

INSPECTION REPORT

Chipping Sodbury School

Chipping Sodbury

LEA Area: South Gloucester

Unique Reference Number: 109324

Inspection Number: 186948

Headteacher: T Winskill

Reporting inspector: Romy Markham

Inspector Number 1387

Dates of inspection: 10/01/00-14/01/00

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

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Pupils enter secondary school when they are age 11 and go into Year 7, which together with Years 8 and 9 makes up Key Stage 3. At the end of this key stage, pupils take national tests in English, mathematics and science, the core subjects of the National Curriculum. The other National Curriculum subjects are design and technology, information technology, a modern foreign language, history, geography, art, music and physical education. Schools must also teach religious education to pupils of all ages. Teachers make their own assessment of the pupils' attainments in all National Curriculum subjects. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 are at Key Stage 4 of their education, at the end of which they may be entered for the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) or other examinations set by national organisations. In the sixth form, students in Years 12 and 13 study for a range of courses for the General Certificate of Education at Advanced level (A-level) or general vocational qualifications (GNVQ).

Standards of attainment are judged in relation to the national expectation of what pupils of similar age should achieve, or, in the case of tests and examinations, to the national average figures for all maintained schools. Value added is the measurement of the progress that pupils make over time by comparing information on their attainment at the start of a key stage with that at its end.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Voluntary Controlled
Age range of pupils:	11-18
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Bowling Road Chipping Sodbury Bristol
Postcode:	BS37 6EW
Telephone number:	01454-316194
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Appropriate authority:	Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr D Peacock
Date of previous inspection:	06/01/96 – 10/01/96

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
R Markham	Registered Inspector		Standards of attainment and achievement, quality of teaching, leadership and management, resources for learning school improvement and effectiveness
N Ball	Lay inspector		Pupils' personal development, how well the school cares for pupils, partnership with parents.
C Griffin	Team inspector	English	Curriculum
P Metcalf	Team inspector	Mathematics	Efficiency
A Davies	Team inspector	Science	
T Davies	Team inspector	Design and technology, information technology	
I Stuart	Team inspector	Geography , religious education	
D Gwinnett	Team inspector	Art, music	
B Barnes	Team inspector	History, special educational needs, equality of opportunity	
D Shepherd	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	Staffing
J Evans	Team inspector	Physical education	Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development
W Stoneham	Team inspector	Vocational subjects	Accommodation

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REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	6
Information about the school	
How good the school is	
What the school does well	
What could be improved	
How the school has improved since its last inspection	
Standards	
Pupils' attitudes and values	
Teaching and learning	
Other aspects of the school	
How well the school is led and managed	
Parents' and carers' views of the school	
PART B: COMMENTARY	
HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?	10
The school's results and achievements	
Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development	
HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?	13
HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS OR STUDENTS?	14
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?	17
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS	18
HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?	18
WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?	21
PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS	22
PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES	27

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Chipping Sodbury is an average sized comprehensive school for boys and girls aged 11 to 18. There are 945 pupils on roll, which is 110 more than at the time of the last inspection. About 30 pupils enter or leave the school during the year. Pupils come from Chipping Sodbury, the urban area of Yate and surrounding villages, in competition with several other secondary schools. There is a broad social mix, but very few pupils of ethnic minority origin and none with English as an additional language. There are however, 23 pupils on roll who are children of Showmen Travellers and who are absent from school for prolonged periods each year. Pupils starting at the school in recent years have had overall attainments varying from below average to average. There is an average number of pupils with special educational needs but an above average number who have formal Statements of Special Educational Need. There are 66 pupils eligible for free school meals, which is below average, but the school reports that although the area is not socially disadvantaged, many families have limited expectations of what pupils can achieve. There are 112 students in the sixth form, which is below average and the school shares sixth form provision with two other secondary schools. There is full employment locally and an above average number of pupils and students leave school at 16 or 18 to go into employment.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Pupils achieve standards overall that show satisfactory development from their attainment on entry, although some subjects are stronger than others and there are weaknesses in literacy. Pupils have good attitudes to their work, their attendance is above average, they develop good relationships and they learn well. Almost all of the teaching is at least satisfactory and much is good or better and this encourages pupils to work hard. There is a wide range of curricular opportunities. There is good provision for the care and guidance of pupils and the school keeps parents and carers informed about their son or daughter's progress and encourages parental support. The school has responded satisfactorily to the issues raised in the last report; good initiatives have been put in place, particularly in the last two years. The headteacher and senior staff are providing very good leadership, most departments are led well and the governing body is supportive and committed to raising standards. The school provides sound value for money overall and in the innovative shared provision in the sixth form.

What the school does well

- The headteacher and senior staff provide very good leadership and a vision for improvement.
- There is good curriculum provision with particular strengths in extra curricular and outdoor education, in how the school works with the local community and in provision for pupils' social and moral development.
- There is good teaching overall, which promotes good learning.
- The school provides good relationships and a safe and caring environment in which pupils are encouraged to develop into responsible young adults.
- Pupils enjoy school; they have positive attitudes, good behaviour and they attend regularly.
- The school makes good provision for the pupils of Showmen traveller families.
- There is innovative sixth form provision, shared with two local schools.
- The governors provide strong support and careful monitoring of standards and provision.

What could be improved

- Standards in English at Key Stage 4 and standards of literacy, particularly writing, across the curriculum.
- The understanding and use of numeracy across the curriculum.
- Standards and provision in information technology.
- Teaching and standards in art at Key Stage 3.
- Planned provision for pupils' spiritual development.
- The quality of accommodation for science and physical education and the general state of repair and decoration.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made satisfactory improvements overall since the last inspection, which took place in January 1996. Standards of attainment have been around the national average and show sound achievement from attainment on entry. Pupils' personal development, attitudes and behaviour have remained satisfactory and their learning has improved and is now good. There have been good improvements in the quality of teaching, care for pupils and management and satisfactory progress in developing the curriculum and the partnership with parents.

There have been many initiatives in response to the issues raised in the last inspection report, several of which are of good quality. The pace of change improved with the appointment of a new headteacher two years ago and it is too soon yet to see the full impact of these changes, for example the whole school focus on improving literacy. There have been good improvements to management structures, development planning and the collection and analysis of assessment data. There have been changes to staffing and organisation and these have resulted in an improved quality of teaching. Departments have responded satisfactorily overall to subject specific issues but some weaknesses remain in art and information technology.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 14, 16 and 18 year olds based on average point scores in national tests, GCSE and A-level/AS-level examinations.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1997	1998	1999	1999
Key Stage 3 Tests	B	B	C	E
GCSE examinations	B	C	D	E*
A-levels/AS-levels	D	D	D	

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

The school's test and examination results have fluctuated over the last three years and reflect the varying attainment on entry of the pupils concerned. Standardised testing indicates that pupils in each year achieved as well as they should, compared with their attainments on entry.

Pupils' results at the end of Key Stage 3 in 1999 were close to the national average overall, although results were better in mathematics and science than in English, as in the last three years. Girls consistently achieve better results than boys, particularly in English. Pupils' results at the end of Key Stage 4 in 1999 were close to the national average for pupils achieving five or more passes at grades A*-C but the average point score was below average. Over the last three years, results have been close to the national average. Since 1994, the trend over time is below the national trend, mainly due to untypical high results in that year and an overall reduction in the number of examination entries from 10 to 9 per pupil. Pupils did better in mathematics, science, design technology and French than in their other subjects. In contrast, standards in English and Expressive Arts are below average. Girls attain higher results than boys. Results in the sixth form, for students taking A-level or GNVQ qualifications, were below average in 1999. A-level results have been below average for the last three years but there have been very few entries and the figures are not statistically meaningful.

Inspection evidence shows that standards are improving, particularly at Key Stage 3. Overall, there are relative strengths in mathematics and science but weaknesses in English, particularly writing, art and information technology.

When results are compared to those of schools with similar intakes, they are well below average at Key Stage 3 and in the bottom 5 per cent (E*) at Key Stage 4. This comparison is based only on groups of schools with similar numbers of pupils eligible for free school meals and does not take into account the attainment of pupils on entry, the numbers with special educational needs, children of Showmen Travellers, pupils entering or leaving school during the year or the low aspirations of many families.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Most pupils have positive attitudes to school and to their work.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	The majority of pupils behave well in lessons and around the school.
Personal development and relationships	Relationships are good and this contributes positively to the quality of learning. Pupils are developing independence and take responsibility for their work.
Attendance	Overall satisfactory. Attendance figures are above the national average and unauthorised absence is average.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged 11-14 years	aged 14-16 years	aged over 16 years
	Good	Good	Good

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

Teaching was satisfactory or better in 94 per cent of lessons seen, of which 58 per cent were good or very good. Four per cent were unsatisfactory and two per cent poor. Teaching is good overall in mathematics, science, design technology, history, geography, music, physical education and religious education. Teaching is satisfactory in English, modern foreign languages and vocational subjects. Teaching in art however, although variable, is unsatisfactory overall because of weaknesses in expectations and classroom management, which results in limited learning. Teaching in information technology is satisfactory at Key Stage 3 but in Key Stage 4, it is unsatisfactory. There is no specialist course and other subjects do not provide enough teaching about information technology skills so that pupils improve, although the limited amount they do provide is often of good quality. Teachers have started to emphasise literacy skills but there are few opportunities across the curriculum to improve pupils' numeracy skills. Teachers know their pupils well and are developing more accurate expectations of what pupils can do, based on the analysis of assessment information. Specialist teachers provide good support for pupils with special educational needs but not all teachers prepare suitable materials to meet their needs. Teachers make good provision to meet the needs of pupils from Showmen Traveller families.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The school provides a broad range of learning opportunities. There are particular strengths in extra curricular activities and outdoor education, enrichment activities and in the contributions of the local community. There is good provision in the sixth form. The introduction of vocational courses and a wider range of accreditation have improved curriculum provision in Key Stage 4. The school does not meet all statutory requirements for religious education and information technology but is currently revising the curriculum for September 2000.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Specialist teaching of pupils with special educational needs is good but teachers in subjects do not always meet the learning needs of the lowest attainers, those with weak literacy or with specific learning difficulties.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Satisfactory overall but variable. Provision for social and moral development is good, cultural development is satisfactory but that for spiritual development is unsatisfactory. Pupils' personal development is enhanced by their links with the community and the opportunity to work with and for others in school.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Overall good. The school has made good progress in monitoring behaviour, attendance and attainment. There is good provision to ensure pupils' welfare, health and safety, including the arrangements for child protection. The educational and personal support and guidance for pupils provided by the school is satisfactory and a developing area.
How well the school works in partnership with parents	The school has developed satisfactory and effective links with parents and is working with increasing success to improve and extend these links.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher and senior staff provide very good leadership, that of departments is more variable.
How well the appropriate authority fulfils its responsibilities	The governing body fulfils its role very well. Governors are well informed, well organised and committed to improving standards.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school is making good use of available information from tests and examinations to evaluate progress and set targets for future developments. The development plan process includes a rigorous evaluation of improvement.
The strategic use of resources	Staffing and the resources available for learning are satisfactory overall, although there are some weaknesses in resources in French, art and music and there are not enough computers in departments. Accommodation remains a problem. The school has used its own resources to refurbish where possible but major items of repair are dependent on local authority support. Provision for science and physical education remains in poor condition. Financial management is good. Best value principles are applied to the school's use of resources although the school does not yet properly monitor the effectiveness of its spending on pupils' attainments.

PARENTS AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pupils like school. • Pupils are making good progress. • Parents feel comfortable about approaching the school with problems. • The school expects children to work hard and achieve their best. • The school is helping pupils to become mature and sensible. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The variable provision and marking of homework. • The amount of information they are given about how pupils are making progress. • Variability in the quality of teaching in some subjects. • The closeness of the partnership between parents and the school.

The inspection confirmed the positive views of parents. The school provides a caring ethos, in which pupils are helped to make progress and pupils develop a mature and sensible approach to work. The school has already recognised the issues and concerns raised by parents and inspection evidence confirmed the improvements being made. In these areas, it was felt that the school had made great strides forward and parents' concerns were not well founded and parents are increasingly well informed and involved by the school. The school is monitoring the setting and marking of homework and is reviewing and extending the information provided for parents, both curriculum information and details on the progress made by pupils. Senior staff are also monitoring the quality of teaching and providing inservice training to improve the consistency of quality across the school.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1. When pupils enter the school their attainments have varied over the last few years between average and below average, as shown in the national tests in English, mathematics and science. The school uses additional standardised tests and these indicate that although there is a wide spread of attainment, there are very few pupils who are attaining well above average and a significant number whose attainments are well below average when they start at the school.
2. In 1999, pupils' results in National Curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 3, at the age of 14, were close to the national comparison with all schools in English, mathematics and science, for those achieving the benchmark Level 5 or above and for the average point score. Results over the last four years have varied between subjects, with standards in English consistently below those of mathematics and science. Girls have consistently achieved better results than boys, particularly in English. Test results were close to teachers' own assessments in mathematics but were higher in English and lower in science. When results are compared to those of similar schools, based on eligibility for free school meals, they are well below average. Standardised testing by the school and comparison of test results shows that the result in 1999 represented satisfactory achievement for pupils compared with their attainments in primary schools.
3. In other subjects, assessments by teachers of pupils aged 14 indicate broadly average standards in design technology, information technology, modern foreign languages and art; above average attainment in history but below average in geography. Attainment was above average in physical education but very low in music. Inspection evidence confirms some of these judgements but those in history were over optimistic and those in geography and music over pessimistic.
4. In 1999, pupils' results in GCSE examinations at the end of Key Stage 4, for pupils aged 16, were close to national figures for all schools for five or more passes at grades A*-C. The average point score however, was below the national average and reflects the cohort, which had few able pupils and a significant number of lowest attainers. However, when results are compared with those of similar schools, they are very low and in the lowest five per cent nationally for the average point score and well below average for five higher grades, although about average for one pass. Pupils did better in mathematics, science, design technology and French than in their other subjects. Since 1994, the trend over time is below the national trend, although there were untypically high results in that year and since then the number of GCSE entries per pupil has been reduced from 10 to 9. The average attainments of boys have declined steadily since the last inspection. Those of girls have been consistently above national figures until a considerable drop in 1999. Although these results did not match the targets set by the school, standardised testing and analysis of assessments shows that pupils achieved as well as expected from their previous attainment. Recent improvements in the use of assessment data are helping the school to set realistic and achievable targets for future years.
5. The attainment of A-level and GNVQ students was below average in both 1998 and 1999. GNVQ students completing their courses of study frequently gain good grades, especially in the intermediate business course, but completion rates are disappointing. Only 53 per cent of students completed their courses in 1998, with this figure falling to 50 percent in 1999. Though some students enter employment and do not complete their courses, the majority fail to complete on time because of non adherence to course deadlines. A-level results overall showed well below average point scores but results in mathematics were above average. In art, business studies, chemistry, English language, English literature, French and music, although there were few higher grades, they each recorded 100 pass rates. Subjects recording pass rates below the national average included biology, design technology, history, physics and sociology. Each subject however has a relatively small number of entries and this prevents any meaningful comparison with national figures over time.
6. From lesson observations and other inspection evidence, attainment in English meets the standards expected nationally at Key Stage 3 and in the sixth form, but is below expectations in Key Stage 4. Pupils' achievements however, are appropriate from their attainments on entry to the school. Speaking and listening are in line at both key stages, and above it for many pupils. Pupils of all attainments answer

questions fully and discuss issues confidently and at Key Stage 4, they are adept at using quotations to support their opinions. Reading and writing skills are as expected at Key Stage 3, although pupils' understanding is more secure than their fluency and expression and writing varies from the outstanding to the very weak, with poor spelling, punctuation and handwriting. Standards of reading are as expected but writing at Key Stage 4 is below expectations because of a lack of accuracy and weaknesses in expression, particularly by middle attaining pupils. In the sixth form, standards are as expected in English literature, where students have a good knowledge of texts and their contexts and many write with a crisp and focused style. In English language however, standards are below expectations and some students have difficulties with vocabulary or inaccuracies in writing.

