in the satisfactory level of teaching provision for pupils who have special educational needs. Provision is satisfactory in lessons where individual education plans are in active use, or where learning support assistants support pupils, and where work is sufficiently modified to meet their needs, as in art. Impressive improvements have been made in the number of classroom support assistants since the appointment of the headteacher. However, teaching arrangements are sometimes unsatisfactory when no additional support is provided. Many teachers, particularly those with less experience, have insufficient expertise to plan how to meet the needs of these pupils when no additional support is available. Teaching of pupils withdrawn from classes for specialist teaching is very good. In the sensory support unit pupils routinely make use of information and communication technology to assist them in their learning. Teachers are aware of the particular needs of sensory impaired pupils and use radio aids very effectively. There are sound arrangements for joint planning with support teachers and learning support assistant to make teaching effective. Learning support assistants attend all subject meetings and keep lesson-by-lesson records of pupils' work. Expectations of pupils with special educational needs are high across the school. Hearing-impaired pupils are taught using an oral/aural approach. The use of personal hearing aids and radio aids systems is given high priority to ensure access to the curriculum. Visually impaired pupils use closed circuit monitors with enlarging facilities to make printed information readable.

46 **The curriculum and its assessment**

47 Overall, provision is satisfactory. Strengths outweigh weaknesses. There have been a number of improvements to the curriculum since the last inspection. These include the provision of religious education and French for all pupils [as either a short or long course] and the opportunity to choose to study a drama and theatre arts course between the ages of fourteen and sixteen; and the introduction of timetabled lessons of information and communications technology for all pupils between the ages of eleven and fourteen. Less progress has been made

in extending opportunities for vocational education, to include business education, although serious consideration is being given to this possibility in the near future. Nearly all pupils gain a good range of passes in the range A*- G within the existing curriculum which provides a relevant foundation for further education and training.

48 For all pupils between the ages of eleven and fourteen the curriculum is broad and balanced, with appropriate time allocations to each subject. All the subjects of the national curriculum are included, together with religious education, drama, personal, social and health education (timetabled as a “Lifeskills” course) and information and communication technology. Between the ages of fourteen and sixteen this breadth and balance are sustained through a number of subjects that are studied by everyone and a further choice of three from seven option subjects. A serious current omission is the timetabled or otherwise planned provision for information and communication technology. As a result statutory requirements are not fully met. Whilst there are some opportunities to develop skills in this area, no pupil is guaranteed it. The school is aware of this weakness and intends to resolve the matter as the younger pupils’ progress through the school. Sex education is taught effectively within science and the “Lifeskills” programme as also are the dangers of drug abuse. A well-established careers guidance programme is available to all pupils from Year 9, incorporating an effective two-week work experience opportunity and well structured career interviews. The allocation of curriculum time to most subjects for pupils between the age of fourteen and sixteen is adequate to meet their basic curriculum needs.

49 The main weaknesses are in planned provision to address a significant number of pupils’ weak skill levels in language and in number between the ages of eleven and sixteen. In most subjects, effective schemes of work support pupils’ progress over time but this is not always the case in individual lessons and across the ability range within setted groups. The inadequate planning within schemes of work for information and communication technology between the ages of fourteen and sixteen means that pupils make slower progress in knowledge, skills and understanding. In English there is insufficient detailed planning for basic language skills development. This results in inconsistencies of content that make it difficult for pupils to extend their knowledge of language by building confidently on what they already know. How teachers interpret the curriculum and the methods they adopt to bring it alive in their classrooms are critical issues that the school needs to address if its pupils are to make still further progress. Although the school has policies on cross-curricular themes, such as industrial and economic understanding, and European awareness, there are currently no consistent planning procedures to ensure that these areas of the curriculum are adequately developed over time in each subject area. There are no core policies in the still more important areas of literacy and numeracy. There are good curriculum links with primary school in physical education and information and communication technology, which enable pupils to develop a greater understanding of these subjects before entry to secondary school. Links with other subjects are, overall, unsatisfactory. Through strong “Compact” arrangements with the local further education college, the oldest pupils are given good insight into the opportunities for continued education beyond the age of sixteen and further opportunities to clarify their understanding of career pathways.

50 All pupils have appropriate access to the planned curriculum. However, weaknesses in literacy and numeracy sometimes restrict this within the taught curriculum. Curricular provision for pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory overall. They can take part in all lessons, planned events and activities. On most occasions, pupils (particularly those with statements of special educational need) are very effectively supported by non-teaching assistants from the learning support department. Pupils with sensory impairment are able to learn more effectively with the high level of well-prepared support, which they receive. There are no occasions when withdrawal of pupils for additional support lessons results in pupils missing important parts of

the planned curriculum. Class teachers in most subjects provide effective support for pupils who have identified special educational needs. They do this through a variety of strategies and support materials. However, in science, mathematics, music and French, despite increased levels of provision, there are occasions when the absence of support limits their progress in basic number and language skills.

51 Extra-curricular activities enrich the curriculum. These include competitive team games for both boys and girls. There is a very large variety of lunchtime clubs in addition to a smaller number of after-school clubs and activities. In response to recommendations following the last inspection report, the school has done much to expand the opportunities for pupils to be involved in musical activities (such as the choir and wind band), in drama productions and through membership of the art club. There are opportunities for pupils to develop further their foreign language skills and knowledge through regular visits to France for Year 8 pupils; and for pupils in Year 11 opportunities to carry out environmental and geographical investigations through residential experiences in the Lake District. In other subjects of the curriculum the opportunities to widen and deepen knowledge and understanding in these ways are much more limited.

52 Assessment procedures overall are satisfactory. The schools comprehensive assessment policy is implemented with varying degrees of effectiveness within particular subject departments. Except for information technology, procedures are satisfactory in most subjects. They are good in science, history and art. Strengths within assessment arrangements include highly effective systems in science and a very useful tracking system in design and technology that benchmarks attainment against National Curriculum levels. English currently lacks such secure baseline assessments based on National Curriculum levels and there is insufficient attention given to self-assessment in drama. Assessment is used well to inform planning in science and is used satisfactorily for this purpose in most other subjects. Assessment informs planning insufficiently at present in English, information technology and religious education policy.

53 The school has recently introduced half-termly assessments in all departments. These are coordinated by form tutors and used to monitor progress. This enables pupils performance to be compared across all subjects. It identifies good performance and under-achievement where action may need to be taken.

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

54 The school makes satisfactory provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Provision for pupils' moral development is good. The school prospectus expresses a clear belief in, and strong commitment to, traditional values. More than three-quarters of parents agree that the school promotes well its positive values and attitudes. Moral values and clear teaching about right and wrong are good features in many classes, in assemblies and in the day to day life of the school community. The school's implicit moral code supports expectations of a high level of pupil responsibility and respect for property. Pupils feel their bicycles can be left safely within the school grounds. The opportunity taken in assemblies to praise publicly the efforts of pupils is a good feature: they are valued and, in turn, value others. The school makes explicit in its policies the values it upholds and makes equally clear those things, such as bullying and dishonesty, which it rejects. Work on citizenship teaches issues of right and wrong in society.

55 Strengths outweigh weaknesses in the satisfactory provision for pupils' social development. An important strength is the range of opportunities to develop maturity and team spirit through opportunities to contribute to the wider aspects of school life, for example by joining a team,

playing in a band or acting in a theatre production. The school aims to develop positive social attitudes and values and thereby enhance personal and social development. Form tutors teach a well-planned programme of weekly personal social and health education. For example in Year 9 pupils learn effectively about self-esteem and the effects of the way they speak to others. Social relationships are good. Pupils and teachers work well together and show enjoyment in each other's company. The habits of co-operation and support for one another are soundly developed in pupils. However teaching methods do not sufficiently build upon these qualities and use the natural readiness of many pupils to work collaboratively in class. There is a satisfactory range of opportunities offered to pupils beyond the taught curriculum, including sports teams and a range of clubs and activities. There are opportunities for social development through participation by some pupils in overseas residential visits and by all pupils in a whole-school activities week and a number of other visits designed to support the taught curriculum. There is a satisfactory range of opportunities for pupils to take responsibility as prefects and librarians and there is a school council with representation from all classes. There are insufficient opportunities for pupils to develop their wider social skills between the ages of eleven and fourteen.

56 Despite improvements since the last inspection there is still room for further improvement in the provision for pupils' spiritual development. Religious and spiritual awareness are increased through assemblies but there are missed opportunities to widen pupils horizons, excite their imaginations and provide opportunities for reflection within lessons. Pupils' spiritual knowledge is developed satisfactorily in religious education lessons although these place insufficient emphasis on faiths other than Christianity. The "Life Skills" lessons further widen pupils' awareness and some aspects of the science scheme of work can inspire a sense of wonder at the wider world. Other subjects have policy statements on these matters but have given insufficient consideration to how these aspects are to be included in particular sections of their schemes of work. Assemblies play an important part in the spiritual and social life of the school. There is a well-planned programme for collective worship. Spiritual moments are enjoyed in whole-school and year assemblies. Assemblies meet statutory requirements for acts of corporate worship. They give opportunity to pupils for reflection. When reflective music is played this enhances the spiritual experience. Where pupils participate in assemblies the involvement of other pupils is clearly increased. Form-time collective worship is well planned and affords good opportunity for pupil participation in prayer, discussion and contemplation. These opportunities offer a worthwhile contribution to pupils' spiritual experience. School assemblies are non-denominational but broadly Christian in character. Clergy are invited to participate. This does not include representatives of faiths other than Christianity. This again limits pupils' experience.

57 Provision for pupils' cultural development remains incomplete, despite some significant improvements since the last inspection. There are opportunities to develop cultural awareness in some subjects, such as history, geography, art and English, but provision does not develop sufficiently an awareness of other cultures. Pupils need to be made more fully aware of our increasingly pluralistic society if the school is to fulfill the aims of the Education Reform Act [1988]. Pupils are taught to appreciate their own cultural traditions in various lessons, including history and English and through extra-curricular visits to, for example, dramatic productions in London. A European Awareness Policy aims to prepare pupils for opportunities and responsibilities created by the social and economic development of the European Union. Pupils have very few opportunities to come into contact with people from other cultures during the school day. There are some occasions when this awareness is developed, for example in music in Year 8 where pupils study world music, including African music. In Year 7 pupils use a mathematics worksheet on the Gujarati system and in drama pupils experience dances of other cultures. There is some world history including a study of indigenous peoples of North America. In geography studies of other peoples and cultures are well developed. However, currently, there are no arrangements in place to ensure the planned breadth and balance of such

provision nor its progressive development as pupils get older.

58 The school ensures that pupils with special educational needs have full access to all activities, opportunities and events. Pupils take substantial responsibility for their own learning, setting up computer programmes, preparing books and helping staff with day-to-day organisation. Current policies and planning documents do not make clear how the special needs department will contribute to pupils' spiritual development. Social development is fostered by paired and group activities and very positive relationships with staff who provide good role models and who make moral expectations explicit.

58 **Support, guidance and pupils' welfare**

59 The school provides a good standard of overall support, guidance and welfare for its pupils. This makes a positive contribution to pupils' attainment. There have been some further improvements since the last inspection in arrangements to monitor academic progress and in the quality of support given by form tutors. The pastoral deputy provides effective leadership for this aspect of school life.

60 Procedures to monitor pupils academic progress and personal development are good. Regular, planned "effort checks" and the consistent use of student planners encourage pupils who are succeeding and identify those in need of further support. Effective procedures are now in place to assess pupils, on a half-termly basis, in all subjects. Mentoring of pupils is part of each form tutors duties. In addition, pupils in Year 11 are mentored in smaller groups by form tutors across the school. Interim reports and good quality pupils' annual reports provide further monitoring of pupils' progress in subjects and more general personal development. Good work and attitudes are celebrated both in classes and assemblies. This arrangement provides pupils with frequent and public confirmation of what is good in their lives and helps raise self-esteem. The Record of Achievement file gives each pupil good opportunities to define and reflect on their achievements, skills, personal qualities and areas for improvement. For special educational needs pupils, the identification and monitoring arrangements are good, especially for statemented pupils.