7. By the end of Key Stage 3, standards of attainment in mathematics seen in lessons and other inspection evidence are as expected nationally and represent satisfactory achievement. Pupils show a good facility for numbers and they work effectively with shape, space and measures. Their performance in using and applying mathematics is more variable and is not developed as well as their other skills. By the end of Key Stage 4, pupils are attaining above the standards expected and this represents good achievement from their attainment on entry. Pupils complete number work without undue reliance on calculators, they calculate the areas and volumes of shapes and have a good appreciation of some geometric theorems. Their work on data handling is well developed but their use of drawing instruments is more variable and not well developed in some classes. Standards of attainment in the sixth form are well above those expected for the course and represent very good achievement. Students complete work to a high standard in pure and applied mathematics, including statistics and mechanics.
8. From inspection evidence, standards in science by the end of Key Stage 3 are above expectations and demonstrate good achievement from the pupils' attainment on entry. Overall standards are in line with expectations by the end of Key Stage 4 and represent satisfactory achievement over the key stage. At both key stages, pupils are confident in planning and carrying out investigations, although higher attainers are more evaluative of the results. Pupils of all levels of attainment develop and consolidate their knowledge of living and physical processes and materials. Examination of A-level folders and limited lesson observation indicates that students are mostly attaining at levels in line with the predicted grades from GCSE.
9. In other areas of the curriculum, standards are as expected by the end of both key stages in design technology, history, geography, modern foreign languages and physical education; standards in religious education are as expected by the end of Key Stage 3 and in the examination course in Key Stage 4. In all of these subjects, pupils build on the knowledge, skills and understanding they had when they entered the school, and they build secure foundations for learning in new subjects. In music, pupils attain as expected by the end of Key Stage 3 but those pupils who choose to study music at Key Stage 4 achieve well and their attainment is above expectations. In contrast, pupils attain as expected in information technology by the end of Key Stage 3 but this declines to below expectations by the end of Key Stage 4 because there are not enough structured opportunities to teach pupils about information technology or to enhance their skills. In vocational education courses, although standards are below expectations, they are appropriate for the pupils involved and represent satisfactory achievement. Standards in art are below expectations by the end of key Stage 3; there is a lack of precision in their work and they do not develop their skills in three-dimensions. Pupils choosing to study art for GCSE however, attain as well as expected.
10. There were only limited opportunities to see lessons in the sixth form because some subjects are taught at other schools and there were some examinations taking place. From the lessons seen and a scrutiny of students' work however, the attainment of present sixth form students is in line with expectations overall but there are considerable variations between subjects. Students are attaining above expectations in design technology, where they understand the design process well and the need for attention to detail. They are able to relate their project work to commercial and industrial settings. In contrast, students of modern foreign languages are working below the standards expected because of weaknesses in their writing skills. Higher attaining students are making good progress in the business studies advanced vocational course.
11. Standards of speaking and listening are broadly as expected nationally when pupils enter the school; they improve as they move through the school and are frequently above expectation. Reading standards are as expected. Pupils' standards of writing are sufficient to communicate their knowledge and understanding of the subjects they study but a number of pupils, particularly at Key Stage 4, have inaccurate spelling, punctuation and expression. Pupils' numeracy skills across the curriculum are broadly as expected and pupils used them effectively in science, geography, history, design technology and business education. There is however, no whole school numeracy policy and numerical skills are not used as often as they could

be across the curriculum. Pupils reach the standards expected in their use of information technology in Key Stage 3, largely as a result of the work done in design and technology and additionally in English and mathematics but standards in Key Stage 4 are below expectations because there is not discrete course or planned framework of developing skills and experiences. Most higher attaining pupils underachieve in information technology, except a significant minority of pupils who develop high level skills at home, exemplifying good independent learning capability. In the sixth form, standards are appropriate for the GNVQ courses but students do not use information technology as much as expected.

12. Pupils with Statements of Special Educational Need make good progress towards the targets set for them when given the support they need. Pupils make good progress in their literacy skills in Key Stage 3, especially in Year 7, for those pupils who receive small group tuition over a period of 6 weeks during English lessons. Achievements are monitored and additional help given if needed. The achievements of pupils with special educational needs who do not have a statement, and consequently no additional support in lessons, is more variable. Most pupils cope adequately in lessons, helped by good relationships with the teachers and by a generally high standard of teaching, but they do not make as much progress as they could or should. Moreover, where pupil management is less secure, pupils with behavioural difficulties in mixed ability classes make unsatisfactory progress. Achievements for pupils with specific learning difficulties also vary. For example, one pupil achieved well in a science test, while another pupil with similar difficulties, is clearly struggling with both spelling and handwriting in history. Both pupils have individual educational plans (IEPs) which include helpful strategies but there is as yet either insufficient skill or support in lessons to enable most teachers to follow advice fully and effectively.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

13. Pupils have good attitudes, they are attentive, stay on task well and appear to enjoy their work. Such positive attitudes make a good contribution to standards attained and the quality of learning. Of the lessons seen during the inspection, 94 per cent were characterised by satisfactory or better attitudes and behaviour and 65 per cent were characterised by a good or better response from pupils. There are a small number of pupils who are not enthusiastic about school and have negative attitudes but the great majority show good interest and involvement in school life and participate well in a range of extra curricular activities, trips and residential visits. The pupils show a commitment to the school community and support for each other in a range of initiatives, such as the paired reading scheme. Pupils work well together in lessons, as in a Year 7 lesson in personal and social education when sharing ideas on things they do well and preparing a presentation to the whole class. The School Council is well respected by pupils and provides a valuable forum for them to present their ideas about a range of school issues.
14. The behaviour of pupils overall is good, as in the last inspection report. The vast majority of pupils are sensible and well behaved in most lessons and around the school. They are polite and aware of the needs of other people. Even in the dining room, which can be crowded and on congested staircases, pupils show good-natured tolerance. Pupils are careful with property, both their own and the school. Good behaviour contributes well to pupils' personal development. Pupils understand the behaviour code and the standards expected of them, most meet these expectations with ease and require only minimal supervision by staff. There is a small minority of pupils whose behaviour can be challenging but they are mostly well managed by staff. The number of exclusions has risen since the last inspection and this reflects the positive application of sanctions in the behaviour policy, especially in terms of a one-day headteacher's exclusion.
15. The personal development of pupils and relationships are good and this contributes positively to the quality of learning and standards attained in the majority of lessons. Bullying, racism and sexism are not features of the school. When incidents do occur, for example, unacceptable remarks or name calling, they are dealt with promptly by staff. Pupils have a satisfactory understanding of how their behaviour affects others and this is successfully reinforced in the school in lessons. Pupils are developing independence and take responsibility for their work and their actions. They respect the values and feelings of others, for example when evaluating each other's performance in drama or physical education. Pupils also recognise the needs of others beyond the school community and actively support a range of charities. Pupils in Year 9 undertake reception duties on a rota basis and there are opportunities for pupils in Key Stage 4 to link with and help younger pupils. Such linking and support between pupils help strengthen relationships within the school and to foster the community spirit. Pupils generally are relaxed and mix well both in lessons in paired and group work and also when at leisure. Positive relationships at all levels are a good feature of the school.

16. Attendance is satisfactory and above the national average for similar schools at over 92 per cent. Unauthorised absence is in line with the national average. The majority of pupils arrive punctually to school but during the day there is some late arrival at lessons because there is no lesson changeover bell. However, this does prevent congestion on narrow stairways and corridors.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

17. Teaching is good overall and in most subjects. Teaching is satisfactory or better in 94 per cent of lessons seen of which 58 per cent are good or very good. Four per cent of lessons are unsatisfactory and two per cent are poor, all of which are in Key Stage 3. Teaching is good overall in mathematics, science, design technology, history, geography, music, physical education and religious education. There is satisfactory teaching in English, modern foreign languages and vocational subjects. Teaching in art however, although variable, is unsatisfactory overall because of weaknesses in expectations and classroom management, which results in limited learning. Teaching is satisfactory in information technology in Key Stage 3 but unsatisfactory at Key Stage 4 because there is no specialist course and other subjects do not provide enough teaching about information technology skills so that pupils improve.
18. Teachers are generally specialists in their subjects, they have a good knowledge and can draw on a range of experiences to illustrate their teaching. This was seen very well in a geography lesson in Key Stage 3 where the teacher's expert explanation of the structure of the earth, using very good diagrams, interested pupils of all levels of attainment and provided a very good introduction to the topic of volcanoes and earthquakes. Teachers use technical terms accurately and ensure that pupils learn how to use them. Teachers have a current priority to improve pupils' literacy skills. They use posters and wall charts to highlight subject specific vocabulary and they use the whiteboards very effectively to consolidate literacy skills. Teachers are aware of which pupils need additional help with their writing and some use prompt sheets or amended materials so that these pupils can achieve.
19. In the best lessons, teachers plan thoroughly to build on previous work, to make the most of the time available and to enable pupils to reach the high expectations that they set for them. This was seen very well in a history lesson for pupils in Year 9 that proceeded at a brisk pace and made good use of different materials. Pupils were challenged to think and make personal responses to changes in medicine in the 19th century; they showed good levels of interest and pupils of different levels of attainment showed good learning, including those with special educational needs. Careful planning for a Year 8 German lesson led to a brisk pace and a range of activities and pupils responded with enthusiasm, demonstrating real enjoyment of the language.
20. Most teachers have good management strategies to ensure that pupils concentrate and get the most out of the lesson. They are very good in music and physical education but unsatisfactory in art where pupils do not become absorbed in their work. Teachers make a satisfactory use of the range of resources available, including books, videos and support staff but they do not all use information technology as regularly as they could, or use the full range available. Some teachers make very good use of artefacts to stimulate enquiry or to create a sense of time and place. This was very effective in a religious education lesson on the Jewish Shabbat and led to learning of a very high order.
21. In lessons and in marking work, teachers use assessment satisfactorily to let pupils know how well they are doing and how they can improve. This is an aspect of teaching that is more variable than some others. Although satisfactory overall, it does vary from being good in design technology and physical education to unsatisfactory in art and information technology. At its best, assessment gives pupils regular helpful feedback on their performance and sets targets for future improvement, related to National Curriculum expectations. Homework was set regularly during the inspection but a scrutiny of pupils' books and planners shows that this has not always been the case. Homework, and other marked work, shows a very variable response by teachers.
22. Teaching meets the needs of the range of pupils in the school. There are very few very able pupils but they are well known to teachers who set appropriately high expectations. Pupils from Showmen traveller families are well supported when they are in school and receive regular work packs when they are on the road. There is good quality specialist teaching for pupils with special educational needs. Pupils are taught in small groups in Key Stage 3 and there is good use of assessment in lesson planning. This gives individual pupils a range of activities to work on and a good mix of independence and support. Teachers use well

selected methods to promote recall and sequencing skills, as well as to reading fluency and comprehension and to writing skills. Pupils practice and consolidate their learning with a range of activities including computer programmes. Pupils who follow a thinking skills course in Year 10 are challenged effectively, and are learning more about how they learn. Some teachers have developed effective ways of meeting the needs of all pupils, with different tasks or levels of work in modern foreign languages and peer group support in mathematics, but there is considerable variation within and between departments. In some pupils' individual education plans, there is a clear recommendation for using alternative ways of recording information for some pupils with specific learning difficulties. This is not always complied with and confirms the concern of some parents that the school is not yet fully addressing the needs of pupils with specific learning difficulties.

23. The overall result of this good teaching is that most pupils learn well. They respond appropriately when set challenging tasks, often become absorbed in their work and enjoy what they are doing. The best teaching results in a brisk pace of learning, engagement in intellectual challenge and enjoyment of new knowledge and skills. Improvements in assessment and recording of pupils' progress mean that they now know what they have to do to improve.