61 Procedures to monitor and promote good behaviour and discipline are very good. The behaviour policy has been distilled into three simple school rules, with associated examples of good and unacceptable behaviour clearly defined. Year 7 pupils confirm that full discussion on the rules is an important part of their first weeks in school. Parents are very positive about the clarity of the rules and the consistency with which they are applied. Parents and pupils are constantly reminded of the rules since they are included in the student planners. A clear set of rewards and tiered sanctions is also defined. The main emphasis is on recognising and rewarding good behaviour and most pupils have responded positively. In lessons, most teachers use praise effectively and maintain clear and consistent boundaries between what is acceptable and unacceptable behaviour. Very rare incidents of bullying are dealt with as part of the sanctions system. Twenty-four Year 11 pupils, operating as school prefects or assistants, provide a "reminding" presence about good behaviour outside the classroom. The school prefects further support the school by monitoring and encouraging good behaviour on the school buses.

62 Procedures to monitor and promote attendance are good. Parents are clear on the need to contact school in the event of absence. Form tutors, heads of year and senior management work well as a team to address irregular or unexplained absence patterns. Parents are involved where concerns arise. The Educational Welfare Officer is effectively involved, if the problem persists. Certificates are awarded for full attendance.

- 63 Child protection arrangements are satisfactory. An appropriate policy is in place and regularly reviewed. The arrangements are known to staff. They are implemented under the direction of the headteacher who is the designated staff member. Pupils are made aware of this issue, as part of their personal, social and health education.
- 64 Procedures to promote pupils' well being are good. Pupils confirm that teachers, form tutors and heads of year are approachable if pupils have problems. The atmosphere in school is calm and supportive and this has a positive effect on pupils' learning and well being. The 'Lifeskills' programme raises pupils' self esteem and confidence and thereby contributes to the development of well-rounded individuals. The school has appropriate arrangements for induction to the routines and expectations of the school in Year 7 but curriculum links with the primary schools need to be stronger. Year 11 pupils confirm that careers guidance provides good preparation for work or further education. Pupils' Record of Achievement work is important in supporting careers guidance by providing pupils with ongoing evidence of their strength and weaknesses.
- 65 Procedures to promote pupils' health and safety are satisfactory. The health and safety policy effectively defines responsibilities and arrangements in school. In practical lessons, such as physical education, the wearing of appropriate footwear and the removal of jewellery is stressed to pupils. Year 7 pupils confirm that laboratory safety rules form a key part of early lessons, in science and technology. The uneven surface on the netball court is potentially hazardous. The local authority's annual inspection provides the school with a valued external view on health and safety. Fire alarm testing, evacuation drills and the inspection of portable electrical equipment are routinely carried out. The practical arrangements, including first aid, to deal with any incidents or accidents are well established and appropriate.

Partnership with parents and the community

- 66 The partnership with parents and the wider community makes a good contribution to the quality of education provided and the standards achieved. The school maintains very good links with parents and provides them with an invariably good degree of information so that they can become as fully involved as they wish in the learning of their sons and daughters and the wider life of the school. Since the previous inspection, provision has improved, particularly in the quality of pupils' annual reports and the links with schools and colleges. The quality of information for parents of special needs pupils is good. They are informed at an early stage and are invited to contribute to reviews.
- 67 The overall quality of information provided for parents is good. Annual reports to parents include clear information concerning progress and targets. The brief interim reports, issued prior to the consultation evenings, are helpful to parents. Attractive, termly newsletters, which include pupils contributions, keep parents and the local community well informed about school life. An excellent glossy school brochure and informative school prospectus give parents an accurate impression of the schools expectations and character.
- 68 Overall there is a good level of parental involvement in the work of the school and in pupils learning. Parents find it easy to approach the school. All parent governor positions are filled, sometimes after elections. An active parent, teacher and friends' association regularly holds a range of fundraising and social events and a number of parents help with transport for sports and other events.
- 69 Links with the local Christian community are good. Vicars and ministers visit the school regularly to take part in assemblies. This occurred on Friday during the inspection. They also contribute within religious education lessons. Good links are also fostered through a range of fund-raising initiatives for charity. Links with the local business community are less well developed and schemes of work do not indicate how this important resource might be used to widen understanding of how what is learned in school can be applied and further developed in the workplace. There are, however, occasions within the "Life Skills" programme when the local police contribute to lessons on such issues as drugs and drink driving.

69 THE MANAGEMENT AND EFFICIENCY OF THE SCHOOL

69 Leadership and management

- 70 The overall quality of leadership and management within the school is good. The headteacher provides good leadership. There is a strong commitment, shared by governors, senior and middle managers, and evident in many lessons and school activities, to raise standards further across the school. To this end, since his appointment in January 1998, the headteacher has worked closely with the governors to set challenging and realistic targets within the school development plan. He has managed most successfully the smooth organisational change as the school has continued to grow in size. The governing body, as part of its role to support the further raising of standards, has been particularly attentive to the professional development of heads of department. It supports financially six teachers who are studying for relevant higher degrees. Through its various committees and twice termly full meetings, the governing body maintains a supportive, critical eye on the current work of the school to further raise standards. It has set targets for both attendance and attainment. The leadership and management of the school are thus well placed to take it forward further and provide the school with good capacity

for still further improvement.

- 71 The current senior management team has been in place for only one year. It has quickly established very effective teamwork at an operational level and provides firm leadership in matters of whole-school policy. The headteacher and his deputies are kept very busy indeed with immediate issues. Curriculum and pastoral leadership are delegated to the deputies. One deputy teaches for over half of the week and the other has a similarly large number of day-to-day responsibilities. Whilst these arrangements are temporary they do limit the time available for shared longer term, strategic planning and evaluation. A more immediate benefit is that both deputies regularly gather direct evidence of current standards in classrooms. By teaching classes across subjects when teachers are absent, the headteacher is also able to contribute to this monitoring of standards. The pastoral deputy fulfills a similar role in addition to her regular teaching commitment. Such monitoring is a developing strength of the school.
- 72 Monitoring procedures are not yet leading to a full evaluation of policy decisions, for example to alter pupil-grouping arrangements in some subjects or introduce curriculum changes. The school development plan is helping the school to fulfill its aims, promote its declared values and implement its comprehensive set of policies. The plan is a satisfactory tool in helping the school to define its priorities and to look ahead to where it wants to be in the longer term. However, it provides insufficiently clear indicators of where it intends to reach each year. The annual measurement of progress towards the fulfillment of its objectives is thus imprecise. The absence of a policy and guidance to support all pupils' language development are a significant omission from the comprehensive range of policies. As a result too many pupils' progress is slower in those subjects which depend heavily on the printed or written word.
- 73 Subject leadership is a developing strength of the school. Teaching is monitored through lesson observation and by looking at pupils' work. The degree to which this results in improved practice is evaluated insufficiently. Nearly all heads of department manage their curriculum areas well. Syllabus developments are carefully considered, for example, in history where the proposed change to a more skills-based syllabus is designed to help pupils to attain higher standards. Good leadership leading to improved results is frequently evident in some of the smaller departments, for example in art and music. The good quality of subject management was also evidenced during the inspection by the smooth operation of lessons in the absence of two heads of department. Occasionally, for example in religious education, subject expertise is more limited and results in relatively slower development. The management of the provision for pupils who have special educational needs is good, as are the procedures to identify their needs.
- 74 The management of behaviour across the school is very good. Well led by the pastoral deputy headteacher, heads of year [who often fulfill the role of head of department as well] successfully achieve a positive, purposeful ethos and manage their year groups well. However, the demands made upon them are very great and, occasionally, conflicting demands are made upon their time. For example, when teaching a class, they can occasionally be required to attend to pastoral and disciplinary matters elsewhere.
- 75 Delegation has improved since the last inspection, although some middle managers would welcome, and benefit from, opportunities to exercise still more initiative in decision making about operational, as distinct from policy matters. Led by the curriculum deputy, the formal monitoring of teaching is a developing managerial strength of the school. The overall contribution of heads of department to this work is frequently good. It is particularly effective in design and technology, where it has resulted in very significant improvements in 1999 GCSE results in resistant materials, and in science where an analysis of the 1999 GCSE results identified that the key factors contributing to the disappointing results related not to teaching

but to the personal circumstances of several pupils. There have been missed management opportunities to evaluate attainment in more detail by a thorough analysis of standard national test scripts completed by pupils in May 1999. The management emphasis in testing is currently upon predicting future pupil attainment. Except within the special educational needs department, it focuses insufficiently upon an assessment of current learning strengths and weaknesses in order to inform curriculum planning, particularly prior to pupils' entry to the school.

- 76 Despite significant improvements in the provision for information and communication technology for all pupils between the ages of eleven and fourteen, the school does not fully meet statutory requirements for such provision between the ages of fourteen and sixteen. Within its helpful and informative annual report, governors are not currently meeting the statutory requirement to report on progress since the last inspection and to indicate arrangements for the admission of disabled pupils. It has identified the need to respond promptly and will include them in the forthcoming report, later this term. The governing body also needs to adopt a written policy for staff discipline, including rules and grievance procedures.
- 77 The good ethos of the school, so evident in the positive attitudes of the pupils and the strong commitment of the staff, stems from, and is frequently supported by, the effectively shared good leadership and management of the school.

77 **Staffing, accommodation and learning resources**

Staffing

- 78 There are sufficient staff to meet the pastoral and curriculum needs of the school as well as to give support to the many other activities which take place. There is a good match between the qualifications of staff and the subjects they teach, with the exception of religious education where some of those who teach are not trained to do so. Growth in pupil numbers has resulted in a significant proportion of teachers joining the school in the past two years. This has enabled the school to establish a balance of experience throughout the staff, half of whom have fifteen or more years' experience and a third who have four or less years' experience. The number of hours worked by administrative staff is above the national average; they are well deployed to provide good quality support. The number of hours provided to support pupils with special educational needs is well above the national average and reflects the proportion of pupils on the special needs register. Learning support assistants provide effective support for pupils with special educational needs. However, despite this much increased level of provision since the last inspection, pupils are sometimes not fully supported as the subject teacher lacks the necessary level of expertise or time to make the appropriate provision.
- 79 Procedures for staff appraisal are currently unsatisfactory but are to be improved shortly. Following whole-school in-service training last year, classroom observation has been introduced. This features regular monitoring, evaluation and reporting by middle and senior managers.
- 80 Overall arrangements for professional development are satisfactory. Operational procedures are clear and understood by all. Arrangements for the induction of newly qualified teachers and new teachers joining the school are satisfactory. The school has a clear induction policy, clear job descriptions and a well-defined line management structure. The relationship between the school development plan and strategic staff development is weak, as also is the link between staff development and appraisal. A significant strength is the governors' recognition through

financial support of those teachers who wish to study for a higher degree. This will serve to further increase subject expertise and contribute to raising standards in the longer term.

80 **Learning Resources**

81 The level of resource provision to meet the needs of the curriculum generally is good and has kept pace with the needs imposed by increased pupil numbers. There is a significant increase in the number of computers since the last inspection and there is now a very high level of provision. The level of provision in science, music, mathematics, physical education, art and drama is good. In other subjects the level of material resources is adequate to meet the needs of the curriculum. Books are up-to-date and in good condition. There has been re-stocking to meet changed curriculum needs, for example in mathematics.