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

Opportunities for learning

24. The school's overall curriculum provides a good range of opportunities, especially at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form, despite not complying with all statutory requirements. The school has made a satisfactory response to the 1996 inspection report. The quality of tutor time has improved significantly and the organisation and arrangements for personal, social and health education have been effectively restructured. The imbalance towards the humanities at Key Stage 4 has been rectified. Shortcomings in the provision for non GCSE courses at Key Stage 4 have been dealt with effectively. All pupils now gain nationally recognised accreditation from all courses. However, progress towards ensuring effective delivery of information technology throughout the school has been slow. The time allocation for the second modern foreign language at Key Stage 3 is still inadequate, although the school has plans to rectify this.
25. The curriculum at Key Stage 3 is satisfactory. It comprises the required range of National Curriculum subjects plus religious education, personal, social and health education and drama. There are some shortcomings in the distribution of some lessons across the 10 day timetable, such as the Year 7 group which has all its history lessons in one of the two weeks available. The time allocated to pupils taking a second modern foreign language in Year 9 is too short. Some pupils have more time to study their second language than others. However, the school has identified steps to remedy what is an interim situation in its curriculum plan for September 2000.
26. The provision at Key Stage 4 is good. All pupils take accredited courses in English, mathematics, science (dual award), design and technology and a modern foreign language. In addition, they take courses in physical education, personal and social education and information technology. The amount of allocated time and the coverage of information technology are not sufficient to meet statutory requirements. The time allocation for religious education is also insufficient to meet statutory requirements, but the school has identified this shortcoming and has clear strategies to meet the requirements for September, 2000. In addition to the core curriculum, pupils study further options that include a choice from National Curriculum subjects, drama and GNVQ Part One courses in business at intermediate and foundation levels. A course in GCSE physical education has been introduced since the last inspection. Altogether the curriculum provides good breadth, balance and relevance. Pupils select courses that match their needs, aptitudes and attainments. The small proportion of pupils who do not enter GCSE in English, mathematics and modern foreign languages achieve accreditation through the Certificate of Achievement.
27. Provision in the sixth form is good for a school of this size and well matched to the students' needs. It results from carefully planned and managed consortium arrangements with two other schools. These provide 19 A-level courses, advanced level GNVQ courses in business and leisure and tourism, and advanced and intermediate GNVQ courses in information technology. There are common arrangements for timetabling and shared teaching and transport arrangements. This represents good provision and opportunity, although the arrangements for religious education do not meet statutory requirements. Sixth

form students have access to the school's range of enrichment activities, including fulfilling leadership and organisational roles on the School Council and fund raising for charity. There are opportunities for additional accreditation in information technology. Currently the time allocated for general studies has been reduced because of budgetary constraints but curriculum plans for the next academic year redress this.

28. The school makes broadly satisfactory arrangements for the teaching of literacy skills across the curriculum, but arrangements for developing numeracy are more limited. Since the last inspection, it has identified the subjects that contribute to the development of numeracy skills. It has established time in Year 7 for the teaching of numeracy within the mathematics department. However, there is no whole school numeracy policy and the lack of such a policy inhibits the further development of numeracy skills across the curriculum. The literacy policy provides clear guidance and expectation about the development of literacy skills in all subjects. Most departments have responded well to the requirement to teach the specialist vocabulary of their subject and there are some examples of good practice in history, geography and religious education. However, the policy has still to make a full impact and there is unevenness in opportunities for reading, guidance for planning and structuring writing and in standards of presentation.
29. The school provides a broad range of opportunities and alternative accreditation to meet the needs of pupils with special educational needs. The requirements for pupils who have a Statement of Special Educational Need are implemented fully. Arrangements for small group support do not disrupt other subject lessons and there is appropriate focus on intensive tuition followed by thorough monitoring to ensure sustained learning. Individual educational plans (IEPs), are of very high quality, with key data to inform subject teachers and a concise summary of pupils' strengths and weaknesses. Targets are mostly specific and measurable and reflect much initial consultation with the pupils concerned and their parents. Some IEPs for Year 7 pupils have targets relating directly to National Curriculum levels, especially in English. Equally well produced behaviour IEPs are drawn up and administered by pastoral staff. Nevertheless, IEPs are not yet fully effective because the plans are not fully implemented in lessons and there is a low level of additional support available.
30. The provision for extra curricular opportunities is extensive and of very good quality. The school has a tradition of providing teams for most major sports and is particularly strong in athletics and cross country. There is also a tradition of outdoor pursuits ranging from a residential camp in Key Stage 3 to the Ten Tors walk for Year 10 and the sixth form. Other activities include canoeing and climbing. In addition to sport there is a school orchestra, music tuition and drama productions. There are visits abroad to develop language skills and awareness of other cultures. Fund raising for charity is well established and sixth form students support younger pupils in organising this. In addition to extra curricular activities, there is a most extensive range of enrichment activities. All subjects provide additional preparation and help for external examinations and tests. Each curriculum area has set up a series of enrichment activities: readathon; field trips; competitions for young designers and technologists; and mathematics challenges. The school arranges an enrichment weekend for more able pupils and an annual project week for all pupils.
31. There are satisfactory procedures to ensure equality of access and opportunity and, with two exceptions, all pupils benefit from what the school offers. Equality of opportunity has improved since the last inspection report by an expansion of accreditation opportunities at Key Stage 4. A notable strength is the provision for the school's small number of pupils of Showmen traveller families, which includes learning packs to support their education during the summer term. There are some shortcomings at Key Stage 3. In physical education, boys and girls do not have equal access to the same activities such as dance and football. The sharply contrasting nature of the core course books for German and French mean that pupils experience contrasting teaching and learning activities. There are differences between the attainments of boys and girls. The school's programme to raise attainment is devised to reduce this difference.
32. There is a well structured programme for personal, social and health education. It has developed considerably since the last inspection and is better taught. Form tutors know their pupils well and give them good support. The programme is expanding, especially with reference to monitoring and supporting the pupils' personal and academic development. It covers a good range of themes, including the main elements of health, diet, sex education, careers and educational guidance and study skills. Since the last inspection, a new co-ordinator has been appointed and this had a positive impact on the provision. Provision for careers education and guidance and work related opportunities is satisfactory. It benefits from the commitment and application from the school's assigned careers officer from Learning Partnership West. However, overall provision suffers from some fragmentation of responsibilities that leads to some lack of coherence. The

school follows the expected procedures for providing guidance to Year 9 pupils when they make their Key Stage 4 option choices.

33. The school's links with the local community are very good and make a significant and effective contribution to the pupils' learning. The personal and social education programme is enhanced by a series of visitors and guest speakers who make contributions on topics such as health, the law and drug awareness. More than 40 employers support the annual Year 9 World of Work project. Pupils visit local churches and other places of worship as part of their religious education. Students in the sixth form research assignments based on local businesses and carry out work shadowing as part of their GNVQ courses. Pupils carry out design projects based on needs in the local community. English language students design, write and read books to younger pupils in infant and primary schools.
34. The school has good links with partner institutions. The links in the sixth form are very good and result in a well matched and extensive curriculum. There is frequent liaison at all management levels and includes forward planning. There are expanding links with higher education institutions. Links with primary schools are satisfactory. There is a primary liaison group that meets regularly. Year 6 and Year 5 pupils visit the school for taster days.

Opportunities for personal development

35. Overall, provision for personal development, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is satisfactory, though some elements of it are stronger than others. Provision for spiritual development is unsatisfactory. Religious Education and personal and social education play a major role in the development of spirituality providing opportunities to reflect on their own and other peoples lives, for example the rights and responsibilities of the citizen and friendships. There is however, no clear pattern of progress in spiritual development across the curriculum. Each year group has an assembly each week developing a sense of belonging to a community and the social responsibilities this entails. The programme focuses on moral, social and cultural issues but there are few opportunities for reflection, interaction between pupils and sharing of values of a Christian nature. The statutory requirement for a daily act of collective worship is still not met and has not improved since the last inspection.
36. Provision for pupils' moral and social development is good. Teachers provide effective role models for pupils and expect them to behave well, care for others and have a clear sense of right and wrong. The school code of conduct provides a clear moral framework. In religious education, pupils study a range of moral issues including euthanasia and abortion. The personal and social education programme promotes responsibilities and attitudes towards a healthy lifestyle and life within the community with topics including, citizenship, crime and punishment, rights and responsibilities. In physical education pupils demonstrate fair play, and good sporting behaviour in competitive games. There are many opportunities for pupils to form positive relationships in lessons, extra curricular activities and enrichment weeks. Pupils are given opportunities to take responsibility through the school Council, raising money for charities and paired reading. The Chips scheme provides older pupils with the opportunity to support other pupils in the school and all pupils have a voice on the school Council through their year representatives. There is some participation in the wider community including the Chipping Sodbury Festival, the Sodbury Sevens and the Ten Tors. Many visitors and local businesses from the community, the Samaritans, the police force and the armed forces are involved in supporting the curriculum. Individual departments provide a range of opportunities to work with a partner and small groups developing co-operative work, listening, discussing and respecting each other's points of view.
37. The provision for cultural development is satisfactory. Pupils appreciate their own cultural traditions through visits to art galleries and theatres. A number of clubs and activities such as music and drama add to cultural awareness. Provision to appreciate the diversity and richness of other cultures, traditions, attitudes and behaviour is provided through trips to France, Germany and Spain; the study of African, Indian and Japanese music; case studies in geography from around the world such as the Amazonian Indians and a range of texts in English. Although there has been some improvement since the last inspection there is still potential to acknowledge and celebrate further our multi cultural society.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

38. The school provides a secure and caring environment in which all pupils are valued. This positive feature of the school has been maintained and improved since the previous inspection. The steps taken to ensure pupils' welfare, health and safety, including the schools arrangements for child protection are good. The school has a clear policy for health and safety and governors and staff give this a high priority. There are regular inspections of the site and equipment. The issues noted in the previous inspection report have been fully addressed. There are regular fire drills and suitable arrangements are made for pupils who are unwell. The school has made some progress in addressing issues arising from the poor quality of some buildings and infra structure but further improvements rely on external investment. The arrangements for child protection are good. The school is sensitive to the needs of pupils and staff show a positive commitment to their pastoral role. Pupils express confidence in being able to discuss problems and concerns with staff or older pupils.
39. Monitoring of academic performance and personal development is good overall. This is an area on which the school has begun to focus and many new initiatives have been put into place and they are now being evaluated. Procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress are satisfactory but there is still some variability between departments as to the use made of assessment data to monitor pupils' progress. The Pupil Support Team members are actively assessing procedures and promoting good practice across the school. A good feature of monitoring developing in the school is the direct involvement of pupils in assessing and reviewing their own progress and setting targets to improve their work or conduct. The pupils' journal is used effectively in this area to record achievements and targets. The use of assessment information to guide curriculum planning is satisfactory but still at an early stage.
40. The school provides a high standard of care for pupils with special educational needs. There are comprehensive and effective systems for identifying pupils with learning difficulties with good liaison with primary schools. A recent improvement includes testing of reading comprehension for all pupils in Year 7, not just those thought to have difficulties. Individual education plans (IEPs) have a range of information to help teachers plan and there are good review procedures which work satisfactorily. The school's register of pupils with special educational needs is sufficiently detailed and yet concise and is updated regularly. Annual Reviews for pupils with a Statement of Special Educational Needs are conducted efficiently, with appropriate involvement of parents and pupils, as well as external support agencies such as the educational psychologist and the Careers Service. Support for teachers includes a helpful "yellow file" for every teacher and user-friendly review formats, although insufficient additional help is available in lessons. Support for pupils includes a homework club and help at lunchtimes and paired reading in the library each week with volunteers from Year 10. While it is too soon to evaluate the reading progress of the Year 7 pupils concerned, it does promote fluency, confidence and good reading habits and provides valuable personal development for the senior pupil-helpers.
41. The school has developed good procedures for monitoring and improving attendance. Good use is made of attendance information and staff are prompt in following up pupil absences. Procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour are also good. There is good guidance for staff and this helps to ensure a consistent whole school approach. The current system of rewards is under review to identify strategies appropriate for all year groups. Procedures for monitoring and eliminating oppressive behaviour are good. The anti bullying policy has recently been reviewed in consultation with parents and pupils. Incidents of oppressive behaviour are carefully recorded and are dealt with effectively but sensitively by the school.
42. The school provides satisfactory educational and personal support and guidance for pupils. The pastoral system is well structured and directed by the Pastoral Support Team. Tutors work in close partnership with heads of year. Pastoral staff know and care for their pupils and have maintained the features identified in the last inspection report. The personal and social education programme covers a good range of themes to promote self awareness, enhance esteem, encourage good learning skills and provide life skills for pupils. The course is enhanced by the use of outside speakers although the quality of guest speakers is sometimes variable. Lessons seen during the inspection were satisfactory and often good and valued by pupils. The careers programme is not as well directed but the school does value the work of the assigned careers officer who is increasingly well linked to senior staff.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

43. The parents' view of the school is satisfactory. They have a generally positive perception of the school as a caring environment in which their children are able to make progress in their studies and develop a mature outlook. Parents especially value the good progress their children make at school and the way in which the school expects pupils to work hard and do their best. Parents felt comfortable about approaching the school with questions and problems. Some parents were unhappy about the quality, quantity and marking of homework and although overall the inspection found homework to be satisfactory the inspection did identify some inconsistencies, particularly in the regularity of marking. The school is monitoring this area. Some parents were not happy about the information provided by the school, especially about their child's progress nor did they feel that the school worked closely with parents. The inspection noted the great improvements that the school had made to the range and quality of information provided for parents and also the active promotion of a positive partnership with parents. In these areas, it was felt that the school had made great strides forward and parents concerns were not well founded and parents are increasingly well informed and involved by the school.
44. The school has developed satisfactory and effective links with parents and is working with increasing success to improve and extend them. Parents have been positively involved by the school in policy reviews as well as the formulation of new policies through the workshops on sex education and drugs. The school has issued a number of publications for parents such as the Year 7 Curriculum Handbook and Survival Guides to help parents provide more consistent and informed support for their children. Publications are clear, well presented and very informative and reflect notable progress since the last inspection. This also applies to the regular information provided in the school newsletter which is printed fortnightly. Information for new parents is good and the induction of new parents and pupils into the school is comprehensive and well organised. Parents receive information about their children's progress each term. The annual report is clear and identifies grades for attainment and effort in all subjects. However not all subject relate attainment to National Curriculum levels. The school does show care and sensitivity in communicating with parents who are unable to read or write.
45. The school encourages good parental involvement. The participation and contribution made by parent governors is valued by the school. Their work has made a positive contribution to new initiatives to improve the involvement of parents and the information provided for them. The Parent Teacher Association (PTA) is active and very supportive of the school. Funds raised by the PTA have been used to contribute to the cost of providing all pupils with a journal and supporting individual departments. Parents attend a range of events at the school but are not involved in the school on a day to day basis. Parents day to day involvement with school has not improved since the last inspection but parents are encouraged to become involved in the targets set for pupils and to discuss them at home. The home school agreement has had a positive impact and the consultation process involved has been a valuable experience. The school is considering the introduction of a parents forum group to represent the views of parents in consultation exercises.
46. The school involves parents of pupils with special educational needs fully into the decision-making, monitoring and reviewing process, for example in producing individual education plans. This ensures appropriately challenging yet realistic targets and engages the help of parents to meet them. In addition, support staff maintain good informal contact, often by phone, with the parents of pupils who have targeted support. There is also support for parents and pupils in the form of an evening meeting to help parents promote the reading skills of their child. There is some parental concern about the school's recognition of dyslexia. There is good provision within small groups for pupils with recognised specific learning difficulties, and appropriate strategies on IEPs, but examination of pupils' work across the curriculum does confirm that in some cases, more needs to be done in the way of providing writing frames and in the use of information technology.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

47. The school is very well led by the headteacher and senior staff. They have a clear vision of school improvement that directs all that they do; they work very well together as a team and have realistic evaluations of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. The governing body is well informed and committed to school improvement. Since the previous inspection report, governors and senior staff have

implemented a range of good quality initiatives, many in the last two years. These initiatives have brought about satisfactory improvement overall with the capacity for much more in the future.

48. Governors have improved the structures and organisation of their committees so that they can develop expertise and make informed contributions to discussion. The governing body offers support and monitors the work of the school through observation, presentations and regular reports, for example on curriculum changes or budget planning. The chairman of governors knows the strengths and weaknesses of the school very well and this reflects the regular evaluation undertaken on standards and provision. The governors receive regular reports on action taken to improve issues from the last inspection. They have set realistic targets for improvements in attainment and performance targets for senior staff. Governors have regularly reviewed their statutory responsibilities but staffing, budget and accommodation issues are given as reasons why the school does not fulfil the requirement for a daily act of collective worship or for the provision of information technology at Key Stage 4.
49. Senior staff have devised good systems to collect and distribute assessment data from standardised tests and they have regular discussions with heads of department to consider what this means for teaching and learning. The school development plan is well devised and presents a very clear picture of how the school can improve and what it needs to do, based on the information gathered from assessment. The school has appropriate priorities to raise attainment overall, the attainments of boys and in particular, standards of literacy and to ensure more even attainment between subjects.
50. The management of departments or pastoral responsibilities is good overall, although there is some variation in quality. Senior staff have ensured that there is a clear understanding of what needs to be done, through job descriptions, policies and guidance. Heads of department meet every two weeks with their line manager to review progress and this ensures that senior staff have a very clear picture of what is happening across the school. There are regular team meetings for departments and pastoral teams in addition to departmental meetings and this ensures that all staff can contribute effectively to school policies and developments. In practice, there are variations in the quality of departmental leadership, in most cases because staff are new or relatively inexperienced in their role.
51. The headteacher and senior staff have devised good procedures to monitor teaching and to share expertise. They are relatively recent and the impact of these changes is satisfactory. Each head of department has time allocated to monitor the work of the department through lesson observation or scrutiny of pupil work. In practice, the use of this time is variable and not all heads of department observe teaching regularly, although they have a clear, informal view of standards. All senior staff have teaching commitments that give them good insights into progress but as yet they do not routinely observe across the curriculum. All staff are invited to join a working group on teaching and learning which is providing guidance and helping staff to share their expertise. Senior staff are aware when teachers are underperforming and when necessary they have set targets and set up regular monitoring visits. These changes to procedures, and staffing changes, have led to improvements in the quality of teaching, compared to those identified in the last inspection report.
52. There is effective leadership and efficient management of learning support by the special educational needs co-ordinator. The school's policy for special educational needs is comprehensive and clear with very good evaluation procedures. The department has set itself challenging targets and there is a commitment to ongoing improvement to promote pupils' attainment. The Governor's Annual Report to parents does not fully comply with statutory requirements and there is a need for closer monitoring of the special educational needs funding arrangements by the governing body. The school contributes generously towards special educational needs and funding is appropriately targeted but the number of learning support assistants is low, enough only to give targeted support to pupils with statements. It was clear from the inspection, that pupils without a statement but on the register do not have enough additional support in lessons.
53. The match of the qualifications and experience of teachers' to the school's curriculum is satisfactory. Since the last inspection, the staff profile has changed. There is now a good balance of relatively inexperienced and experienced staff, some of whom are taking responsibility on a temporary basis. However, there are not enough qualified teachers of information technology to effectively deliver the curriculum. The arrangements for the professional development of staff are satisfactory. A staff development policy is in place and the effectiveness of training is monitored. Training is planned, after consultation with subject leaders, and is usually linked to school and department development plans and to individual needs. A separate budget is provided for training and staff are required to evaluate any training they have received on returning to school. Support for newly qualified teachers is planned through the school's induction

programme; they feel well supported by the school and the department. The match of the number of non-teaching staff to the needs of the curriculum is inadequate, particularly with regard to learning support assistants in special needs. Technical support in other areas is sufficient to meet the demand. There is now a shadow staffing structure towards which the school is moving. There is now a clear system of line management.

54. The school has a satisfactory level of resources for the curriculum overall, but there are some variations between departments. There are good resources in geography, German, history, physical education and vocational subjects but there are weaknesses in French, art and music. Although the number of computers overall is close to the national figure, there are relatively few in departments and the suites of machines are booked up many months ahead, thus restricting flexibility. The library is a good learning resource, well managed by a qualified librarian and includes additional computer resources, including CDROM and Internet access. The school has made good use of charitable grants to improve levels of resources, particularly textbooks.
55. The quantity of the school's accommodation is satisfactory, but with poor maintenance in some areas. Since the last inspection, a number of improvements have been effected. Some of these have been small scale and funded from the school's own budget and frequently relying on the skills and enthusiasm of the caretaking staff. Some larger schemes have also been implemented, including art and music facilities, the refurbishment of the pupils' toilets and the replacement of some windows. Much work remains to be done, however. Teaching and learning are made more difficult in cold and draughty conditions. The standard of the playing fields is unsatisfactory and the school is presently unable to provide outdoor cricket facilities. The facilities in general for physical education are unsatisfactory and both gymnasiums are in a poor state of repair. The school does not have a sports hall. The science laboratories are unsuitable for the demands of the National Curriculum and sixth form teaching and some of the tar-macadam areas around the school are uneven and poorly maintained.
56. Staff and governors are aware of the problems and, since the last inspection, a site development plan has been constructed. Outstanding items however will require significant external investment. Where improvements have taken place, the working environment has been improved and further enhancements have been achieved by stimulating displays of pupils' work. The library is a good resource for the students and the suiting of departments has seen an effective use being made of the accommodation available. Some corridors, though narrow, are well decorated, often with examples of pupils' work and, in one case, by a most impressive mural produced by the school's art department. The working environment, with the exception of the gymnasiums, is clean and pleasingly graffiti free.
57. The school's educational priorities are clearly communicated in the school development plan. This is appropriately costed and links well with departmental development plans, although the quality of these are variable and costings are not always fully considered. However, this is being addressed through line management discussions. The school's financial procedures are sound and improved accountancy practices and procedures have been introduced following a recent review. Budgetary practices are well-controlled using local authority protocols. Best value principles are applied to the use of resources, although the school does not yet properly monitor the effectiveness of its spending on attainment. The school has managed its financial resources very carefully and has begun to address successfully its deficit. The school's finances are monitored closely by the governors, who meet each month to review a detailed financial report.
58. The staffing costs and budget income are properly balanced at each key stage and in the sixth form. Some Year 12 and 13 classes are taught together to make more cost effective class sizes. The school makes satisfactory use of its limited technology and expenditure on new technology has been targeted at providing resources (Internet access, electronic mail and CD-ROMs) in the school library and in the sixth form area. Specific grants are used effectively for their designated purposes and the standards fund has been spent on developing GNVQ courses and providing for better school security. The money for pupils with special educational needs is used appropriately and staffing and resources are well deployed. Additional funding is available from the Chipping Sodbury Endowed School Foundation and this funding has been put to good use in providing additional resources for the school.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

59. In order to raise further the standards of work and quality of education provided, the governors, headteacher and senior managers should:

*Improve standards in English at Key Stage 4 and standards of literacy, particularly writing, across the curriculum by;

- improving the organisation of teaching and teaching methods to ensure that all pupils' needs are met;
- ensuring that teaching is monitored regularly and that feedback is given to teachers;
- developing more extensive use of writing frames and other supports for pupils' writing;
- developing further the supports for literacy in all subjects.

(1-6, 11-12, 62-74)

Improve the use and understanding and use of numeracy to help pupils analyse, plan and predict across the curriculum by;

- developing a whole school policy on numeracy;
- identifying a planned progression of numeracy skills and ensure that this is written into schemes of work;
- providing appropriate inservice training for all staff in the understanding and use of numeracy.

(7, 11, 28, 86)

*Improve standards and provision in information technology by;

- improving access to computers for all departments and individual pupils;
- developing a framework to ensure a planned progression of skills across the curriculum to meet the requirements of the National Curriculum;
- providing inservice training so that all staff are confident and capable of teaching information technology skills.

(11, 26, 128-133)

Improve teaching in art and improve standards in art at Key Stage 3.

- ensuring that all teachers use appropriate behaviour management strategies
- improving the range of topics used to meet the needs of all pupils;
- improving the nature and organisation of homework and ensure that marking helps pupils to improve.

Improve the planned provision for pupils' spiritual development by;

- identifying planned opportunities for spiritual development across the curriculum and ensuring that these are written into schemes of work;
- monitoring provision at departmental and whole school level.

*Continue to press the appropriate authorities for urgent improvements to accommodation for science and physical education and for improvements to the general fabric and decoration of the buildings.

(55, 97, 155)

60. In addition the governors should ensure that all statutory requirements are met for the provision of collective worship, religious education at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form and in providing full information on special educational needs provision in the annual report of governors to parents.

(26, 35, 43, 48)

61. The governors' action plan should also consider ways in which other issues are to be addressed, for example the variability of departmental management and the provision made in departments to meet the learning needs of pupils with special educational needs.

(22, 29, 50)

* The governors and senior managers have already identified these items in the school development plan.

PART C DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	160
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	56

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	16	42	36	4	2	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	No of pupils
Number of pupils on the school's roll	945
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	66

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs		Y7-11
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs		28
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register		102

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	0

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	30
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	33

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	92.4
National comparative data	90.9

Unauthorised absence

	%
school data	0.8
National comparative data	1.1

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	1999	89	72	161

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 5 and above	Boys	47	56	46
	Girls	48	49	34
	Total	95	105	80
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	school	59 (58)	66 (68)	50 (69)
	National	63 (65)	62 (60)	55 (56)
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 6 or above	school	21 (29)	43 (37)	20 (36)
	National	28 (35)	38 (36)	23 (27)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 5 and above	Boys	39	57	68
	Girls	46	49	59
	Total	85	106	127
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	school	53 (59)	66 (69)	79 (81)
	National	64 (61)	64 (64)	60 (61)
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 6 or above	school	22 (34)	42 (38)	28 (41)
	National	31 (30)	37 (37)	28 (30)

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year	1999	66	71	137

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	26	62	64
	Girls	34	61	69
	Total	60	123	133
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	school	43.8 (44.2)	89.8 (97. 3)	97 (98)
	National	46. 3 (44.6)	90.8 (89.8)	95.7 (93.4)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score	school	33.8 (38.4)
per pupil	National	37.8 (36.8)

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

Vocational qualifications		Number	% success rate
Number studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	school	35	89
	National		N/A

Attainment at the end of the sixth form

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A-level or AS-level examinations	1999	18	21	39

Average A/AS points score per candidate	For candidates entered for 2 or more A-levels or equivalent			For candidates entered for fewer than 2 A-levels or equivalent		
	Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
school	14.2	13.1	13.6	2.7	5.5	4.3
National	17.7	18.1	17.9	2.7	2.8	2.8

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

Vocational qualifications		Number	% success rate
Number in their final year of studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	school	20	50
	National		72

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	2
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	3
Pakistani	1
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	823
Any other minority ethnic group	4

Teachers and classes**Qualified teachers and classes: Y7-11**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	55.6
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	17
Average class size	25.6

Education support staff: Y7-11

Total number of education support staff	2
Total aggregate hours worked per week	16

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	1	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	51	0
Other minority ethnic groups	3	0

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

Financial information

Financial year	1998-9
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	£
Total income	2129570
Total expenditure	2177169
Expenditure per pupil	2439
Balance brought forward from previous year	-47599
Balance carried forward to next year	-33934

PARENTAL SURVEY

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	945
Number of questionnaires returned	106

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	36	49	12	3	0
My child is making good progress in school.	43	49	5	3	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	22	59	7	5	8
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	18	58	19	5	1
The teaching is good.	24	58	12	1	5
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	29	44	25	2	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	38	48	8	4	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	53	43	2	0	2
The school works closely with parents.	16	57	16	8	3
The school is well led and managed.	28	51	9	4	8
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	36	48	10	3	3
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	21	51	15	4	9