82 Provision of cookers restricts the flexibility of work in technology but elsewhere equipment is satisfactory or good. Provision specifically to meet the needs of lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs when additional adult support is not provided remains unsatisfactory. Printed resources are insufficiently modified to meet the wide range of learning needs in some subjects. In science, although provision is generally good, computer software is needed to support simulation modelling, data logging activities and to support pupils with special educational needs. In history and religious education there is a shortage of texts suitable for lower attaining pupils and in religious education there are not enough artefacts.

83 The library provision, which was mentioned as a weakness at the last inspection, though improved, remains inadequate to meet the needs of the curriculum. There are still insufficient fiction books to support a planned, progressively more challenging reading programme. The library does give good support to the curriculum in art where there is an impressive collection of historical and contemporary material, which is well used. Deficiencies in textbooks for French and geography have been remedied.

83 **Accommodation**

84 The school's buildings and grounds are well maintained and provide a very pleasant environment. Overall the accommodation is satisfactory but the increase in the number of pupils in recent years has presented some difficulties that have been or are being addressed by the school. All subjects now have discrete areas and since the last inspection an additional science laboratory and an additional classroom have been provided. There are plans to build two more classrooms. For the most part the rooms are adequate in size for the subjects being taught although in design technology the food area is too small for some groups and the shape of one English room makes it difficult to develop a wide range of teaching methods, including group work. Two of the science laboratories lack sufficient gas and electricity points resulting in overcrowding in parts of the rooms. This weakness is currently being addressed. Facilities for physical education are also satisfactory but the size of the gymnasium and the paucity of the provision for football, cricket and netball place constraints on further enrichment of the physical education curriculum.

84 **The efficiency of the school**

85 The overall quality of financial planning is satisfactory. It has many strong features and some current weaknesses. These need to be seen in the context of a small, expanding and improving school. The finance committee of the governing body meets regularly and ensures that the full membership is kept informed of current developments. It defines its priorities clearly and has

been particularly alert to the financial implications of increasing costs related to issues of remuneration. The governing body has worked very closely with the headteacher in these matters. The current, above average contingency fund includes committed expenditure for further increases in accommodation and facilities over the next four years and anticipates additional staffing costs, including additional responsibilities for developing links with the community. There are two current, important weaknesses. Except in the area of accommodation improvements, financial planning is insufficiently linked to school development plan objectives. This makes it difficult for the governors and senior managers to achieve a rigorous evaluation of their planning priorities and expenditure decisions, particularly where this has staffing implications, for instance in current considerations concerning the curriculum provision for pupils between the ages of fourteen and sixteen.

- 86 The school has profiles of projected income for the next three years but is not currently using this management information to cost explicitly its longer-term objectives or to model different, costed planning models. The picture is similar at subject department level where there is no evidence of funding being calculated in line with costed objectives within the subject development plans. Allocations within the current budget to subject departments are generally appropriate to meet current needs although the budgets for English and for the library are relatively low this year, given the very real need to continue to address weaknesses in pupils' language development and the continuing unsatisfactory level of provision within the library. The specific grants for staff development and special educational needs are identified clearly in the overall budget but need to be identified more clearly in the costing of the school development plan objectives.
- 87 The overall use of teaching and support staff is good. It has many strengths and a few weaknesses. Pupils are nearly always taught by specialist teachers. Several teachers teach for a minority of their time in a second or third subject. This is not affecting standards but can result in inefficiencies in departmental communication. Classroom support assistants are very well deployed and are highly effective. However, despite their above average number, demand still outweighs provision. The expenditure on teaching staff is lower than the national average but expenditure on support staff is very much higher and reflects the school's aim to provide well for its lower attaining pupils and those who have special educational needs. As is often the case in small secondary schools there is a need for several teachers to fulfill more than one management role and to teach more than one subject. Whilst the joint roles of head of subject and head of year involve a very efficient deployment of staff time there is insufficient time to fulfill the pastoral role and occasionally this results in interruptions in the teaching of lessons. Good use is made of learning resources and accommodation. The headteacher, in close consultation with his governors, has given careful attention to rationalising and extending the existing accommodation and to developing an above average level of facilities for information and communication technology. The ratio of books and computers to pupils is high. These are efficiently used, particularly for pupils in their first three years at the school.
- 88 The quality of financial controls and school administration is very good. The most recent auditor's report identified a small number of procedural omissions, which the school addressed very promptly. Inventories are computerised and up-to-date and the contents of every teaching area are audited annually. The bursar regularly provides the headteacher with excellent financial management information to support his monitoring of expenditure.
- 89 Given the below average attainment of its pupils when they enter the school and the broadly average unit costs; the above average levels of attainment in comparison to similar schools in the 1998 statutory national tests at the age of fourteen; the above average attainment at GCSE in 1998 in comparison with similar schools, and the very good behaviour, good attitudes and overall good teaching, the Thomas Cowley High School gives good value for money.

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

89 **ENGLISH, MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCE**

89 **English**

90 The literacy skills of the majority of pupils when they enter the school at the age of eleven are below the national expectation. The gap between pupils' attainment and the picture nationally is narrower at the age of fourteen than it is at the age of sixteen. This indicates that, over the past two years, the school has made progress towards its aim of raising attainment.

91 The 1999 statutory national test results are above the national average. 77 per cent of pupils attained level 5 or better, of whom 40 per cent achieved level 6 or better. Sixty-four per cent of pupils achieved this standard nationally. The teacher assessments show that 59 per cent of pupils attained level 5 or better. The test results are well above average for similar schools. Work seen during the inspection did not reflect these test results and was closer to the teachers' own assessments of their pupils' attainment. The 1999 results were much higher than those in 1998. Over the period 1996- 1999, the proportion of pupils attaining level 5 or above has fluctuated: sometimes below the national average, sometimes above it and overall close to it. This year the proportion of pupils attaining Level 6 has risen. Over the past three years girls have performed better than boys.

92 Attainment at grades A*- C in English at GCSE in 1998 [32 per cent] was below both the national average for all schools nationally [53 per cent] and below the average for all modern school [42 per cent]. In the 1999 GCSE examination, the proportion of pupils attaining A* to C grades [31 per cent] was similar and all pupils entered gained a grade in the range A*- G. There has been a slight decline in standards over the last three years. Overall, approximately one third of pupils has attained grades A*- C over the last three years whereas the average for modern schools is 40 per cent. Attainment across the full range of grades A*- G has been broadly in line with the national average for all schools for the last three years. It dipped slightly in 1997. In the 1998 GCSE English Literature examination the percentage of pupils gaining grades A*- C was very low indeed [13 per cent] compared with an average nationally of 58 per cent and an average for similar schools of 41 per cent. Results improved in 1999 with 41 per cent of pupils gaining a grade in the range A*- C and 97 per cent doing so in the range A*- G. The results, however, remain below the average for all modern schools nationally and well below the national average. In both English and English Literature there is a recurring pattern of better performance by girls.

93 Pupils' work in lessons between the ages of eleven and fourteen, and that which they have completed prior to the inspection, generally confirms that they are in line to attain the standards indicated in recent national tests, with the exception of the 1999 test results. However, by the age of fourteen there is less evidence of attainment beyond the level of national expectation [level 5]. By the age of sixteen, the majority of pupils' attainment in class is below the national expectation. The attainment of higher-attaining pupils in all years is lower than it might be because teaching materials address insufficiently their particular needs. By the age of fourteen the attainment of most pupils with special educational needs is in line with their ability but at the age of sixteen it is not. The standards of higher-attaining pupils, in both key stages, are often adversely affected by the lack of sufficiently well differentiated tasks, designed to extend their learning.

94 Between the ages of eleven and fourteen, many pupils' speaking and listening skills are in line

with the national expectation. Their listening skills are good. They respond clearly in discussion and use standard English. Beyond the age of fourteen and by the age of sixteen, speaking and listening skills of the majority of pupils are below national expectations. There is a reluctance amongst all but the highest attaining pupils to venture more than a short response to questions. Few pupils respond confidently or are able to organise their ideas to speak fluently. Planning and methodology within teaching, including the use of group work and whole class discussion, addresses this issue insufficiently. The need to develop speaking and listening skills in more formal settings, identified at the time of the last inspection, has been insufficiently addressed.

- 95 By the age of fourteen, many pupils' reading skills are generally in line with national expectations. Higher attaining pupils and lower attaining pupils, many of whom have special educational needs, make good progress. Pupils within the middle ability range make less progress. Current provision to improve progress in reading for these pupils is less effective. The progress of pupils beyond the age of fourteen is slower than between the ages of eleven and fourteen. As a result, standards in reading for the majority fall. A significant contributory factor is the lack of resources. The school library stock is insufficient for the department to effectively manage a whole-school reading programme, which ensures that all pupils read at an appropriate level.
- 96 The previous inspection report stated that substantial numbers of pupils found difficulties with writing, but made good progress. Traces of these earlier weaknesses in developing basic writing skills, and previous inconsistencies in teaching methods, can be seen currently in attainment levels in writing which are well below national expectations at the ages of fifteen and sixteen. The recent introduction of a structured developmental programme, regularly taught to all pupils, has yet to affect the quality of writing throughout the school. A current strength across the school is the frequently good quality of presentation across the ability range. The handwriting of most pupils is fluent and legible.
- 97 Overall literacy and oracy levels are thus below the national expectation in each year group. The school has not formulated a whole-school literacy policy and literacy is not promoted effectively or consistently throughout the school. However, there are some good features upon which the school needs to build. There are some planned opportunities for pupils to undertake basic research in most subjects. Most departments promote the use of information technology. These facilities support research and the development of word processing skills. However, in many subject areas, poor writing skills affect attainment and reduce the degree of progress. For example, in geography, there are insufficient opportunities for writing at length, there is too much copying of text and the range of written tasks is too narrow. There is insufficient opportunity for class discussion in order to consolidate, develop and apply pupils' geographical knowledge and understanding. Sometimes the style and vocabulary of printed resources are beyond the pupils' understanding and there are insufficient opportunities to discuss these misunderstandings and uncertainties. In design and technology, pupils' range of expression is limited. In their writing, many pupils make spelling mistakes that indicate insufficient concentration on the written word. Only a minority of pupils use appropriate technical language. The literacy strategy in the music department is more effective. In all lessons, pupils read and understand technical vocabulary. Key words are displayed in the classroom and regularly learned for homework. There is a good range of written tasks in history and planned opportunities for extended speech, for example making a presentation about events leading up to the second world war. There are insufficient opportunities to develop research skills. Opportunities for discussion and debate are more restricted in religious education. The range of written tasks is limited and sometimes lacks challenge, evident, for example, in the requirement that older pupils write only half a page on the topic of euthanasia.