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

ENGLISH

62. Pupils enter the school with broadly average standards in English, although standards of writing are not as high as those in reading and speaking and listening. As at the time of the previous report, standards in the work seen at Key Stage 3 match expectation and represent satisfactory achievement given the pupils' previous attainments. Standards at the end of Key Stage 4 are below expectation because of weaknesses in the accuracy and expression of some pupils' written work. Standards in tests and examinations are below average but inspection evidence suggests that standards are improving, particularly in Key Stage 3.
63. In the 1999 end of Key Stage 3 tests, the average point score was below the national average and well below average for similar schools (based on the eligibility of pupils for free school meals). The proportion of pupils who reached the expected Level 5 or better and the higher Level 6 or better was in line with the national average but well below the average for similar schools. For the period 1996-99, attainment was below average, mainly because of the weak performance of boys. Pupils with special educational needs performed as expected from their previous attainment. Pupils' attainments overall were not as high in English as in mathematics but were similar to those in science.
64. Attainment in the 1999 GCSE English language examination was below the national average. The proportion of pupils who gained five or more higher grades was below the national average and well below the average for similar schools. The proportion achieving five or more passes however, matched the national average. A number of pupils with special educational needs passed at grade G or higher with a smaller proportion gaining the alternative Certificate of Achievement. Overall, pupils did not do as well in English as in their other subjects. The proportion passing at grade C or better has fluctuated over the last three years, peaking in 1998 when it was close to the national average. Girls consistently do better than boys. Standards of attainment in the 1999 GCSE English literature examination were above the national average but from a relatively small entry compared with figures nationally and in previous years in this school. Girls do better than boys. In 1999, pupils performed as well in English literature as in other subjects.
65. In the 1999 A-level English literature examination, all students passed at grades A-E or higher and a small proportion at grades A-B. Overall, attainment was higher than in 1998. In the 1999 English language examination all students passed at grades A-E and one third passed at grades A-B. This also represents improvement on the 1998 results. Students tend to achieve results in line with their previous attainment. The numbers taking examinations are too small for meaningful statistical comparison.
66. From work seen during the inspection, standards at the end of Key Stage 3 are in line with expectations with speaking and listening often higher than expected. Pupils of all attainments answer questions fully and discuss issues confidently. Some pupils have below expected standards in reading skills because they lack fluency and expression. However, overall levels of understanding are satisfactory, as was frequently seen when pupils were discussing their work on 'Romeo and Juliet'. The best pupils write at a level that is well above expectation such as the Year 9 boy whose continuation of the ending of 'River Ran out of Eden' used precise and expressive vocabulary to establish setting, mood and characterisation to gain the reader's interest. This was an outstanding piece of work. Most pupils punctuate sentences correctly and write in paragraphs, especially after checking and redrafting. They do not do this consistently enough in their first drafts of writing, especially pupils in the middle range of attainment. Some lower attaining pupils, including those with special educational needs, have standards of writing that are well below expectation because of weaknesses in spelling, punctuation and handwriting.
67. Pupils' standards of attainment in writing are below expectations by the end of Key Stage 4 but standards of reading, speaking and listening are in line with expectation. Pupils spoke fluently and clearly in their role plays based on issues raised in Wilfred Owen's 'Disabled'. Course work shows some thoughtful responses to what pupils have read, including demanding texts such as 'Hamlet' and 'Lord of the Flies'. Many pupils are good at using quotations to support their opinions. During a lesson that analysed 'Great Men' by Sassoon, pupils correctly answered increasingly difficult questions about the satirical nature of the poem.

Some of the lower attaining pupils have standards that are below average, but show that they understand the main events and character of texts such as 'Macbeth'. Standards of writing are below expectation mainly because of a lack of consistent accuracy and weaknesses in expression among a number of pupils in the middle ability range. Their redrafted work is accurate enough but they find it difficult to meet these standards in test and examinations. A substantial minority writes with at least the expected levels of accuracy and expression. A small number does so at the highest level, with a wide range of vocabulary and hardly any flaws in accuracy. Some pupils, including those with special educational needs, attain well below expectations because of the basic nature of some of their errors, such as omitted punctuation and forgetting to use capital letters consistently. Nevertheless, their work has progressed well in terms of planning and content, as they showed when they started their essays about an alien abduction. Pupils use word processing for some their work with standards usually meeting expected levels. There was no evidence of pupils having the chance to apply and develop their numeracy skills at either key stage.

68. Standards in the sixth form are in line with expectations in English literature and below them in English language. The best students write with a crisp and focused style, carefully analysing a writer's use of language, confidently explaining and understanding different interpretations of the same piece. Students have good knowledge of the subject matter of their work, for examples the poems of John Donne and the background to them. Students following the English language course have a sound understanding of the main features of language use and development, particularly in producing writing for children of younger ages. They are less secure in some aspects, such as using the required vocabulary when analysing the grammar of a text and some students' writing is undermined by inaccuracies in their writing.
69. Most pupils have good attitudes to their work. At Key Stages 3 and 4 some pupils, usually boys, display immature classroom behaviour by talking over the teacher and other pupils, or by not concentrating on their work. Most, however, want to make progress and get on with their work and learning is satisfactory overall. Pupils in a Year 10 lesson concentrated well on their reading activity, preparing full responses to the task set, despite the unhelpful attitude of a small number of pupils. A group of low attaining Year 11 pupils worked with excellent concentration and industry on their story writing and asked sensible questions to clarify any confusions. A notable strength is the perseverance and effort pupils put into some very long writing assignments. The main weakness observed concerned some low standards of care and neatness in the exercise books of a number of pupils in Key Stage 3 and 4, although standards are improving in Year 7.
70. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall and is promoting satisfactory learning. Teachers are good subject specialists and they help the pupils to develop a good understanding of the texts they study. Most activities challenge the pupils' understanding and skills, such as the Year 8 lesson in which the pupils used their knowledge of figurative language to create descriptive images of a bird of prey. Teachers show a good knowledge of classroom methods and they give effective support to lower attaining pupils. In the lessons where teaching was good, pace and challenge were consistently evident and led to a faster rate of learning, such as the Year 11 lesson on 'Great Men'. Occasional lapses in organisation however, mean that some pupils are not challenged consistently. The pace of some lessons is too slow to challenge some of the higher attaining pupils in classes where there is a wide range of ability. Sometimes too much time is given to some tasks and pupils lose concentration and become distracted. Teachers in some lessons do not maintain effective discipline well enough to prevent some of the less motivated pupils impeding progress. The marking of course work and assessment folders is good but is less consistently so in exercise books. Pupils do not seem clear about how well they are doing in relation to national expectations and about how they can improve. Teachers are reviewing the use of exercise books and how information about pupils' previous achievements can be used to identify potential. Homework is used well and extends and reinforces the pupils' skills and understanding.
71. Currently the department comprises an experienced head of department and a young, enthusiastic team of specialists. The department is determined to improve the pupils' achievements in tests and examinations and the head of department is effectively reviewing its procedures to achieve this. Teachers are beginning to sharpen their expectations of pupils through the use of assessment information to identify pupils' potential. New procedures provide more frequent examination preparation. Careful analysis of the strengths and weaknesses in pupils' trial GCSE examination papers is used to plan lessons. The curriculum is strong and teachers are adapting the comprehensive scheme of work format to more specific texts and themes. Many of these changes are recent and it is too soon to assess their impact, but evidence of improving pupil attainment was apparent in the inspection, especially at Key Stage 3. The weaknesses in provision for speaking and listening development identified at the last inspection have been very well dealt with. Provision for boys has improved and the 1998 GCSE results showed an improvement in their attainment, but this still remains an issue for further action.

Literacy

72. Pupils apply their speaking and listening skills effectively in many subjects and frequently attain levels that are above expectation. Teachers in religious education, design technology, history, drama, information technology and science expect the pupils to speak clearly and extensively and this supports the expectations in English and drama. Pupils improve the quality of their contributions by using the specific vocabulary of each subject. This was evident in a Year 10 GNVQ lesson where the teacher successfully enhanced the pupils' understanding of the precise meaning of terms such as 'costs' and 'expenses'. Pupils in modern foreign languages have underdeveloped skills in speaking in the target language, although they listen well. There are limited opportunities for extended speaking in geography and they are not specifically planned for in art.
73. Most pupils have reading levels that are in line with expectations and this help them to cope effectively with the reading demands across the curriculum. This was often apparent in history where the pupils have frequent opportunities to read extensive passages from attractive and well set out texts. Good standards were also seen in geography, religious education, English and in food technology at Key Stage 4.
74. Pupils express their knowledge and understanding of their work adequately in writing. Some responses are very extensive, such as course work in Key Stage 4 English and extended story writing at Key Stage 3. Pupils write effectively in a range of formats in geography, religious education and history. Pupils use the technical vocabulary of geography most effectively and this reflects the emphasis and expectation of the teachers. Pupils' attainments also benefit from the guidance they receive about organisation and expression in geography and religious education. Pupils in history show average levels of writing, although there is a tendency for pupils to rely too much on using the words of the text during note making rather than their own. Pupils write well in regular assignments in music. There are some weaknesses in presentation in many subjects, especially among the boys.

Drama

75. Standards in drama match national expectations and represent good achievement given that pupils start school with different experiences of the subject. Pupils in Key Stage 3 work well together on activities such as mime and raise their skill level though discussion and evaluation. No Year 11 lessons were observed during the inspection but analysis of pupils' written work indicates that standards meet expectation. The best pupils have a considerable ability to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of their performance and different features of their expectation. In the sixth form, there is one group in Year 12. Standards match expectations, with characterisation particularly effective. Overall, pupils work well together and bring a positive attitude to the subject. Occasionally some immature responses from a small number of pupils impair the flow of the lessons but skilled teaching copes effectively and sensitively with this. Teaching is good and a particular strength is the emphasis the teachers place on pupils evaluating their own standards and presenting them with challenging contexts as in the Year 9 lesson on mime. As a result, pupils make good progress in acquiring knowledge and skills in the conventions of performance and in the relevant use of technical vocabulary. The department benefits from energetic and enthusiastic leadership and teachers who develop good rapport with the pupils. The accommodation in a small hall is sound and enhanced by effective lighting and sound facilities.

MATHEMATICS

76. Attainment in mathematics is as expected nationally. The pupils' results in the 1999 national tests at the end of Key Stage 3 were close to the national average but below the average for similar schools. The results have remained at the same level over the last few years with only minor differences between the performance of girls and boys. The performance of pupils in mathematics at Key Stage 3 is better than in science and English.
77. Pupils' attainments in the 1999 GCSE mathematics examinations were close to the national average for those achieving five or more higher grades but below the average for similar schools. The performance of pupils in mathematics is better than in English and there is little difference between the performance of girls and boys. The students' results in the A-level examinations continues to improve and the average point

score in the 1999 examinations was in line with the national average but above national averages in terms of the number of A to E grades and the number of the higher A and B grades.

78. Based on the work observed, the attainment of pupils at the end of Key Stage 3 is broadly in line with the national expectation. Pupils show a good facility for number work and can substitute in expressions and solve equations. They can find the general term of a linear sequence and, the most able, can find the general term of a quadratic sequence. Pupils can use Pythagoras' Theorem to find the length of a missing side and provide and test hypotheses in statistics. Their performance in using and applying mathematics is more variable and some of the work seen lacked development over time. The attainment of pupils at the end of Key Stage 4 is now above the national expectation and pupils demonstrate a satisfactory grasp of number work without an over reliance on their calculator. They can find the areas and volumes of shapes and have a good appreciation of Pythagoras' Theorem and trigonometry. The most able pupils can work with trigonometry in three dimensions and have a good understanding of vector geometry. Pupil's work on data handling and probability is well developed but their use of drawing instruments is more variable and not sufficiently practised in some classes.
79. On the basis of the lessons observed and the results of the examination modules already taken, attainment in the sixth form is well above the national average standards required for the course. Students follow the SMP 16-19 A-level course and take modules in pure mathematics and applied mathematics that includes statistics and mechanics. The most able students take additional modules in discrete mathematics including work on graph theory, networks and critical path analysis. All pupils' work is supplemented by coursework, which covers a variety of topic areas and is completed to a high standard.
80. Overall, pupils show good achievements in mathematics. They make satisfactory progress in their learning during Key Stage 3, although Year 7 pupils do not make the best progress they could, because teaching does not take enough account of work completed in the primary school. Pupils make good progress in their learning in Key Stage 4; it is particularly good in Year 11 where pupils benefit from a thorough revision programme, which is complemented by additional lessons during lunchtime and after school. Pupils show good learning skills in both key stages. They show an interest and enthusiasm for their work. They want to succeed and respond well to challenges when they are presented with them. Pupils behave well in the majority of lessons but, in some classes, demonstrate a poor attitude to the subject and have difficulty sustaining concentration for the full sixty minutes especially where the lesson is not sufficiently broken down to provide a variety of learning experiences for them. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress and they are well supported by teachers as well as other pupils as part of the peer support programme. Students in the sixth form enjoy positive, productive and supportive relationships with their teacher and they show very good progress in their learning. They are developing their skills as independent learners and work co-operatively to support each other in overcoming any difficulties that they have with their work.
81. Teaching is good overall and this has a significant impact on pupils' learning. There are however, variations in quality; teaching is consistently very good in the sixth form but more variable at Key Stage 4 between very good and occasionally unsatisfactory. Teachers' strengths are in their good subject knowledge and high expectations of their pupils. They use questioning to good effect and they are perceptive to pupils' difficulties and potential misunderstandings. In Key Stage 4, teaching provides challenge for pupils of all levels of attainment, for example a Year 10 top set was challenged with work on geometric series which was sensitively introduced and developed by the teacher. This level of challenge was not often seen in Key Stage 3. Teachers develop good relationships with their pupils and offer good support and guidance, for example when pupils are planning investigations for GCSE topics. There are occasionally some weaknesses in teaching when the lesson objectives are not clear and work is not sufficiently planned to cater for the spread of ability in the class. Homework is set regularly but there is too much emphasis on finishing off work and insufficient emphasis on catering for the full spread of ability.
82. The curriculum meets statutory requirements although planning shows some lack of curriculum continuity from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3. Departmental schemes of work are still being developed but those which exist are not sufficiently referenced to National Curriculum levels and do not provide links with information technology or using and applying mathematics. Assessment is usually undertaken at regular intervals and marks are recorded in mark books. Pupil records are not provided in terms of National Curriculum levels and pupil's attainment is not efficiently tracked across different years to provide a concise overview of their strengths and weaknesses.
83. Pupil's literacy skills are not sufficiently developed in mathematics. Lists of technical vocabulary are kept in pupils' books and displayed on classroom walls but little evidence of their use was seen during the

inspection. Spiritual and moral issues are similarly under developed and insufficient emphasis is given to the cultural dimension of mathematics. In Key Stage 3, teachers develop pupil's capability in information technology through the use of LOGO and databases. In a Year 8 lesson, pupils were confident interrogating a database on holidays but their graphical printouts (for example line graphs showing adult costs against child costs) were inappropriate. There is little evidence of any work on information technology in Key Stage 4 but good use is made of it in the sixth form.

84. The head of department provides effective leadership. There is a clear vision and purpose that is beginning to be shared by the rest of the department. The head of department provides strong support for the team and her own practice in the classroom is a good model which needs to be embraced more fully by departmental staff. The department is beginning to make use of data available from internal tests and external examinations, but the analysis of this data lacks sophistication to identify weaknesses and highlight issues. At present, there is insufficient monitoring of the department to share strengths and identify areas for improvement.
85. The department has made satisfactory progress in addressing the issues raised in the last inspection report. Standards of attainment have been maintained and the quality of teaching has improved. There are revised procedures to deal with pupil misbehaviour, although these are not used sufficiently in all classes.

Numeracy

86. Pupils have satisfactory numeracy skills for the low-level tasks they are asked to do across the curriculum. There is however, no whole school numeracy policy and its absence inhibits the further development of numeracy. In Key Stage 3, pupils accurately use compass points, grid references and scales in geography, time lines and roman numerals in history, and graphs and tables in science. Pupils in Year 8 analyse their own attainment and effort grades using graphs that allow them to plot their performance over time and compare their performance with others. In Key Stage 4, pupils make good use of graphicacy in their GNVQ work, and in a Year 10 design technology lesson pupils' project work on loft conversions involved careful measurement and planning especially in working out angles for the wooden frame. In the sixth form, student's numeracy skills are adequate with some good statistical work noted in geography and in a Year 12 business education class where students used moving averages to analyse sales figures and trends.

SCIENCE

87. Pupils enter the school with attainment in science that is close to the national average. Overall standards are above expectations by the end of Key Stage 3 and demonstrate good achievement from the pupil's attainment on entry. Although in 1999 test results are broadly average when compared to all schools, this cohort were below average attainment on entry to the school. Overall standards are in line with expectations by the end of Key Stage 4 and represent satisfactory achievement over the key stage. Students in the sixth form achieve A-level grades as good as expected from their GCSE results.
88. In the 1999 end of Key Stage 3 tests, the proportion of pupils gaining Level 5 and above and Level 6 and above is close to the national average for all schools but well below average when compared to similar schools. There is no significant difference in the performance of boys when compared to girls. Teacher assessments of the pupil's attainments are well above test results and well above levels attained nationally. Over the last three years end of Key Stage 3 test results have been above average when compared to schools nationally. Analysis of 1999 test results shows that overall nearly all pupils, including those with special educational needs, attained levels above expectations from their end of Key Stage 2 test results. Pupil's overall attainments in science were similar to English but not as high as mathematics.
89. The proportion of pupils gaining higher grades A*-C in GCSE examinations in double award science in 1999 are close to the national average for both schools nationally and for similar schools. They are similar to results over the last three years. The performance of girls was in line with that of boys. Relatively few pupils take single science instead of double science and most obtain GCSE grades in line with expectations from their Key Stage 3 test scores. National comparisons for this small group of pupils are not statistically valid. Pupil's GCSE grades in science are on average similar to the grades attained in other subjects. Few students enrolled on A-level courses in biology, physics and chemistry and A-level grades attained in 1999 overall match the grades expected from the student's GCSE results. The small number of students make comparisons with national results invalid.

90. From work seen during the inspection, standards at the end of Key Stage 3 are above national expectations. Pupils of all levels of attainment, both boys and girls, show interest during the lessons and an enthusiasm for practical work. For example, in a Year 8 class all pupils were able to carry out a dissection task carefully and sensibly, they used dissection equipment safely and were able to relate a cross section diagram to the actual structures seen. The good teaching at Key Stage 3 is the main factor contributing to the levels of attainment gained by the pupils by the end of the key stage. Teachers prepare these lessons well and use adequate resources very effectively. In a Year 9 lesson introducing a topic on pressure, the pace of learning was very good and the high expectations of the teacher ensured that all pupils not only learnt about the relationship between pressure and surface area, but also then consolidated their understanding with calculation tasks and appropriate homework.
91. From lessons and other inspection evidence, standards by the end of Key Stage 4 are in line with national expectations. Pupils plan and carry out an investigation confidently, for example in Year 10 during an investigation into electromagnetism, pupils describe their planning and identify the factors which effect the strength of a magnetic field. They demonstrate a good awareness of the need for a fair test and record a series of results accurately. In a few lessons however, the standards attained by pupils are below expectations, particularly when tasks are not interesting. For example in a lesson on food chains and food webs, a lack of stimulating resources led to an early loss of interest by the pupils and little learning was achieved during the lesson. The attainments of boys are similar to those of girls and pupils with special needs make satisfactory progress towards the targets set for them.
92. The numbers of students opting to study A level biology, physics and chemistry has been low. Examination of A-level folders and limited lesson observation indicates that students are mostly attaining at levels in line with the predicted grades from GCSE. Lesson observation was limited due to pre-scheduled modular testing.
93. Teachers emphasise the development of literacy skills at all key stages. Key scientific words are displayed in a number of laboratories and the departmental literacy policy is used by teachers to reinforce the use of correct terminology, spelling and grammar. Pupils reinforce their numeracy skills through scientific topics and many pupils are confident in the manipulation of formulae. The use of information technology within science remains underdeveloped. This was an issue identified in the previous inspection report and although the department has made some progress, especially at the end of Key Stage 3, resources remain inadequate.
94. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour in science are usually good. They are sometimes very good, and never less than satisfactory at Key Stage 3 and in the sixth form. Most pupils show interest and concentrate in lessons but pupils in some Key Stage 4 lessons show less interest and occasionally their behaviour is poor. Pupils show a real enthusiasm for science in a number of lessons of a practical nature, they maintain their interest and learn well.
95. Teaching is good overall at Key Stage 3 and it was very good in half of the lessons seen. Teaching at Key Stage 4 is overall satisfactory but does vary much more than the consistently good teaching seen at Key Stage 3, and on one occasion, teaching was poor. Teaching in the limited number of lessons seen in the sixth form was good. The good and very good teaching is characterised by very good lesson planning and lesson preparation. The laboratory technicians provide very valuable support in ensuring that adequate resources are well-prepared and ready to support the teaching programme. Teachers have good subject knowledge and in many lessons, high expectations and good use of time ensure that pupils learn a great deal. The weakest element of teaching is seen at Key Stage 4 where some teachers do not engage the pupils in the lesson, weak planning and low expectations reduce pupil's motivation and this is exhibited in some unsatisfactory or poor behaviour.
96. Overall, the quality of learning is good at Key Stage 3 and satisfactory in Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. The good quality of learning at Key Stage 3 is directly linked to the more consistent quality of teaching at this key stage. Boys and girls of all levels of attainment make good progress through Key Stage 3. Sound progress is made at Key Stage 4 where the learning opportunities are more varied due to the variations in teaching. Good progress is linked firmly to good teaching.
97. The department is well led and the progress of pupils is increasingly monitored on an individual basis through each key stage. The department has the capacity for further improvement and a clear agenda. Most issues from the previous inspection report have been addressed. The two outstanding issues are dependent on additional resources. The first outstanding issue is to improve the use of information technology within

science; some progress is being made but more hardware and software are needed. The second major issue concerns the very poor state of repair of the science accommodation and this requires the major resources of a replacement building programme to rectify the problem.

ART

98. Standards are below those expected nationally and represent unsatisfactory achievement overall. Pupils' attainments at the end of Key Stage 3 in 1999 were in line with the national average, according to teachers' own assessments but this is not supported by inspection evidence. In the 1999 GCSE examinations, the proportion of pupils attaining A*-C grades was well below the national average. These results were poorer than those of 1998, although the proportion gaining A*-C grades in 1998 was also below the national average. In both years, pupils taking art GCSE attained broadly the same results as in the other subjects they sat. In the 1999 A-level examinations, all students passed the course with the proportion attaining A or B grades well above the national average, which was an improvement on the previous year.
99. In work seen during the inspection, pupils attain below national expectations by the end of Key Stage 3. They produce drawings that are often not sufficiently precise. For instance, whilst pupils draw shapes accurately, they do not always include subtle shading that provide a sense of depth. They do however, use colour imaginatively. For instance, Year 7 produced lively paintings in an Aboriginal style. Teachers provide limited opportunities for three-dimensional work in Key Stage 3 and pupils fail to appreciate how sculpture or relief is used in a dramatic way to catch people's attention. By contrast, there is some very good sculpture by GCSE candidates using clay and found materials. By the end of Key Stage 4, whilst some pupils respond predictably to the requirements of the GCSE art course, attainment broadly matches the national average. Half of the pupils in the current Year 11 are predicted to attain A*-C grades by the end of the course. Pupils make successful links between the practical and theoretical parts of the course, but some work lacks vitality or originality. Better work includes imaginative painting based on traditional Hindu motifs and good use of surrealist imagery. By the end of the sixth form, students work shows sound technical proficiency across a range of skills. Students are improving their use of information technology, although the range of programs available is still somewhat restricted, particularly for those in examination groups who are not fully aware of how modern technology is increasingly used within the arts industries.
100. Pupils' attitudes, behaviour and personal development are satisfactory overall. Their learning is sound in Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form but unsatisfactory at Key Stage 3. Most listen attentively to teachers, settle sensibly to practical work and sustain their concentration. However, behaviour is not good in every lesson. In some lessons there is too much talking that interferes with pupils' concentration. Many pupils lack confidence in their skills. Most pupils use equipment sensibly and return it to its proper place at the end of lessons. In examination groups, better-motivated pupils develop sound independent study skills, although others tend to rush their work at home, giving in work that lacks sufficient care and attention.
101. The quality of teaching is unsatisfactory overall, despite some instances of satisfactory and occasional good quality teaching. Where teaching is unsatisfactory, teachers do not create a settled atmosphere in which pupils become quietly absorbed in their work. This was the case, for instance, in a Year 9 class, where pupils were allowed to talk over the teacher whilst instructions were being given. In the same lesson, the teacher succumbed to 'red herrings' deliberately introduced by some pupils to waste time. In better lessons, teachers successfully quieten pupils down so that they give proper attention to their work. Whilst teachers are experienced specialists, they do not always choose topics that all pupils can be successful at. As a result, some pupils complain that they "are no good at art". This was the case in a Year 8 lesson on perspective; some pupils lost concentration because they found the exercise too difficult. Teachers do not successfully resolve the pressures created by the large mixed ability groups. Consequently, in some lessons, pupils regularly stray off task and there is limited learning. Whilst teachers successfully emphasise the importance of technique, they do not always use methods that bring these different techniques 'alive' so that pupils enjoy what they are doing. There is sometimes a lack of intellectual challenge and stimulation for higher attaining pupils, although pupils with special educational needs are well supported and make sound progress. Whilst homework is set very regularly, current arrangements are not sufficiently flexible. Consequently, the completion, collection and marking of homework become an imposition for pupils and a burden for teachers rather than a welcome and natural extension to work in class. Teachers sometimes draw attention to art terminology, although there is no consistent attempt to reinforce pupils' basic literacy or numeracy skills through art.

102. Although the management of the subject is satisfactory overall, some aspects that were criticised in the previous inspection report have not yet improved. GCSE results are still below the national average and teachers do not mark pupils work so that they are clear about how to improve. The continuing lack of pace and rigour in some lessons contributes to the high level of chatter and lack of self confidence. The resources used in lessons are limited, lack variety and contribute to depressed standards in Key Stage 3.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

103. Standards of attainment are broadly in line with national expectations overall and above it for many pupils at the end of Key Stage 4. It is not possible to make a judgement about standards at the end of the sixth form as students are taught at another school. Girls achieve better than boys overall except in the control course where boys' achievement is very high.

104. The proportion of pupils reaching the expected Level 5 in the 1999 teachers' assessments is in line with national averages. Girls' attainments are slightly above their respective national average, boys are slightly below. At the end of Key Stage 4, the proportion of higher grades A*-C has been consistently above national averages overall and compare favourably with results in other subjects at the school, largely because of the above average results of girls. In 1999, the proportion of boys achieving higher grades improved significantly from below national averages in 1998 to being in line with them and for all pupils, results have been consistently above national averages since the last inspection. Results in food and control courses are particularly good and the percentage of pupils gaining the top A*/A grades in food, control and textiles is very high for both boys and girls. In the sixth form, although A-level results have included above average proportions of A and B grades, the numbers entering are too small to make meaningful comparisons.

105. Work seen during the inspection is broadly in line with national expectations at both key stages and has generally been maintained since the last inspection. Attainment improves for most pupils at Key Stage 4, except for some lower to middle attaining boys who are more casual in their approach to work. Lower to middle attaining girls sometimes achieve better than expectations in food technology where they show confidence in exceeding their predicted grades. At Key Stage 3, pupils adopt a disciplined approach to designing and they present high quality drawings. They work safely with tools and equipment in food, plastics and fabrics and are developing good manufacturing skills. Middle to high attaining pupils do not develop higher order thinking skills except when the teaching encourages them to frame their own questions and challenges and take responsibility for their work. They have limited access to readily available, up-to-date reading materials in rooms and this restricts achievement for these pupils. Pupils with special educational needs are often confident, pay attention to detail and achieve successful results. In Year 8, all pupils gain a good understanding of the impact technological development makes on the environment through studying and solving recycling problems with the aid of an external speaker.

106. Pupils in Key Stage 4 achieve a good balance in how they generate creative ideas, develop and apply skills and knowledge in both design work and manufacturing. Middle to higher attaining pupils create imaginative graphics. High attaining pupils in the control course develop complex electronics systems using computer modelling and simulation effectively to aid their learning. Lower to middle attaining boys do not develop the necessary evaluation skills required to build an understanding of the design process, even though their practical construction skills using resistant materials can be good. In the sixth form, all students understand the design process well and the need for attention to detail. They are able to relate their project work to commercial and industrial settings.

107. Standards of writing are good in many folders at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form where students need to present complex ideas and development plans. Good levels of word processing often aid pupils' presentation and in food, spreadsheets are used effectively to process survey results improving their understanding of how numerical analysis can aid product development.

108. Pupils in all years reflect a good ethos and work ethic. They respect and trust their teachers and this has a positive impact on their achievement. Most pupils at Key Stage 4 are motivated by the possibility of a good examination grade and in the sixth form, students take greater responsibility for their learning linked to the relevance of the subject to their chosen career paths.