- 98 Most pupils make satisfactory progress despite these weaknesses in teaching methods. Their good behaviour and positive attitude to work are a strong feature, regularly contributing to their progress. Pupils make particularly good progress in Years 7 and 8. Progress is slower after the age of fourteen and is, overall, unsatisfactory. Many pupils in Years 7 and 8 are making good progress in the development of basic skills. They can apply these skills in their continuous writing. Timetabled support by the Learning Support Department, both in lessons and through group work, helps pupils who have special educational needs to make good progress. Previous weaknesses in curriculum provision to develop basic skills mean that most pupils beyond the age of fourteen still have insufficient mastery of the written word to achieve well in public examinations. There is less additional support beyond the age of fourteen for pupils who have special educational needs and insufficient teacher expertise to address these pupils needs when they are unsupported. Sometimes teaching methods in GCSE classes do not motivate pupils because the work is not matched to their level of need, knowledge or understanding. There are, however, examples of good practice, where the department has developed units of work, which complement the schemes of work, but, overall, curriculum planning to support progress has some weaknesses. This has contributed to the fluctuating pattern of national test results at the age of fourteen and standards that are below the average for modern schools nationally in GCSE English examinations over the past three years.
- 99 As at the time of the last inspection, good behaviour and positive attitudes help pupils of all ages to make progress. The emphasis on individual research and group activities in many lessons increases pupils' self-motivation. They are keen and enthusiastic and there is much enjoyment of English lessons. Where pupils are very dependent on their teachers, they show less enthusiasm and cannot concentrate throughout the lesson. This occurs more in lessons for pupils between the ages of fourteen and sixteen.
- 100 The quality of teaching is satisfactory in both key stages. There are more strengths than weaknesses. In lessons for pupils between the ages of eleven and fourteen, there is a significant proportion of good teaching. The previous report identified the need for more resources to encourage independent learning, more challenge for the higher attaining pupils, improved library resources and information technology facilities, well-structured lessons in the basic skills, and varied and appropriate reading and writing strategies as well as further opportunities for cultural development. Since the appointment of the new head of department some of these issues have started to be addressed but there has been insufficient time yet for this to have an impact on standards in lessons. There are now more opportunities to undertake research and increasingly good use is being made of information and communication technology to promote them and to develop word processing skills. However, resources for the teaching of reading are still inadequate. Stock levels of fiction have not increased in line with the increased numbers of pupils at the school. The range of fiction within the library is insufficient to ensure that pupils can follow a reading programme at an appropriate level, matched to their interests and reading ability.
- 101 Specialist subject knowledge is good. Other strengths include the management of pupils' behaviour in class based on positive relationships and the good use of time and resources in lessons. Homework is set regularly and is well linked to classwork. In many lessons, particularly those with higher attaining pupils, teachers ensure that pupils are constantly challenged and expectations are high. There have been improvements in the planning of the curriculum. The introduction of the new scheme of work and the use of teaching units linked to it are starting to promote a greater degree of consistency in the teaching. There are strong links between English and drama, which are well used to increase understanding of literacy texts. Opportunities within both subjects for extra-curricular activities are good and promote a widening and deepening interest in the subjects and the study of literature makes a sound contribution to pupils' spiritual and cultural development. There remain some weaknesses in

the mismatch between the chosen teaching method, the organisation of the activities and the abilities of the pupils. Sometimes this involves presenting pupils with materials that they do not fully understand; on other occasions they are given insufficient opportunity to use initiative and work unaided. Marking remains unsatisfactory. It is completed regularly and consistently in line with school policy but there is limited guidance within it to indicate how pupils might make progress, address current weaknesses or build further on their strengths. This restricts the progress that pupils make. The department has worked hard to produce an effective assessment system but weaknesses remain. The pilot system introduced last year provides a starting point. However, pupils' attainment and progress is not rigorously judged against the National Curriculum level descriptors; assessment is still too general to enable specific targets to be set for individuals or groups or to inform teachers' planning. These weaknesses restrict the progress pupils make.

101 **Mathematics**

102 Results in the 1999 National Curriculum tests at the age of fourteen were better in 1999 than in the previous year. Sixty-four per cent of pupils attained the national expectation or better, of whom 31 per cent attained above the national expectation. These results were broadly in line with the national average and above average for modern schools. Girls attained higher standards than boys. GCSE results in 1998 for A*- C grades are below the national average of all schools but in line with the average for modern schools. Results for A*- G grades are broadly in line with national averages. Boys' and girls' results do not differ significantly. There has been a steady rise in the proportion of pupils obtaining A*- C grades over several years and this continued in 1999 when a record number of pupils attained these grades. There was a small decline in the proportion of pupils gaining A*- G grades in 1999 due partly to the absence of some pupils from the examination.

103 Pupils' work in lessons is below the national expectation at the age of fourteen and again at the age of sixteen. By the age of fourteen, almost all pupils have some basic number skills. Lower attaining pupils can add and subtract and solve simple problems, although many are unsure of their tables. They have a basic knowledge of measurement and shape and understand the concept of symmetry. Average and higher attaining pupils can draw and interpret graphs and bar charts and use decimals, fractions and percentages. They evaluate areas and volumes of regular plane and solid shapes and collect and evaluate data. By the age of sixteen, many pupils have well-developed investigational skills. They formulate appropriate questions and investigate them logically. Higher attainers generalise their results and explain their reasoning. They use algebraic methods to solve equations and have well-developed data handling skills. They reach and occasionally exceed the standard expected. Most other pupils have secure number skills and use decimals and fractions appropriately. Some lower attaining pupils are well below the standard expected. They are not yet proficient or confident in numeracy skills. This limits their progress in some other subjects because they cannot apply this knowledge and understanding.

104 Pupils between the ages of eleven and fourteen made good progress in about one-half of their lessons. At other times their progress was never less than satisfactory. Between the ages of fourteen and sixteen, progress is at least satisfactory and sometimes very good. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in lessons when they are given support. In other lessons they sometimes have to wait too long for the help they need and their progress is reduced. Higher attainers make best progress when activities are challenging and opportunities are provided for them to move on to new work. Progress is reduced when they spend too long on repetitive activities, which they have already learnt. There is no difference in the overall progress between boys and girls.

105 Pupils behave well in lessons. They take pride in their work, which they present well. They are attentive to explanations and ask questions in order to improve. Concentration levels are generally high, although they are not always sustained, particularly towards the end of some lessons. Higher attainers often work independently and persevere well with difficult problems. Other pupils collaborate and help each other and this enhances their progress.

106 The quality of teaching is at least satisfactory in all lessons. It is often good in Years 7,8 and 9 and occasionally very good in Years 10 and 11. Teachers know their subject well. In the better lessons, good planning and clear objectives help pupils to make progress. For example, in one year 10 lesson a brief revision of circle circumference and area followed by well chosen oral questions enabled pupils to find the length of arcs and the area of sectors. In other lessons good use of resources assists pupils' understanding. A good example of this occurred in a Year 9 lesson where pupils of lower attainment were finding lines of reflective symmetry. They were encouraged to fold the paper in their own way and hence discover the position of the lines and appreciate the concepts involved. Most teachers have good class management skills and control their pupils effectively. They make good use of support teachers to assist the progress of lower attaining pupils. Occasionally, when support is unavailable, they are overwhelmed by the number of pupils seeking help. Higher attaining pupils are challenged effectively in the majority of lessons. Extension activities and well-selected examples enable them to advance their learning. In other lessons they spend too long practising previously learnt work and this limits their progress. Good day-to-day assessment assists pupils to improve and informs teaching. Homework is set regularly to consolidate and extend the work covered in class.

107 The department is well led. There is active monitoring of teaching and curriculum development. Relationships are good and all staff are committed to raising standards. There is a positive ethos for learning which supports the school's aims. The curriculum is broad and reasonably well balanced, although there is a heavy emphasis on number work particularly for the lower attainers. It provides well for pupils with special educational needs. There are sufficient good quality textbooks and resources for all lessons and for pupils to take home. There are good computer facilities within the department, which are readily available for lessons.

107 **Science**

108 Attainment in the 1999 statutory national tests at the age of fourteen was slightly above the national average and a further improvement on the previous year. Sixty per cent of pupils reached the national expectation or above, of whom 20 per cent attained above the level of expectation. Boys attained slightly higher than girls. When compared with the attainment of pupils from similar schools, the attainment of both boys and girls was well above the national average. When comparing the average attainment of pupils over a three-year period with the national average, the attainment of pupils in science has been just above the national average. In the 1998 GCSE examinations the attainment of pupils at the age of sixteen was broadly in line with the national average when compared with all secondary schools, but when compared other modern schools the performance was significantly better. The attainment of boys was higher than that of girls. Over the three-year period 1996 to 1998 the average attainment of pupils in science has been slightly better than the national pattern of averages.

109 Pupils' work in lessons shows that attainment is in line with the nationally expected level. By the age of fourteen pupils in a Year 9 class discussion could relate particle motion to the size of forces acting on them in solids, liquids and gases. In another lesson, in which Year 9 pupils were studying biological variation in humans, they could apply their knowledge by using the

term's "inherited" and "environmental" characteristics correctly in solving written problems. At the beginning of Year 7, pupils can carry out simple experiments involving the heating of liquids in order to observe and record temperature over time, and can record their results successfully using both graphical and tabular representation. By the age of sixteen, pupils can successfully apply the conditions required for a "fair" test. In a top set Year 11 class, a majority of pupils could explain why they needed to keep the volume and concentrations of solutions constant when they were investigating the effects of temperature on the reaction between sodium thiosulphate and dilute sulphuric acid. They could also make sensible predictions about the possible effect of raising temperature on speed of reaction before completing their investigation. In another Year 10 class, pupils were studying the concept of 'power' as an extension of prior work on force and energy. Many could identify the application of power as a concept in different settings and could successfully use the equation connecting power, work and time in order to solve numerical problems. Across the age range there are occasions when pupils find difficulty using scientific words accurately during whole class discussions. When using text books some lower attaining pupils (particularly in Years 10 and 11) find reading and understanding the text difficult, other than at a superficial level. Although pupils can handle number and graphical representations for simple applications effectively, there are occasions when some calculations are beyond them. In a Year 9 (second set) class, many pupils found considerable difficulties understanding how multiplication could lead to an estimate of dilution as they diluted the concentration of a purple solution (potassium permanganate) until the colour disappeared. In another mixed ability (Year 7) class, many lower attaining pupils were unsure how to use graph paper to draw appropriate scales in order to plot the results of their experiment involving the heating of water.

- 110 Between the ages of eleven and fourteen, a majority of pupils make good progress in their lessons and over time. They make good gains in their knowledge and skills of carrying out investigations and show a good understanding of the main characteristics of animals and plants, and of materials and forces. Pupils with special educational needs make similar progress on most occasions. However there are occasions when pupils struggle and make only satisfactory or less progress when they require greater support with their understanding of language or mathematical application. Between the ages of fourteen and sixteen, pupils' progress is mainly satisfactory across all attainment targets. They are making sound gains in their application of practical and investigation techniques, as also in their chemical understanding and in their understanding of forces, work and power. Although higher attaining pupils often make good progress, lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs occasionally make unsatisfactory progress because of insufficient support with language or numeracy difficulties. There is insufficient provision of suitably modified, printed materials to support their progress in scientific knowledge and understanding.
- 111 Pupils of different ages regularly show enjoyment of their science lessons, particularly when they are using practical apparatus in the laboratory. When working on investigations pupils invariably work co-operatively, demarcate work well as a team, and treat equipment and resources with care and respect. They show a generally good awareness of safety and cleanliness. Most pupils show pride in their work by presenting it neatly and carefully. Homework is normally completed on time and pupils show an interest during lessons by asking questions in a confident manner.
- 112 Teaching is good overall. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen. It ranges from satisfactory to good across the age range but there was a significantly smaller proportion of good teaching seen in lessons for pupils between the ages of fourteen and sixteen. All teachers manage their teaching groups well and manage resources effectively. They have high expectations about behaviour. This results in good attitudes and responses from the majority of pupils. Books are conscientiously and regularly marked and helpful and supportive comments often provided.

Teachers generally show a good knowledge and understanding of their subject, which is used to enliven introductory and plenary sessions of lessons. In a good Year 7 lesson involving the heating of water the teacher had planned the lesson with clear aims, activities and resources. He gave a clear introduction to the topic, emphasising key words on the board, and used good questioning technique to make pupils think more deeply about what they had seen and done. By setting a variety of activities and maintaining a good pace to the lesson the interest of pupils was maintained and they made good progress. In a number of lessons, well-briefed support assistants give valuable and effective assistance to statemented pupils with severe sensory impairment. In a small number of GCSE lessons, when no additional classroom support is available, teachers do not provide enough appropriate learning support materials or a sufficient range of teaching strategies to help lower attaining pupils to overcome language (and sometimes numeracy) difficulties. In a lower attaining Year 11 class, pupils were introduced to adaptation in plants after learning about photosynthesis. Many pupils showed reluctance to work independently and a number of pupils struggled to make sense of both the leaf cell diagram and associated vocabulary in the textbook, even though they behaved well and remained on task for most of the lesson. Insufficient attention was given to matching work closely to different pupils' levels of ability. There were no arrangements to modify text materials to aid pupils' understanding. As a result, their potential progress was reduced. In another Year 11 class, pupils were investigating the effectiveness of various heat insulators using an electronic temperature probe. The teacher had no record of the individual education plan targets of the pupils with special educational needs and as a result was not able to support them effectively.

113 The curriculum is broad and balanced. However, insufficient materials are currently provided to motivate and support those pupils with special educational needs who are not receiving additional non-teaching assistance. Since the last inspection insufficient progress has been made in providing additional materials for pupils of differing abilities. Insufficient planned opportunities currently exist to use information and communication technology. The introduction of individual pupil records based on well co-ordinated assessments is providing valuable diagnostic information for future planning across all years. The head of department, who is also a year tutor, provides good leadership for his colleagues, who in turn provide valuable support in undertaking a range of additional departmental tasks. Recent improvements to the flooring and furnishings of laboratories have improved the teaching environment. However, in two of the smaller laboratories there are occasions when large numbers of larger pupils involved in heating materials present potential dangers because the services are restricted to wall-side benches.

113 **OTHER SUBJECTS OR COURSES**

113 **Art**

114 Since its last inspection, the department has made very good progress in addressing those areas, which needed action. It has undergone a renaissance in the past two years, benefiting from very experienced and effective management. The use of computer aided art as part of the taught courses has significantly increased, and the multimedia machines, which are housed in the art room, have helped to enrich and extend the variety of work on offer. Standards of attainment are now far more consistent. Many pupils have knowledge of the work of other artists and a good understanding of subject specific vocabulary. The department is now well resourced.

115 In the past two years, G.C.S.E. results for grades A*- C have shown a very significant improvement. In the latest reporting year [1998] 41 per cent of pupils gained grades A* - C. This was below both the national average and the average for modern schools but marked a very significant improvement on the previous year. This improvement has continued and in the

1999 examinations 63 per cent of pupils attained grades A*- C. These standards are just above the most recent national average for all schools and above the average for modern schools. There was also an increase in the percentage of pupils attaining grades A*- G, from 97 per cent in 1998 to 100 per cent in 1999.

- 116 Whilst there is no evidence that the school has identified levels of attainment in art on entry, more than eight out of ten pupils have reached or exceeded the national expectation by the age of fourteen. This is above the national average. Many pupils demonstrate technical and expressive skills in a variety of media. The observational exercise on sections of pepper, with its increasing analytical challenge and range of colour experimentation, was a good example of this in Year 9.
- 117 Attainment in class by the age of sixteen is good and in some instances very good. Many pupils have developed competent drawing and painting skills as well as confidence in mixed media work. The good range of creative methods of experimentation helps to raise standards. The work on architecture in Year 11, based on observational information but leading into abstraction, block prints, batik, montage and computer aided work, is a good example. There are many who speak confidently and enthusiastically about the development of their work and are clear on how well their artistic skills, knowledge and understanding have progressed. The encouragement of independent learning and original response, the regular use of homework to extend or prepare coursework, the encouragement of a brisk working pace in class, and the end of lesson review of work are strengths that contribute to high attainment and good progress. In relation to G.C.S.E. achievements in other subjects this year, attainment in art has shown the most significant improvement in the school.
- 118 Progress for the majority between the ages of eleven and fourteen is good. There is evidence of progress in drawing, painting and the use of homework to support and extend classwork in Year 7. Pupils in Year 8 make progress in the use of a wider range of media, and in Year 9 pupils further extend their competence in the use of experimental drawing skills and tonal work with colour.
- 119 Progress between the age of fourteen and sixteen is even greater. It is good and in some instances very good. Pupils who choose to study art at the age of fourteen make progress in the range of experimentation and the pursuit of originality based on more thorough research and increased competence in working with two- and three-dimensional materials and mixed media. The businesslike approach to work, the application of deadlines and the use of diagnostic assessment contribute to their progress. Pupils with special educational needs are well integrated and, for the majority, their rate and degree of progress is not dissimilar to others of their age. They receive good teacher support in class, and are able to make progress in art, where this is not dependent on literacy skills. The encouragement of independent learning, the regular use of homework and assessment, the pace of work expected in class, in addition to the end of class review of work are further strengths that contribute to attainment and progress.
- 120 Attitudes to work are generally positive, often enthusiastic. Pupils arrive promptly and settle quickly to work. They are attentive to teaching points, work sensibly together and respect the work and views of others. Many demonstrate perseverance, a capacity for independent learning and the ability to concentrate. Artistic confidence and originality of outcome grow as the result of enthusiasm for the subject engendered by good teaching. Pupils behave well in class and use equipment responsibly.
- 121 The teaching of pupils between the ages of eleven and fourteen is good; between the ages of fourteen and sixteen it is often very good. A strong emphasis on drawing and observational

skills begins in Year 7, and forms the basis of an increasingly challenging range of tasks. The most effective teaching occurred when the teacher's knowledge and enthusiasm for the subject were linked with clear lesson objectives, which made expectations specific. The quality of relationships with pupils encouraged a positive and co-operative approach to work. There was a brisk working pace and the use of class time was very effectively managed to incorporate a thorough explanation of homework requirements and a concluding review of work that involved all pupils. Despite these many strengths, there is an absence of planned teaching opportunities to challenge the more talented and most able pupils.

122 Planning is good in all years and statutory requirements are met. There is evidence in pupils' work of the influence of other cultures in both two- and three-dimensional media, although this rich vein of exploration and cross-curricular development could be more influential and inspirational. The department acknowledges the value of the spiritual element in art. Reference to the works of famous artists and artistic movements, as well as gallery visits, does partly address this element, but opportunities for reflection could be further developed. Good systems of assessment are in place and effectively used. Pupils understand the criteria used and are appreciative of the regular diagnostic assessment, which informs them of their progress. Assessment informs summative reports and curriculum planning. One full-time specialist currently manages the art curriculum with contributions from two other teachers, one of whom is not an art specialist. Arrangements for monitoring and team management now need to be developed.

122 **Design and Technology**

123 GCSE results in graphics and resistant materials over the past years have been above the national average for similar schools and all maintained secondary schools. In 1999, 67 percent of girls and 80 per cent of boys gained A*- C grades in resistant materials. In graphics 100 per cent of girls and 57 per cent of boys gained A*- C grades. In 1998, the percentage of pupils gaining A*- C grades improved on the previous year. All pupils entered have consistently gained A*- C grades at GCSE. Girls are performing significantly better than boys. Girls results in food studies have been broadly in line with the national average for A*- C, but boys have performed below this level. A percentage of work is still ungraded for GCSE food studies, although the percentage for 1999 is less than that for 1998. Attainment by the age of sixteen is above national expectations in graphics and resistant materials and below national expectations in food studies.

124 Pupils' attainment at the age of fourteen is in line with the national expectations. By this age, the majority of pupils have a stronger base of skills than was evident in the previous inspection. Pupils generate ideas that they are able to develop. Drawing skills are variable and this affects the ability of pupils to present their designs effectively in Year 7. By careful teacher targeting, standards in attainment target 1 - designing - do rise by the age of fourteen in the work of most pupils. Imaginative work is produced by the use of theme boards in the Year 7 and 8 projects in the bookends theme in resistant materials and the Italian food theme. In these same projects pupils research a number of ideas and by the age of thirteen can produce simple graphic images and more complicated 3D views. The higher attaining and middle attaining pupils usually produce clear, detailed work with tidy labelling. The ideas and graphic images produced by lower attaining pupils, many of whom have special educational needs, are usually not of such a high standard. They are incorrectly sized, lacking detail and clear labelling. However, over time, with adult support, these pupils are attaining a satisfactory standard of work to match the rest of their peers. Year 9 pupils who can discuss and record their findings are carrying out simple disassembly and product analysis on everyday foods like cakes and biscuits. They know why product analysis is carried out in industry. In lessons generally, pupils who volunteer to answer teacher-led questions usually do so competently, although pupils' range of

expression is limited. In their writing, many pupils make spelling mistakes that indicate insufficient concentration on the written word. A minority of pupils use appropriate technical language. Between the age of eleven and fourteen, pupils show a growing understanding of the design process. They increasingly build on their skills of graphics and making and have a basic understanding of components and processes by the end of Year 9.

- 125 Pupils' attainment at the age of sixteen is in line with national expectations in technology overall. It is above expectations in resistant materials and graphics and below expectations in Food. As at the time of the previous inspection, some work is beyond what would normally be expected given the uncertain level of attainment on entering Year 7. In graphics and resistant materials, pupils use their developing designing and practical skills to tackle longer and more complex assignments and projects. Good graphical skills are evident in these projects. Higher attaining pupils' work combines detailed research with critical analysis of data in well-presented coursework. Making skills of a good quality are found in these individual projects such as in storage containers and display stands. In food, pupils apply nutritional knowledge to different situations, such as when devising meals for special diets. They carry out simple experiments to analysis changes when preparing food. However, pupils' work in food generally does not produce such detailed, in-depth research and good presentation. Pupils who have special educational needs produce individual ideas and with help develop these ideas to a satisfactory level. A number of pupils between the ages of fourteen and sixteen are articulate and enthuse about their work. These higher attaining pupils produce fluent and thoughtful evaluations of their work. Pupils' measure wood and plastic accurately for their projects. They produce good quality isometric drawings in GCSE Graphics. There are examples of helpful graphs in pupils' GCSE projects. Work is presented well in all years.
- 126 Pupils make good progress between the ages of eleven and fourteen. Between the ages of fourteen and sixteen, progress in graphics and resistant materials is good. It is unsatisfactory in food studies. From low levels of attainment on entering Year 7, pupils establish clear routines for working. Designing skills develop slowly over the next two years. Pupils make satisfactory progress in developing their practical skills and capabilities of working with a range of materials. They acquire greater understanding of the design process. This is due to the opportunities and encouragement presented by teachers for pupils to practise these skills. Effective demonstrations also help. Beyond the age of fourteen pupils frequently make good progress in graphical skills in Year 11 projects. The majority of pupils are progressing in producing written work that is clear, readable and well presented. Pupils' teamwork develops well over the course of study. As recommended in the last inspection, projects have been devised within GCSE courses, which develop concepts and skills together.
- 127 With the assistance of support staff who work alongside them, explain in some detail what is required and allow them to improve the quality of their work, special educational needs pupils make satisfactory progress in lessons and over longer periods of time. Statemented pupils make particular progress in developing organisational skills and in sustaining on task behaviour.
- 128 Pupils' attitudes to learning are good. They respond well in lessons, show interest in their work and participate in teacher led question and answer sessions. Concentration is satisfactory throughout the lesson. Behaviour is good. Relationships are usually good and, in the best lessons, mutually supportive. Collaborative work is most successful when groups of pupils work on their chosen topic as in the theme board projects. When given opportunities to work independently or take responsibility, pupils respond willingly. Special educational needs pupils often show commitment to learning in class. This was particularly noticeable in the Year 8 class undertaking the Italian food topic, where pupils' attitudes to learning combined with the teachers' supportive class management, ensured an atmosphere of concentration throughout the lesson.