109. Teaching is good overall, particularly at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form, because teachers develop a greater understanding of their pupils' strengths and weaknesses and are able to set more appropriate targets.

They then support them in more appropriate and individualised ways. Teachers are very knowledgeable about their subject, prepare lessons very carefully and manage their time and resources well. Teachers across the material areas make a good contribution to pupils' learning in information technology by expecting them to apply the skills to meaningful tasks such as testing electronic circuits using computer simulation software in a Year Eight electronics lesson. Teachers use assessment data to define target grades for pupils. All teachers understand the needs of pupils with special educational needs and make good provision to ensure that they make progress. Some teaching in food and control at both key stages is very good because the needs of all pupils are known and the teacher plans the lesson carefully to take account of these learning needs. They have high but appropriate expectations of pupils' achievement. In a very good Year Eleven lesson, pupils were learning evaluation skills effectively through testing bread rolls against specified criteria. Teachers integrate theoretical work with practical activity so that pupils are able to fully understand its implications. Teachers use a range of questioning techniques to ensure that they are aware of the progress all pupils are making with their understanding. Clear targets are also included for promoting pupils' literacy development.

110. Pupils' learning is frequently assisted by good, meaningful formative marking. At Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form, oral feedback in all material areas helps to give pupils direction to their learning. Displays of pupils' work in some technology rooms and around the school are used effectively to stimulate an interest in the subject and to promote higher standards. Teachers have developed excellent links with a large range of commercial and charitable agencies and help to promote higher standards and progress. Some pupils perform extremely well in a range of externally organised and well-respected design competitions. There are very few weaknesses in teaching but sometimes teachers spend too long talking to a class and giving out basic instructions, at Key Stage 3. Lower attaining boys then become bored and frustrated with their ability to understand what is being done.
111. Management of the technology faculty is good. There is a clear vision for the subject, a well-structured approach and a strong, well led team of teachers. Capitation levels are low but teachers use resources effectively. The effectiveness of teaching and learning is reduced by the relatively low time allocation at Key Stage 3, particularly for Year 7 and some difficulties in continuity of learning. Satisfactory progress has been made since the last inspection through improvements with teaching.

GEOGRAPHY

112. Overall standards in geography are similar to national averages at both key stages and at A-level, reflecting achievement by pupils that is generally in line with their attainment on entry. Teachers' assessments at the end of Key Stage 3 in 1999 show results well below the national average for both boys and girls, whereas in 1998 they were above average. Evidence gathered during the inspection indicates that these results are not reliable and that the 1999 figures undervalue pupils' achievements. GCSE examination results have fluctuated in recent years, being above average in 1997 and below in 1998, particularly because of boys' underperformance. Results in 1999 are in line with the national average, with the small number of girls who took the subject achieving well above average results. The number of very high grades is above the national figure; equally the number of very low grades is higher. Although their results are lower than girls by more than the national difference, boys tend to obtain similar results in geography as in their other subjects. A-level results in recent years are around the national average from relatively small numbers of entries, with the 1999 results showing a mixed pattern of achievement from standards reached at GCSE.
113. In work seen by the end of Key Stage 3, attainment is in line with expectations, as it was at the time of the previous inspection. Although more able pupils are generally neater, the majority of Year 7 pupils can draw simple maps accurately, and can use map references and other skills successfully to take their geographical learning forward. Drawing and using graphs and diagrams are strengths of most pupils. More able pupils by Year 9 make good links between human activities and their impact on the environment, and how human activities are also influenced by natural forces. Less able pupils, including those with special educational needs, and particularly boys, have more difficulty with extended writing. However, teachers are emphasising reading and using the correct geographical terms and this is having a positive effect on literacy standards in geography. Most pupils' numeracy skills are adequate to cope with statistics, graphs and concepts such as scale and direction that are used in geography. There is insufficient use of computers by most pupils to judge attainment; however, most can successfully produce accurate computer generated climate graphs, though the scales are often misleading.

114. In work seen by the end of Key Stage 4, attainment is in line with expectations. However, some able boys and girls in both Years 10 and 11 are achieving at the highest levels. Detailed notebooks provide a very sound basis for learning. For example, there is good understanding of farming in many contrasting examples from the American Mid-West to the Netherlands and Kenya. Higher attainers have produced coursework that successfully uses a wide range of presentational techniques including very good annotated photographs, transects and cross sections, and often the use of computers. Weaker coursework has lower standards of organisation and analysis. There is a similar emphasis to developing literacy skills at Key Stage 4, and the fluent reading of some lower attaining boys indicates the success of the policy. Generally, lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs are achieving the targets set for them. Work seen at A-level is at expected standards. Individual studies have clear aims and use appropriate techniques, including statistical analysis. Students reach sound conclusions, though not in any great depth.
115. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour in geography are good. They are sometimes very good, and never less than satisfactory. At all stages, the majority work hard and want to do well. It is only in the occasional lesson that chatter and poorer behaviour means that some pupils are off their tasks and waste time. In most lessons, pupils respond well with very good behaviour and interest to the methodical teaching they receive. In one Key Stage 4 lesson of lower attainers, there were high levels of concentration as pupils reacted very positively to high quality teaching which had high expectations of the pupils.
116. Teaching is good at Key Stage 3 and 4. None is less than satisfactory and some at Key Stage 4 is very good. In many lessons, the depth of the teachers' knowledge has a very positive impact on learning. In one lesson at Key Stage 3, the teacher's expert explanation of the structure of the earth, using very good diagrams as visual aids, interested pupils of all levels of attainment and provided a very good introduction to the topic of volcanoes and earthquakes. Clear and detailed explanations are a feature of several lessons, and the interest this generates in pupils aids their learning; similarly, logical progression, challenging tasks and apt examples help pupils' progress. Year 7 pupils were required to write an account of times when the weather had controlled their lives and developed their thinking considerably both in the task itself and in subsequent discussion. Firm classroom management in most lessons creates a good working environment and also allows teachers to give detailed attention to individuals when the class is engaged in written tasks. All lessons are well planned, well structured and maintain good pace, with most containing a range of activities. Sometimes at Key Stage 3, there is a narrower range of activities which limits the scope for providing different opportunities for different ability levels; in one lesson where there were special materials for higher and lower attainers, these did have a positive impact on learning and all made particularly good progress. When lessons become too theoretical, the opportunities for active learning are reduced, and, in one lesson, more use of the board would have focused learning on the really key points when pupils began writing. Teachers put emphasis on developing literacy skills by using a range of written work for pupils and frequently requiring pupils to read, sometimes aloud. There were few opportunities to observe A-level teaching during the inspection, so no judgement can be made. However, the tutorial work seen used well-chosen resources so that teacher and students could work together to build up students' understanding.
117. Overall, the quality of learning is good and is firmly linked to good teaching. Progress at Key Stage 4, in particular, is good as all teaching is good or very good. Whilst pupils of all levels of attainment, including those with special educational needs, do make at least sound, and often good, progress, teaching at Key Stage 4 is more adapted to the needs of differing abilities; this means that progress and learning tend to be more rapid. Generally, there is no noticeable difference in the quality of learning between girls and boys.
118. There is a coherent scheme of work, and the good range of fieldwork for all year groups provides very good active learning opportunities. However, the use of computers to aid geographical learning is still underdeveloped. There are good resources in the subject area and in the library. All pupils are able to have a textbook for their own use, and this has a very positive impact on learning, especially in the value of homework tasks. The subject is ably led, and there is a strong team of committed teachers. There has been satisfactory improvement since the previous inspection. Teaching and the curriculum are good, although there is scope for more use of computers and for making geography's already good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development more explicit. Pupils' attainment remains in line with expectations. There is potential for further improvement in the subject, with more rigorous attention to using assessment information to track pupils' progress, set targets and analyse the effectiveness of teaching.

HISTORY

119. Standards in history are broadly in line with those expected nationally and represent sound achievement from pupils' attainments on entry. Teachers' own assessments at the end of Key Stage 3 in 1999 showed attainment to be well above average but the assessments were not rigorous and are not supported by inspection evidence. At the end of Key Stage 4 in 1999, 44 per cent of pupils achieved GCSE results at the higher A*-C grades and all candidates passed. While no reliable comparison can be made with national averages, because there were only 18 candidates, pupils attained in line with predicted grades based on their previous attainment. The number of candidates was equally small in 1998. Girls' results are higher than boys', more so than is usually found. Results at A-level were disappointing in 1999, with only four of seven candidates passing, but the outlook for the current year is more promising. Results have fallen over the last three years reflecting both the relatively low grades at GCSE of candidates and the difficulties caused by changing staff and curriculum.
120. From work seen during the inspection, pupils are developing good historical skills of enquiry and interpretation and this is an improvement since the last inspection report. As early as Year 8, pupils understand and can use words like "reliable" and "biased" when referring to source evidence. They extract information from texts competently and often include their source of information, though some pupils in both Key Stages 3 and 4 write statements that they do not fully understand. This was illustrated in a lesson where a pupil had included "Only free men fought in the Roman army" in a list of reasons for the decline of the Roman Empire, but could not explain the link between cause and effect. Where they have experience of using computers in lessons, Year 9 pupils can apply statistical information to extend their understanding of the relative strengths of armies in the First World War and more able pupils can carry out their own research. Pupils in Key Stage 4 are developing their skills of analysis well and their writing is concise and detailed. However, spelling errors occur across both key stages and across attainment levels. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well when they have support in lessons. Some find it difficult to stay on task while others have difficulties recording what they know.
121. By Year 13, students have a sufficient grasp of their work on Mussolini to disagree with each other's conclusions with reasonable confidence and reference to evidence. Some in Year 12 have mastered the techniques of clearly outlining how they intend to address an essay topic. However, in other essays there is evidence of continued spelling and punctuation errors. There is surprisingly little evidence of any use of information technology in their work.
122. Standards in reading are good and are developed well in history, with reading playing a key part in most lessons observed. Pupils write carefully and neatly on the whole, but most do not appear to check their work for spelling errors; nor do they often correct them when their teachers have identified them. Standards of numeracy are adequate for purpose in history and there is evidence of time lines, graphs and, in sixth form historical material, of statistical information being used to illustrate or extend learning. Standards in information technology are sound where pupils have access to this, but there is uneven provision between and within year groups.
123. Pupils' and students' attitudes, values and personal development are good and this is promoting good quality learning. They settle down to work quickly, are keen to participate in lessons, and there is an atmosphere of enjoyment in nearly all lessons. There is a much good-natured co-operation and higher attaining pupils in particular show considerable enthusiasm for their classwork. Year 8 pupils stated at pupil interviews that they had to work hard in history but that did not deter them. Nevertheless, in a few lessons in both key stages, a minority of boys are chatty and do not work steadily or hard. When working on computers, pupils help each other unbidden. As a result of clear instructions from teachers, pupils get on with tasks with a fair degree of independence. In the sixth form, students take their work seriously and display mature attitudes.
124. Teaching is good overall. It is most consistently good at Key Stage 4. There are differences however within key stages in the quality of teaching and access to information technology. These differences have considerable impact on the quality of pupils' learning. Teachers have good subject knowledge and focus well on historical skills. Nearly all teachers have good management skills which enables pupils to work productively, promotes good listening skills and effective pupil participation and provides an atmosphere where pupils can concentrate, especially when writing. A particularly strong feature to the teaching in Key Stages 3 and 4 is having a balance of reading, writing, speaking and listening in lessons. This enables pupils to learn in ways that suit them. Well-chosen, and attractively presented books were used in most of the lessons observed and there is a good stock of history materials in the library. Some teachers combine the

teaching of basic skills very effectively with their history teaching, as in pointing out the 'a' in "parliament" and noting key words on the board continuously as they speak. Teachers share the aims of lessons with pupils so they are clear about what they are doing and do not need repeated instructions. Many lessons observed ended with an effective summing up that helped pupils to consolidate what they had learned and to reach conclusions. Following departmental policy, teachers ensure pupils know what to do to improve, and make helpful reference to level descriptors as they set work.

125. In the best taught lessons, teachers set high expectations, and planning incorporates strategies to meet the needs of all pupils, such as having different homework tasks as in a Year 10 lesson or sensitive pairing to enable one pupil to help another. However, this practice is as yet inconsistent. In a small number of lessons observed in Key Stage 3, the level of challenge was insufficient for the most able pupils, and in some across both key stages there was insufficient support for pupils experiencing difficulties recording their work. Homework set is well planned to consolidate or extend pupils' understanding but there was evidence from pupils' exercise books of teachers' comments on poor effort or incomplete work but no follow up of work being re-done or completed. One teacher's expertise in the use of information technology is effective in promoting pupils' understanding and skills and confidence. In the sixth form, teachers have appropriately high subject knowledge, and sound though different teaching methods each which challenge students effectively in different ways.
126. The schemes of work ensure good coverage of key elements including a strong and early focus on historical enquiry. On the other hand, there is no systematic planning in these schemes for teaching progressive writing skills, or strategies to meet all pupils' needs - although this occurs in many lessons. In the same way, opportunities to develop pupils' moral, cultural and social and spiritual development are provided, as in a Year 12 lesson where students watched film footage of Nazi brutality in stunned silence, but there would be more consistency of practice if these aspects were included in schemes of work. Assessment procedures are inadequate in Key Stage 3 but a good start has been made to individual pupil targets and reports include specific guidance about what is good about pupil work and how to make it better. There is a need for more equal access for pupils and students to information technology.
127. The history department is well led and managed. The head of history has vision, commitment to the subject and to improvement, matched by optimism, energy and a willingness to innovate. Good improvements have been made since the last inspection. The school has made appointments of specialist history staff. The teaching of historical enquiry in particular has been addressed and is now a strength. The quality of teaching was unsatisfactory and is now good. The effects of all this are starting to show in attainment and the numbers of pupils taking GCSE history are healthy again. There is considerable potential for further improvement.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

128. Overall, standards of attainment are below national expectations and pupils are not consistently achieving the standards they could. At the end of Key Stage 3 in 1999, teachers' assessments indicate that the proportion of pupils achieving the expected Level 5 is broadly average. Girls are slightly above their respective average and boys were slightly below. Standards are below average by the end of Key Stage 4 because pupils do not receive enough teaching in information technology. Throughout the school, the frequency with which pupils use computers is limited and their understanding of the social, economic, ethical and moral issues associated with the applications of information technology is under-developed.
129. Work seen during the inspection is in line with national expectations during Key Stage 3, largely as a result of the work done in design and technology and additionally in English and mathematics. Pupils are confident using computers for text processing with software at a basic level. Some pupils present text-processed work in a number of subjects, many using home computers and occasionally demonstrating more advanced desk-top-publishing techniques e.g. for presentation of a Year 8 English portfolio of work. Most pupils understand how spreadsheets and databases are constructed, but few have the skills to apply them as the needs arise in a range of different settings. They use control software to solve practical problems but their graphics skills are very limited.
130. At Key Stage 4, most pupils do not build on the skills and understanding developed during Key Stage 3. Pupils with special educational needs however are well supported in their use of computers. They often achieve good standards reflecting the increased confidence they gain through generating well presented work. Much of the work done at Key Stage 4 is text processing to present their work in other subjects.