- 129 Teaching is good in technology and very good when delivered by an experienced teacher. The knowledge of technology specialist teachers is good, and usually used to good effect, with clear demonstration techniques, for example, on isometric graphs or scone production. Most lessons are appropriately planned and structured to allow for teacher explanation or demonstration and pupil activity. Worksheets are clear. Time is well used in lessons. Teachers regularly assess and record pupils' work. Homework is set and makes a sound contribution to the pupils' learning. Teachers generally have and express high expectations of pupils. In lessons, verbal praise for positive contributions is given to pupils. Work is usually marked. However, the quality of evaluative comments on the work of pupils between the ages of eleven and fourteen varies: some comments are clear and helpful but some do not provide a clear indication of how to improve. In the most successful lessons, a friendly working atmosphere is created and teachers ensure pupils are understanding and applying new knowledge. Storage of pupils' work is well organised. Information technology is underdeveloped within the department. Oral feedback on their work to pupils who are studying GCSE courses is an important contributory factor in progress and improving attainment.
- 130 This management of the department is strong and effective. It is very well led, with energy and vision. There are adequate resources in terms of textbooks and small equipment, although accommodation space and large equipment for food studies are inadequate for the large number of pupils in the classes. Curriculum time for technology is less than the national average. Current arrangements to establish what pupils already know understand and can do when they enter the school are unsatisfactory. The issues of the previous inspection report have been successfully addressed. Pupils experience a reasonably broad range of processes and materials and are able to work in wood, food, graphics, plastics and electronics. Good quality products are produced in the making aspect. Staff work hard at raising pupils' expectations and knowledge base. An assessment scheme is in place. The department has planned its work well for pupils between the ages of eleven and fourteen. This progressively builds up skills and techniques for pupils to apply successfully in their GCSE courses. The most impressive feature has been the improvement in GCSE examination results.

Drama

- 131 Attainment in drama is in line with the national expectation for all pupils by the age of fourteen. Similar standards are achieved at the age of sixteen by those pupils who continue to study the subject. In the 1999 GCSE drama examination, the proportion of pupils attaining A* to C grade passes was below the national average for similar schools. This was the first year the school entered candidates for a public examination in drama.
- 132 Pupils make good progress. Between the age of eleven and fourteen, pupils develop skills in social interaction, oracy and dramatic awareness. Beyond the age of fourteen, those who follow the examination course, continue to develop these skills and become much more confident in performance. In all years, pupils with special educational needs make good progress in drama. Many activities are appropriately modified and they attain in line with their abilities.
- 133 Behaviour and attitudes are good in all years. Pupils are well motivated, cooperate effectively and enjoy drama. Pupils' attitudes are a contributory factor to satisfactory attainment and good progress.
- 134 The teaching of pupils between the age of eleven and fourteen is always good and sometimes very good. In the GCSE classes, teaching is always satisfactory and sometimes good.

Particular strengths are careful planning and good class management. Teachers maintain high expectations of pupils. There are insufficient opportunities for pupils to contribute towards the assessment of their own work as an integral part of the lesson.

135 The curriculum provides effective continuity and progression for all pupils between the ages of eleven and fourteen. Between the ages of fourteen and sixteen, the lack of a scheme of work and reliance on the GCSE syllabus makes the full delivery of the curriculum less secure. The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Opportunities are taken in lessons to develop these strands of pupils' personal development both through an awareness of issues and the teaching strategies employed. The wide ranges of extra-curricular activities are a strength of the department and effectively complement the curriculum.

136 The department is well organised and has sufficient qualified teachers to deliver the curriculum. The accommodation and learning resources are adequate.

136 **Geography**

- 137 In the 1998 GCSE examinations 38 per cent of pupils achieved grades A* to C. This is well below the national average but similar to the national average of 36 per cent in all modern schools. The percentage of pupils achieving grades A* - G, 96 per cent, is in line with the national average. Girls do better than boys as they do nationally. Pupils do less well in geography than they do in their other subjects. Results in 1999 are lower with 33 per cent of pupils entered gaining grades A* to C. This is the same as results achieved in 1997 and does not follow the trend of steady improvement found nationally.
- 138 Attainment at the age of fourteen shows substantial improvement over the last three years. Almost half of pupils are working at National Curriculum levels achieved by the majority of children in their age group. Girls' achievement is higher than boys'. Attainment over time shows steady improvement from Year 7 to Year 9. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, show substantial improvement in the standards they achieve during their first year in the school. Year 7 pupils can use map work skills to give grid references and can construct contour diagrams. Year 8 pupils are able to classify industry as primary, secondary or tertiary and use divided bar charts to show employment structures in, for example, India. By Year 9 pupils use graphical skills to show relationships, between for example Gross National Product and a Rank of Development Index, as part of their work on population.
- 139 At the age of sixteen, attainment, in class and in exercise books, is below that found nationally. Pupils do not achieve enough. The higher attaining pupils are not routinely required to work at a sufficiently demanding level and pace. The lowest attaining pupils, following the Southern Examining Group Certificate course, in Year 11 achieve well and can for example recall and explain key geographical words such as "corrosion" and "hydraulic" in their work on erosion of the Norfolk coast.
- 140 All pupils, including those with special educational needs, make good progress between the ages of eleven and fourteen. Their progress is satisfactory between the ages of fourteen and sixteen. Pupils in Year 8 develop their knowledge of places in the British Isles and go on to make connections between physical location and climate; one lower attaining pupil explaining that, 'rainfall is high in Fort William because it is in mountains'. Pupils can relate newly acquired knowledge and understanding to what they have learned previously. In questioning about prevailing winds they can link to their home area and explain that winds in Donington blow chiefly from the south-west. Pupils in all years extend their ability to interpret and present data. Since the last inspection information technology resources have improved and are used competently. For example, in Year 8 pupils begin to generate computer graphics using rainfall and temperature data. By Year 9 higher attaining pupils studying coffee trading in Tanzania begin to appreciate that people's lives in one place are affected by actions and events in other places. Where teaching is very good, high, middle and lower attaining pupils in Year 11 all contribute well and show clear understanding and knowledge of the reasons people migrate from town to country in Brazil and can explain cause and effect when applying these ideas to, a different country, Turkey. Progress is satisfactory in speaking and listening but there are insufficient opportunities for pupils to develop their skills in extended writing and for higher attaining pupils to tackle more demanding tasks. The contribution that geography can make to the growth in pupils' of spiritual awareness is not sufficiently exploited. Pupils are made aware of cultural diversity and richness in studies of countries and peoples around the world. Where pupils make field study visits, or participate in the visits to other countries in Europe, which the department offers, this makes a good contribution to their social and cultural development. The department has a sound programme of fieldwork and observation but all pupils have not had

the chance to improve their understanding of geography by taking part in an investigative activity this year.

141 In all lessons, pupils behave well. They listen well, pay attention, get on with their work and are respectful to their teachers. Work is always presented with care and neatness of handwriting is a good feature. Pupils are considerate and supportive to each other, particularly when others are explaining their ideas. The contribution pupils make to lessons is limited because they do not expect that they will be required to remember their work from earlier lessons. They do not know and use enough geographical vocabulary. Relationships are good; in all classes pupils and teachers smile and are polite.

142 Almost all teaching (89 per cent) is satisfactory or better. More than half (51 per cent) is good or very good. This ensures that pupils learn well in each lesson and over time. Teachers demonstrate very good subject knowledge and understanding and teach effectively. Where teaching is good, expectations are high and this raises standards. Lessons are planned with varied activities, which improve pupils' learning. Pupils are managed well and there is good organisation and control. This ensures that pupils spend their time concentrating on their work. The use of time in lessons is not always sufficiently focused to raise standards. Where unsatisfactory teaching occurs, in 13 per cent of lessons, pupils are not sufficiently productive and have not learnt the key geographical facts they need to make their further progress secure. Teachers do not make enough use of learning materials suited to pupils of different attainment levels so lower attaining pupils can find work too difficult and higher attaining pupils are not challenged to raise the standard of their work. Access to the curriculum for those with special educational needs is helped by staff awareness of those needs and by the effective individual support they receive in lessons from the teacher and where necessary from a learning support assistant. Assessment pieces concluding each unit of work are thoroughly marked and graded by all teachers in accordance with school and department policies. Marking of other work is weak. There is not enough written comment which tells children what they can do to make their work better. Homework is set but expectations are not high enough to ensure that it reinforces and extends what is learned in school. Schemes of work are sound and ensure that pupils are moved forward through their work in a planned way. The administration of the department is thorough.

142 **Health and Social care GNVQ**

143 Year 10 pupils undertaking the GNVQ course on Health and Social Care showed a basic understanding of nutritional requirements for health. After a slow start to the lesson pupils made limited progress on the properties of food nutrients. Although easily distracted, pupils enjoyed describing their recreational hobbies and interests in the second half of the lesson. While teacher knowledge was satisfactory, delivery was such that it was difficult to follow. The special educational needs pupils who are deaf functioned particularly well in this lesson and their standard of work was equal if not better than that of others in the class.

143 **History**

144 Attainment overall by the age of fourteen is below national expectations. However, between the age of eleven and fourteen, pupils are practised at using source material to answer questions and have a good understanding of the issues surrounding historical evidence. They are developing appropriate analytical skills and can readily discuss the causes and consequences of historical events. They are less adept, however, at using detailed historical knowledge to describe important developments and changes within the period they are studying. Literacy standards are below average. The department has started to plan opportunities for pupils to

develop skills in writing fluently and at length on historical issues. Pupils need more support to help them organise such tasks. Attainment in understanding and evaluating differing historical interpretations of people and events are below expectations but are improving. There is little evidence of variation in attainment between boys and girls.

- 145 The proportion of pupils achieving grades A*- C in the GCSE examinations in 1998 was below the national average but close to that obtained in similar schools, with nearly 32 per cent of pupils reaching grades A*- C. The proportion of pupils achieving grades A*- G is in line with national averages. The department is in a good position to raise standards following its decision to change the syllabus to one that places more emphasis on source work skills, an aspect of the subject in which many pupils show a good level of competence. Lesson observations, scrutiny of work and discussion with pupils indicate that attainment is now closer to the national average and is improving. A Year 11 group, for example, understood the links between several complex factors leading to the Second World War and were able to use the organising concepts of history to communicate their ideas. Recall is usually better than between the ages of eleven and fourteen; for example many of the pupils in a Year 11 class on the Home Front in World War Two were able to explain why there was no home guard in World War One, a topic that they had covered some time ago.
- 146 Progress between the ages of eleven and fourteen is good. Pupils often start with a low base of knowledge and skills, particularly language skills. Good teaching propels them forwards and pupils are strongly committed to their tasks. Careful planning with a clear focus on learning objectives is a positive factor. Pupils strengthen their confidence in analysing sources of evidence and are developing their knowledge and understanding of people and events in history, evident, for example, in a Year 8 class where pupils were all able to provide several reasons why Columbus sailed.
- 147 Between the ages of fourteen and sixteen, the great majority of pupils maintain a steady rate of progress in the development of historical skills, knowledge and understanding. All make clear gains in their skills in drawing information from sources of historical evidence. Good teaching enables them to use evidence critically. Lesson planning refers back to earlier learning so that new knowledge builds on what has been learnt before. Regular attention is paid to key questions and pupils have lists of these for each unit they study. The progress of pupils with special needs is in line with that of all the other pupils in all years.
- 148 The pupils show interest in their history lessons. They are willing to take part in a broad range of activities and are eager to learn. They enjoy participating in question and answer sessions and are keen to read aloud. They show good response to challenge and are almost always well behaved, completing their tasks with a minimum of fuss. They work well together in pairs and in small groups.
- 149 The teaching seen during the week of the inspection was never less than satisfactory and in almost all lessons it was of good quality. Teachers employ a good range of methods, which involve the pupils in a variety of activities in which they can exercise their imagination. A class in Year 8, for example, worked on the spice trade. They were helped in their understanding by samples of real spices as well as 15th century recipes and cures. Teachers have a good subject knowledge, high expectations and they manage pupils well. Their enthusiasm is infectious and pupils' interest sustained. A class in Year 10, for example, examined various primary sources left by a cavalryman in the Great War; several then remembered work they had done on field postcards in Year 9. Most lessons are conducted at a brisk pace, with activities given clear deadlines, so that there is very little slack time. Lesson objectives are clear, helped by effective schemes of work and assessment which helps pupils to understand what they have done well and where they need to direct further effort.

149 **Information Technology**

- 150 Attainment in information communications technology at the age of fourteen in discrete information technology lessons is in line with the national expectation. This is an improvement since the last inspection when pupils at the age of fourteen did not meet the national standard. No examinations in information technology are taken by pupils at the age of sixteen. Pupils' work seen during the inspection indicates that the attainment at the age of sixteen is below the national expectation.
- 151 From uncertain levels of attainment on entry, pupils in the discrete information technology course access the KeyBytes interactive software and become reasonably competent at using it. With good teacher direction, they access the software quickly and easily. They are fluent in basic operations, such as using a keyboard and mouse. Pupils read the simple text instructions on the interactive software carefully. They can use the KeyBytes textbook confidently, search for information and answer basic questions on hardware. Between the age of eleven and fourteen, they word-process, use desktop publishing and create simple spreadsheets. Pupils can enter data into spreadsheets, and use them for addition, subtraction and multiplication in mathematics. Work is saved and retrieved, as appropriate, and text is enhanced with illustrations, which have either been created or transferred from other sources. Some pupils display satisfactory word processing skills which, for many pupils, have been practised and developed as much on their home computers as on those in the school. Pupils can use a CD-ROM to access information on specific topics such as vitamins and minerals in science. The Internet search engine is also used to find specific information. Pupils who attend the lunchtime Computer Club can program using Logo. Special educational needs pupils, with teacher support, can satisfactorily attain the targets set for them by the teacher and produce similar work for their peers. Pupils have a reasonable understanding of communicating and handling information.
- 152 Between the ages of fourteen and sixteen, in the design and technology GCSE resistant materials course pupils can use the PowerPoint software package to create a slide presentation. They use software to produce questionnaires to generate their own data and then display the analysis of this data in differing types of charts. However, the standard of work produced by these pupils is not significantly higher than demonstrated by pupils between the age of eleven and fourteen.
- 153 The progress made by pupils in lessons between the ages of eleven and fourteen is satisfactory. They make good progress when the teaching is very well structured. Quick development of skills was noticeable in a Year 7 lesson with the sensible use of the Key Bytes interactive software. This progress is encouraged by clear presentation by teachers, appropriate use of the accompanying textbook and good classroom interaction between pupils. Special educational needs pupils, with adult support, develop confidence and make slow but steady progress in information technology lessons.
- 154 Pupils' attitudes to learning are good. Pupils enjoy the topics offered and are keen to work on computers. While classes are quite large, some with twenty-eight pupils in them, these pupils are supportive of each other and good working relationships with the teacher exist.
- 155 Teaching in discrete information technology lessons for pupils between the age of eleven and fourteen is satisfactory. Sometimes it is very good. In the very good lessons, work is well structured with time for instruction and adequate pupil activity, together with a good level of exchange between teacher and pupils. A small number of teachers teach this subject for a minority of time. The head of subject leads and co-ordinates this team well. Their subject

knowledge is very good. Good support for the subject area is provided by the technician. The support given by the teachers to individual pupils in lessons helps them to gain in confidence. Teachers are aware of the pupils' strengths and weaknesses and usually respond accordingly. An assessment scheme is in place but no completed records were available. Planning for cross-curricular information communication technology is well documented but there is limited related planning within the schemes of work of other subjects. Only in art, design and technology, English, mathematics and music, is it clearly identified in planning. Monitoring of information communications technology in the curriculum has only just started.

156 There have been significant improvements in the number and quality of resources since the last inspection. Resources are well used and facilities are made available to pupils at lunchtime. There is a long-term plan to develop provision further. These features promote improving standards. There needs to be more professional development to raise awareness and develop skills. As at the time of the last inspection, statutory requirements are not fully met for pupils between the ages of fourteen and sixteen.

156 **Modern Foreign Languages**

157 In the 1998 GCSE examinations the percentage of pupils attaining levels A* - C in the full course in French [36 per cent] was below the national average [43 per cent]. It was above the average for modern schools [29 per cent]. Attainment was lower in the short course and no pupils gained above a grade D. There is no national data available upon which to make a comparison. The percentage of pupils gaining grades A*- G was broadly in line with the national average for all schools. In 1999, standards improved. Of the nine pupils entered for this examination, just over half [55 per cent] gained grades A*- C. However, the number of pupils entered for the full GCSE course was far lower than the previous year. The number of entries has varied each year. This makes comparisons between years misleading.

158 Overall attainment at the age of fourteen is below national expectations. Year 7 pupils, however, are now attaining higher levels. Although only in their fourth week of learning French they are able to use greetings and are generally competent at using numbers up to thirty and have learned the months. They use this information to talk about birthdays. Many pupils have made a good start at spelling the numbers and practise by doing simple sums in French. The highest attaining pupils in Year 9 can describe the appearance of themselves and others. Their listening skills are sufficient for them to be able to extract relevant information from a recorded dialogue. When doing written work most fill in gaps correctly and then copy the text accurately but cannot yet write descriptions from memory. They are developing a sound understanding of grammatical rules.

159 Between the ages of fourteen and sixteen, attainment is below the national expectation. On entry to Year 10 there is a need for re-inforcement and consolidation, not only for the lowest attainers but also for those pupils deemed capable of obtaining higher grades in GCSE. This means that pupils are currently working at low levels. However, these pupils make good progress in consolidation and consequently in their confidence. Those pupils attaining the lowest levels in Year 10 are able to understand individual items of vocabulary but cannot put them into phrases without close guidance. This need to revert to basic grammar and structures results from unsatisfactory learning last year in Year 9. The department has addressed this weakness by the setting of pupils in Year 9 so that teaching can match their attainment levels more closely. The highest attaining pupils in Year 11 can say what jobs they want to do and give reasons. In doing so they give accurate and fluent answers and have good listening comprehension skills. Their written work shows that they are developing sound writing skills.

- 160 Between the ages of eleven and fourteen, pupils make good progress in French. This is because of the brisk pace of the lessons and the enthusiasm of pupils in Year 7. Between the ages of fourteen and sixteen, pupils following full GCSE courses make satisfactory progress in all the skills. Those doing short GCSE courses also make satisfactory progress considering the constraints of the ten-day timetable cycle.
- 161 Pupils' response in French is good. Pupils are generally attentive in lessons and often keen to answer questions. They usually get down to individual work very quickly and most have good concentration. Lessons are characterised by positive relationships between teachers and pupils and between the pupils themselves. Behaviour in lessons is good.
- 162 The quality of teaching in French is good. Teachers plan their lessons well and have clear objectives. They often share these with the pupils at the beginning of a lesson so that they clearly understand what they are expected to achieve. Teachers employ a variety of strategies to teach and reinforce vocabulary and structures and they try very hard to improve the pupils' confidence and to get them to speak. Well-considered use is made of French for instructions and simpler explanations and this sharpens pupils' listening skills. Teachers are very aware of the wide range of attainment and set tasks of appropriate difficulty. They are also aware of the requirements of pupils with special needs and adapt the level of tasks accordingly. Although there is very little additional support for pupils with special needs in French lessons, teachers monitor their work carefully. Lessons generally move at a good pace so that speaking, listening, reading and writing skills are all addressed in a sixty-minute lesson. Teachers offer the older pupils the opportunity to improve their learning by providing additional lessons after school. This has been of particular benefit to a number of pupils following the short GCSE course whose progress has been restricted by the time allocation.
- 163 The department is well led. A comprehensive scheme of work is in place, which ensures a broad and balanced curriculum within the subject and provides continuity across the year groups. Staff are appropriately qualified and the classroom accommodation, although small for some groups, is adequate for the subject to be taught effectively. There are sufficient resources, including audio-visual aids, available to teachers. Very limited use is currently made of the school's information technology facilities in French lessons. Since the last inspection there have been notable improvements in two areas. French is now taught to all pupils between the ages of eleven and sixteen.
- 163 **Music**
- 164 Standards in the GCSE examination are improving. In 1998, 35 per cent of pupils who chose to study music achieved grades A*- C. This was well below the national average for all schools and below that for all modern schools. All pupils attained at least grade G. This was above the national average for all schools. In 1999, nearly half of the pupils entered [47 percent] attained grades A*- C and, again, all pupils gained at least grade G. The 1998 statutory teacher assessments at the age of fourteen are in line with the national average for 1997.
- 165 Attainment is broadly in line with the national expectation at the age of fourteen. Most pupils have a clear understanding of the basic principles of composition and are able to perform with confidence. They show a satisfactory, and sometimes above satisfactory, knowledge of various styles of music, for example Jazz, Indian, Jamaican and Chinese. Those few pupils working above expected levels are able to use their own instruments and perform in a group showing an awareness of other performers and using different textures to develop musical ideas. Recordings of pupils' performances between the ages of fourteen and sixteen show that whilst overall standards are below national expectations, pupils can perform across a wide range of instrumental solos, for example, with voice, guitar, recorder and keyboard. One pupil

could write a “Winter” poem and use various effects on the keyboard to compose a piece of music to match. Another is developing a composition on an idea thought about in English and worked on in drama, entitled “It’s my fault”. These pupils attain in line with expectations within the composing element of the GCSE course.

- 166 Progress between the ages of eleven and fourteen is satisfactory. Most pupils develop a clear understanding of basic principles of composition and all perform with confidence. There are occasional missed opportunities to develop the skills of self-evaluation and appraisal of others’ work. Listening skills develop well and pupils use increasingly a musical vocabulary to describe their understanding, using, for example, terms such as “Romantic Period”, programme music, staccato and legato. Pupils who have special educational needs make satisfactory progress. This is often slower because of the large minority of these pupils needing help, the absence of classroom assistance and the limited provision of open-ended tasks for these pupils. Between the ages of fourteen and sixteen, those pupils who choose to continue to study music make satisfactory progress overall. Some make good progress in the composing part of the GCSE course.
- 167 Since the previous report, behaviour remains good. This enables learning to take place. Pupils listen well and show a readiness to improve the quality of their performance and composition. Pupils work well individually. In groups they readily share ideas for performance and composition. Between the age of fourteen and sixteen, pupils work well in the classroom and at home. They make full use of the music department facilities in their free time. The take-up rate has increased from twenty candidates in 1998 to twenty-five for the 2001 GCSE examination. Pupils are beginning to take responsibility and show initiative in music. Some assist the teacher at group rehearsals, are invited to identify the needs of the music department and are forthcoming in volunteering to perform in concerts.
- 168 Teaching is never less than satisfactory. It is often good. It is characterised by secure subject knowledge and skills. However, teachers’ expectations are not always clear to pupils, for example, when a few pupils fail to understand instructions or vocabulary. Sound procedures for assessment are in place and planning is mostly effective but does not always take into consideration the differing needs of below average pupils. Marking is good. In all lessons the teacher’s questioning probes pupils’ knowledge and understanding. Pupils are managed well and lessons proceed at a good pace. Information technology is used in all years. Information and communication technology are used in the GCSE course. There are insufficient computers for pupils between the ages of eleven and fourteen. Pupils have many opportunities to develop their skills as performers and composers. On-going assessment during lessons is satisfactory and formal assessment systems are well developed and designed to inform future planning and teaching. Homework is appropriate, regularly set and supports literacy using musical words in general and those relevant to current projects.
- 169 The music department makes a significant contribution to pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. They are given the opportunity to reflect on music that moves them and an unbiased opportunity to sample all types of ethnic and world music. Pupils perform in their own time at a variety of musical activities. Two Year 11 pupils were observed rehearsing for ‘Grease’. Both had worked hard to learn all their music for the leading roles, well in advance of the production. The department is well managed and there are sufficient classroom instruments including keyboards. The generous budget last year has enabled the department to purchase additional orchestral instruments. This was a priority in the previous report. The provision for instrumental tuition has doubled. Twelve per cent of pupils currently receive tuition on a variety of instruments. The four peripatetic music teachers work closely with the department helping pupils to prepare for performances and public examinations.

169 **Physical Education**

- 170 Very good standards have been maintained since the last inspection. Further improvements in provision have also been made. There is now a GCSE examination course for pupils between the ages of fourteen and sixteen. Following the appointment of another specialist teacher, the curriculum is broader, providing opportunities for both boys and girls to experience games such as cricket and basketball.
- 171 Both at the age of fourteen and at the age of sixteen, pupils attain standards in games that are in line with national expectations. Some pupils achieve higher standards than expected; few underachieve. By the age of fourteen, nearly all pupils use their skills in ball games with increasing precision. Year 8 pupils in basketball are successful in the use of the 'lay-up' shot. Careful questioning and supportive feedback helps pupils to plan and evaluate their performance. Most pupils, by the age of sixteen can perform the underarm serve in volley ball and use the "dig" and "set" to keep the ball in play. In badminton, they can perform the low serve and the "net kill".
- 172 Pupils of all abilities make good progress between the ages of eleven and sixteen. Between the ages of fourteen and sixteen they make progress in volleyball and badminton because they respond positively to teacher comments to improve their racquet skills and technique. They work hard to perfect new skills and apply previously learned skills in competitive situations. Between the ages of eleven and fourteen, through practice, repetition and application in pairs and small-sided games, most pupils learn how to use space and beat an opponent. In football in Year 7 boys learn how through close control they can turn with the ball in a variety of situations.
- 173 In all lessons pupils respond positively. They are prompt and have appropriate kit for each activity, with few non-participants. They show interest in their work, sustain concentration and apply themselves to given tasks. They answer questions confidently and can work well as individuals, in pairs or in small groups. Pupils understand the need to practise in order to develop and improve skills. They are also able to evaluate what is needed to improve their own and others' performances. Good relationships are a feature of all lessons, with pupils showing good social and co-operative skills. They are able to use equipment safely and apply sound health and safety principles at all times. The positive attitudes contribute significantly to the degree of progress they make and the levels of attainment that they reach.
- 174 Overall, teaching is good. It is never less than satisfactory. In half the lessons observed the teaching was very good. Despite the absence of a member of staff, very good alternative staffing arrangements were organised. Pupils' progress was thus assured. Teachers plan their lessons well for the needs of pupils of all levels of ability. They show excellent knowledge and enthusiasm for the subject. High expectations and appropriately challenging tasks extend and motivate the pupils. With lessons continuing at a good pace and in well-considered stages there is plenty of opportunity for pupils to achieve success. Good use of questioning to ensure understanding helps to create a learning situation where pupils' contributions are valued. The good and satisfactory teaching has some, but not all, of these features.
- 175 The curriculum has breadth and balance. Through careful planning it meets the needs of all pupils and most are able to achieve end of key stage expectations. Schemes of work are well developed for all activities and provide a good basis for individual lesson planning. The department offers a range of extra-curricular activities and visits, which benefits pupils of all

abilities. Issues identified in the last report have been addressed, with lesson planning allowing more pupil evaluation. There is, however a lack of opportunity for pupils to develop their leadership skills. Assessment policies are in place, but pupils are unsure of their progress in the activities. The large number of pupils who have opted to study physical education for GCSE, despite its unsatisfactory timetabling outside of the normal school day, is an indication of its popularity.

176 Delivery of the curriculum is often hampered by a lack of space and although teaching areas are satisfactory, enrichment of the curriculum in these circumstances is prevented. Use of the on-site netball court poses a risk to health and safety because of its uneven and mud covered surface.

177 Physical education benefits from strong leadership and a shared sense of purpose in the department, which have a positive impact on the standards achieved. Teaching strategies are carefully considered and pupils benefit from the on-going commitment to training and improvement. Every effort is made to provide pupils with opportunities to improve their standards and the comprehensive development plan will continue to further these aims. House competitions, sports days and dance evenings give all pupils chance to take part in internal competitions. Fixtures for football and netball with other schools occur regularly. The department makes a contribution to sport in the local community through its involvement in local primary schools.

177 **Religious Education**

178 In lessons and in work seen, attainment at the age of fourteen is below the national expectation. Pupils have a satisfactory knowledge of the main tenets and practices of Christianity and understand the point or purpose of religious belief and practice in the lives of adherents. However, most pupils achieve unsatisfactory standards in their knowledge and understanding of the distinctive features of religions other than Christianity. Lower attaining pupils, for example, have poor recall of the application of Jewish food laws or of Muslim religious festivals and what they signify. Most pupils find it difficult to understand the historical links that exist between some religions because they do not possess a coherent picture of the tenets and practices of religions other than Christianity. Literacy standards are below average and pupils do not use specialist vocabulary with confidence. Pupils do not visit local places of worship (except Christian), nor do they meet visitors from different faith communities and therefore they do not fully relate what they learn to the experiences of others.

179 Between the age of fourteen and sixteen, all pupils now follow a GCSE short course in religious education. This serves to raise the status of the subject and to improve pupils' motivation. Attainment in the public examination is below the national average, with nearly 25 per cent of pupils gaining grades A*- C in 1998. However, pupils' responses to a wide range of moral issues are generally informed and considered and indicate higher standards of attainment in this aspect of the subject. Year 11 pupils consider aspects of euthanasia, for example, and handle well concepts such as conscience and responsibility. Many pupils, though, are not yet able to provide a coherent picture of the two religions they study at GCSE, particularly Judaism.

180 For the majority of pupils, including those with special needs, progress between the age of eleven and fourteen is broadly satisfactory, although adversely affected by poor literacy skills and low attainment on entry to the school. They develop their knowledge at a satisfactory rate through Year 7 when they study symbolism in Christianity. As pupils move through Year 8 they show an understanding of the importance of pilgrimage to, for example, Lourdes. Many pupils, however, have poor recall of the beliefs and practices of religions other than

Christianity. Higher attaining pupils are insufficiently challenged in some of their lessons where, for example, too much time can be spent on simple tasks such as drawing signs and symbols rather than on understanding the difference between signs and symbols.

- 181 Progress is also satisfactory between the age of fourteen and sixteen. It is strongest in those lessons, which focus on an overview of knowledge and understanding of a range of moral issues. Pupils develop their ability to consider their own values and beliefs about, for example, marriage or abortion. Work in religious education makes a positive contribution to pupils' moral development. However, the majority of pupils still do not use technical vocabulary precisely and lack detailed scriptural knowledge. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress in relation to their prior levels of attainment.

- 182 Pupils' attitudes to religious education are generally satisfactory in both key stages. Most take care to present their work well. The pupils, including those with special educational needs and lower attainers, enjoy the lessons and are interested in the topics. Pupils are well behaved and respectful. They particularly enjoy opportunities to participate actively in lessons as, for example, in one lesson where they were able to ask the local vicar questions about his work and beliefs.
- 183 The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall in all years. However, concerns raised in the last inspection are still evident and lead to lower standards. There are no specialist religious education teachers in the department. There are still too few opportunities for pupils, especially between the ages of eleven and fourteen to become actively involved in their learning by, for example, giving presentations, group work, enacting festivals, visiting places of worship or talking to visitors from a wider range of faith communities. Teaching in Years 10 and 11 enables pupils to participate in discussion and develop their reflective skills. Discipline is firm, in a pleasant and friendly atmosphere. Lesson preparation is thorough and the head of department provides considerable support for the team. Schemes of work, however, need to address lesson objectives more clearly, indicating how these objectives will be met through activities and showing what pupils should be getting better at. Teachers relate well to pupils and respond fully to their comments and questions. This is an encouragement to pupils to speak up. Homework is regularly set and marked. Comments on pupils' work do not sufficiently indicate pupils' strengths and those areas in which they need to direct further effort. The use of a wider range of resources in lessons would enable pupils to further develop their understanding of different religious communities.

183 **PART C: INSPECTION DATA**

183 **SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE**

184 Before the inspection, the registered inspector held a meeting, attended by 12 parents and the team considered 126 responses to the questionnaire about their opinions of the school.

185 Twelve inspectors spent the equivalent of 44 inspector days in the school, gathering first-hand evidence. One hundred and seventeen lessons were observed in all subjects and within the school's Lifeskills programme. All three whole-school assemblies were observed and the registered inspector was invited to contribute to the final assembly of the inspection week. Ten registration sessions were observed and several extra-curricular activities. A sample of pupils' work, taken from across the full ability range of the school, was analysed and provision made for this to be discussed with the head of subject. Additionally, inspectors in several subjects spoke to pupils about their work outside class, particularly in religious education and physical education, and a sample of recent statutory national test scripts in English was also examined. Altogether, approximately 130 hours were spent in direct observation of classes, the sampling of pupils' work and talking to pupils.

186 Discussions were held with pupils during the course of lessons and separate discussions were arranged with pupils from each year group to talk about aspects of their work and their involvement in school life.

187 All teachers who are timetabled to teach were observed in lessons on at least one occasion and many on a number of occasions. The headteacher is not timetabled to teach and was not observed when, as is his practice, he took a class for an absent teacher at short notice.

188 Subject inspectors held planned discussions with heads of department, including the co-ordinator for special educational needs, and these were also arranged with some heads of year to discuss aspects of the pastoral arrangements. Discussions were also arranged with teachers who had special responsibilities for various aspects of school life, with administrative and support staff, with a recently qualified teacher, the caretaker, a technician and the liaison officer for partnership in the community. Discussions took place with several governors as part of the planned programme of inspection.

189 The previous OFSTED report, action plan, policy documents, schemes of work, school development plan and related financial information, together with a wide range of other school documentation, were examined both before and during the inspection.

190 Attendance registers, the most recent auditor's report, pupils' reports and records and a range of data concerning attainment on entry and pupils' attainment thereafter were also inspected.

191 **DATA AND INDICATORS**

191 **Pupil data**

	Number of pupils on roll (full-time equivalent)	Number of pupils with statements of SEN	Number of pupils on school's register of SEN	Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals
1999-2000	512	20	133	50

191 **Teachers and classes**

191 **Qualified teachers (Y7 – 11)**

Total number of qualified teachers (full-time equivalent):	27.5
Number of pupils per qualified teacher:	18.85

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

Total number of education support staff:	11
Total aggregate hours worked each week:	321.5

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes: 78.8

Average teaching group size:	KS3	24
	KS4	22

Financial year:	1998-1999
	£
Total Income	987677
Total Expenditure	1011967
Expenditure per pupil	2299.93
Balance brought forward from previous year	121440
Balance carried forward to next year	97150

Number of questionnaires sent out:	512
Number of questionnaires returned:	126

Responses (percentage of answers in each category):

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I feel the school encourages parents to play an active part in the life of the school	18	59	14	7	2
I would find it easy to approach the school with questions or problems to do with my child(ren)	25	59	5	10	2
The school handles complaints from parents well	18	57	16	4	5
The school gives me a clear understanding of what is taught	20	63	10	6	2
The school keeps me well informed about my child(ren)'s progress	27	60	6	6	2
The school enables my child(ren) to achieve a good standard of work	26	61	6	6	1
The school encourages children to get involved in more than just their daily lessons	29	62	6	3	1
I am satisfied with the work that my child(ren) is/are expected to do at home	23	56	8	10	2
The school's values and attitudes have a positive effect on my child(ren)	27	54	9	6	4
The school achieves high standards of good behaviour	27	56	9	4	4
My child(ren) like(s) school	33	50	6	4	6

193 Other issues raised by parents

- Some of the small numbers of those attending the parents' meeting were concerned that the school would not grow in size beyond its currently agreed limit. The governors gave an assurance during the inspection that it would not.

• Summary of responses

- Parents who returned completed questionnaires have a very positive view of the school, over 85 per cent of them regularly agreeing with the statements within the questionnaire and more than 25 per cent agreeing strongly in the majority of cases.