Pupils develop basic research skills using the Internet but they are not required to use higher level intellectual activity. Most higher attaining pupils underachieve, except a significant minority of pupils who develop high level skills at home, exemplifying good independent learning capability. In the sixth form, standards in GNVQ courses are satisfactory, and improving in text processing and data-management but they do not use computers as often as they could. In information technology courses, high standards of work were achieved when a group of students designed a web page promoting the school. It displays a good sense of audience and utilises well-researched content. Students have limited understanding of how their skills and knowledge apply to commercial contexts. A-level design students apply a good understanding of control procedures in electronics projects.

131. The English department makes a good contribution to pupils' information technology experiences using 'Keybytes' software at Key Stage 3. Higher attaining pupils in mathematics develop complex programme sequences using LOGO in Year 7 and are introduced to holiday databases in Year 8. Art and music introduce pupils to a range of creative opportunities using computers, which represents an improvement since the last inspection. Computers are generally used in an unstructured way in geography to aid presentation skills but pupils use them effectively to develop mapwork skills at Key Stage 3. A limited but significant contribution is made by the history department e.g. Year 11 pupils use computers to understand the significance of the Mormon Church in American history. Pupils are generally very positive and enthusiastic about using computers, and show satisfactory levels of learning when given the opportunity. Pupils work together well in groups and pupils with special educational needs are particularly proud of their achievements.
132. Teaching is unsatisfactory overall because of the limited amount of structured teaching that takes place to promote learning in information technology. When it happens, for example in a Year Eleven history lesson, pupils learned in a satisfactory way how use information technology to prepare a newspaper article for a particular audience, giving a 'Mormon perspective' on American history. Better progress occurs when teachers are more knowledgeable about how pupils learn in information technology, as in some design and technology lessons. In the sixth form information technology lessons, teachers are enthusiastic, share clear lesson objectives with students and give good levels of support to individuals. For instance, with a Year 13 group who are learning how to use industry standard software to construct a database of information. This results in enthusiastic responses from students, many of whom are striving to develop careers in information industries. Learning however is sometimes limited when teaching is too theoretical and little attention is given to how much students with different abilities are actually learning in a Year 12 lesson where students were preparing for examinations.
133. The day to day management of information technology is satisfactory but there remain weaknesses in whole school policy and planning. There is a general commitment across the school to improving standards and achievement and ensuring that all statutory requirements are met in provision. There is an assessment and recording system in place for all Key Stage 3 pupils which is contributed to by a number of departments. The provision of computers is nearly in line with national averages and provision for the sixth form and in the library is good. There are weaknesses however, in that financial restraints have prevented the school from developing the broad range of provision needed to ensure that pupils have appropriate learning opportunities at each key stage. The main suite available for cross-curricular teaching is a poor teaching environment and comprises hardware and software with severe limitations. Specialist staffing is limited, and whilst high quality technician support is available, time is restricted. Training opportunities are equally restricted even though many staff throughout the school possess reasonable levels of information technology competence.
134. In the last inspection, improving the curriculum plans for the delivery of information technology was a key issue. Additional issues were raised in respect of teaching, assessment and training opportunities for teachers. Whilst there has been limited improvements in some areas, progress is deemed to be unsatisfactory because curriculum provision remains unsatisfactory and improvements in assessment and training are limited.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

135. Standards in both French and German are average at Key Stages 3 and 4 and are in line with what they should be, given the average attainment profile of pupils on entry to the school. Students in the sixth form are working satisfactorily and attainment is as expected from their GCSE results, although below the national average.

136. In 1999, pupils were assessed by their teachers as working slightly above the national level by the end of Key Stage 3. However, in work seen during the inspection pupils were achieving in line with national expectations.
137. The language taken by pupils at GCSE last year was French and results were broadly in line with national figures for those gaining A*-C grades. A similar picture was seen in German in 1998, when this was the first language. These results show a clear improvement from 1997. Pupils who take GCSE examinations in languages gain results that are similar to other subjects. The figures are distorted by the fact that only about two-thirds of the year group are following GCSE language courses. The achievements of boys and girls follow the national pattern, with girls results being consistently above those of boys. However, in German in 1999, more boys achieved higher grades than girls, in the small group who sat the examination. Pupils who take the Certificate of Achievement course gain grades appropriate for lower attaining pupils.
138. At A-level, standards in both French and German have fluctuated from year to year. Small numbers of pupils follow language courses at this level but results over the last three years indicate that there are more lower grades in this school than nationally. There are no differences between the achievement of boys and girls or the standards in French and German.
139. From work seen during the inspection, pupils show a good understanding of spoken language throughout both key stages, and in the sixth form. This is because teachers use French and German as their main means of communication in class and pupils respond well to this. In the best lessons, pupils were also able to use the language effectively to communicate with the teacher. Speaking is well developed in the sixth form, with a pleasing level of fluency. Pupils at Key Stages 3 and 4 need to be encouraged to extend their answers and to talk to each other in the language. High attaining pupils show a good grasp of grammar in both languages, but at Key Stage 4 would benefit from more opportunities to relate this directly to examination type work. Pupils of all levels of attainment are well supported by material that is appropriate to their needs. A-level pupils cover a wide range of topics. Their strengths are in listening and speaking. Most pupils at this level find it hard to write with a high degree of accuracy, and writing is their weakest skill. Since the last inspection, standards have remained broadly the same in spite of the wider range of pupils now following language courses.
140. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall, with half the lessons being good or very good and only one deemed unsatisfactory. Lessons are characterised by the good use of the foreign language. Most lessons are well planned to take into account the needs of individual pupils, including those on the register of special educational needs. The best lessons have a range of activities, which cover the four attainment targets of listening, speaking, reading and writing. A very good lesson at Key Stage 3 enabled pupils to make very good progress in their learning because it was carefully planned and the teacher had high expectations of the pupils both in terms of their behaviour and their achievement. They responded with enthusiasm, demonstrating real enjoyment of the language. In a less successful lesson, pupils made slow progress because they were unable to understand the relevance of the work. The teacher did not relate it closely enough to the examination for which they were preparing, and this led to some poor behaviour and underachievement. Teachers use assessment at the end of each unit of work to judge the progress their pupils are making. This is currently not linked closely to National Curriculum levels, but is under review. Pupils need to be aware of the levels at which they are working and what they need to do to reach the next one. There is some use of information technology, but opportunities are not yet highlighted in schemes of work because there is not enough access to the network for it to be regularly used.
141. Most pupils show interest in their work and have a positive attitude to it. Behaviour in most lessons is good, although the enthusiasm of some pupils leads to a raised noise level. Where teachers have high expectations of their pupils in terms of behaviour, this leads to good progress. In the sixth form, pupils are diligent and work to their full potential. Pupils show satisfactory learning in their foreign language. At Key Stage 3, pupils who study a second language make slow progress because of the small amount of curriculum time allocated to it. However, at Key Stage 4 they make progress at a faster rate so that by the end of the Key Stage their attainment is in line with the first language. This is because they are taught in a small, motivated group.
142. The acting head of faculty has only been in post since September but she has a clear understanding of her role and has already made significant steps to move the department forward. The most pressing issue is resources for the teaching of French. The current text book needs replacing because it is out of date and no longer meets the needs of pupils. Although appropriate resources are available for German, there is still a lack of books, with teachers only having half a set to use with their classes. This is unacceptable. Pupils have a different experience depending on which language they study and this is leading to inequality and less take up of French than German at Key Stage 4. The current curriculum model is under review, and

from September more time will be spent on learning a second language. However, there is not yet a clear rationale for language teaching and this needs to be clarified so that strategies can be put in place to encourage more pupils to continue to study two languages at Key Stage 4. Satisfactory progress has been made since the last inspection, with standards remaining in line. Teachers now make good use of the target language and its use is being developed for pupils. The resource issue remains outstanding, but whereas the report highlighted the lack of modern language assistants, at the present time the need is for books. Visits to France and Germany are organised annually, and the acting head of faculty is working to establish an exchange with a German school so that more pupils can benefit from a cultural experience.

MUSIC

143. Standards are broadly as expected nationally and there is satisfactory achievement overall. By the end of Key Stage 3, teachers' assessments of pupils' attainment pessimistically placed most pupils below the national expectation. Inspection findings however, show that the majority of pupils successfully attain or exceed the national expectation for 14 year-olds. In the 1999 GCSE examinations, the proportion of pupils gaining A*-C grades was above the national average. This was also the case in 1998, although the number of pupils sitting the course was very small. There was one A-level entry in 1999 and one in 1998. Both of these students passed the course, with one gaining a grade A pass.
144. In work seen during the inspection, pupils at the end of Key Stage 3 perform and compose music confidently, in line with national expectations. In the Year 9 class, for instance, pupils compose melodic and rhythmic riffs to lyrics they have written themselves and perform these confidently to the rest of the class using vocals and electronic keyboards. Improvised backing sounds suitably match the mood of the words and higher attaining pupils consider additional elements such as contrast between soloist and group to add musical variety and interest. Many pupils sing tunefully and confidently, with those in performance groups singing with well-developed intonation and secure diction. Some musical youngsters have received deserved acclaim in regional and national competitions and the school is justifiably proud of their impressive efforts.
145. By the end of Key Stage 4, standards are above expectations; pupils successfully integrate theoretical and practical aspects of musicianship. For instance, several GCSE candidates have written compositions that take account of the particular sound and techniques of individual instruments. There is a good range of modern and traditional musical forms, and pupils readily perform their efforts to each other and larger audiences in school concerts. Skilled instrumental teaching by visiting staff, has a very positive impact on pupils' musicianship and helps higher attaining pupils development of advanced musical skills. Regular concerts inside and outside school are performed to appreciative audiences. A-level students are coping satisfactorily with all coursework requirements.
146. The subject has a positive impact on pupils' developing literacy skills through the commentaries pupils write about music they hear and in reflective writing about their composition and performance projects. However, there is occasionally too much emphasis on writing and not enough on practical music making. Use of information and communication technology is improving. Pupils in examination groups are beginning to use sequencing software in their composition arrangements, and those in Key Stage 3 use CD-ROMS successfully to research facts about music.
147. The quality of teaching is good in both key stages and in the sixth form and is promoting good quality learning. Teaching is always enthusiastic and lively. Teachers have very good relationships with pupils, managing to elicit respect and affection. Teachers are well qualified and experienced and have realistic expectations of most pupils. However, some higher attaining pupils are not always stretched sufficiently in class lessons. This happens, particularly, in large mixed ability classes where the teachers' attention is understandably with the average and lower attaining pupils who need extra help and encouragement. Teachers plan effectively but do not always ensure there is a good balance between practical and theoretical work. For instance, in one otherwise good lesson, there was too much use of question and answer and not enough singing or playing of instruments. Enthusiasm waned and the teacher nearly lost the pupils' attention. Those with special educational needs enjoy lessons and make good progress as a result of planning that is well pitched for their particular circumstances. Teachers encourage both boys and girls to respond positively so that all pupils learn successfully. There are a good number of boys in performance groups and examination classes. The energetic and assured direction of extra-curricular activities has a major impact on the development of higher musical skills.

148. Pupils are well behaved and attentive in class. They listen carefully to instructions and settle sensibly to practical work in small groups. Most work well when not closely supervised and treat instruments and equipment with care. Most appreciate such opportunities to work away from the main teaching room and behave maturely. Those in performance groups develop very good teamwork skills and reliably support school musical evenings and musical trips out. Older students effectively lead younger pupils in lunchtime rehearsals. The increasing enjoyment of music has resulted in increased numbers opting for the GCSE course.

149. The management of the subject is good and there have been very good improvements since the last inspection. There is now good planning for lessons in Key Stage 3 and pupils' attitudes have improved as a result. Assessment of pupils' work has improved, although some marking of homework lacks critical comments to help pupils to move on. Spacious and modern accommodation has a positive impact on learning. However, some resources, such as electronic keyboards, are dated and in short supply, and there is insufficient new repertoire for the wind band and orchestra.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

150. Attainment at the end of each key stage matches the national expectation and matches teachers' assessments of standards. A GCSE course has been introduced since the last inspection and the first cohort will take examinations this year. By the end of Year 9, pupils have a sound understanding of the rules, positional play and tactical awareness. They perform sending and receiving skills with increasing confidence and control and apply them into full recognised games. Boys in gymnastics plan, perform and evaluate sequences of movements with increasing fluency using both the floor and apparatus. However the movements lack quality, body tension and clarity of body shape. Girls in Year 7 dance develop their creative skills by composing, performing and appreciating dance ideas using language and music.

151. By the end of Year 11, pupils increase their knowledge and understanding of games play and perform skills with more control and accuracy. The high attainers use more advanced tactics and anticipate moves to outwit their opponents in hockey and football. In Year 11 GCSE trampolining, pupils plan and perform a routine with increasing confidence but the movement lacks quality. Pupils in all years demonstrate sound levels of physical fitness. They are aware of their own and others safety and use the facilities and equipment with due care and attention. Pupils with special educational needs are fully integrated into the physical education programme and make sound progress. They make good progress however, where there is additional support for them.

152. Pupils have positive attitudes to their work. They wear appropriate clothing, behave well are willing to participate and be physically active. They are enthusiastic and enjoy their lessons and most show good learning skills. They listen and respond quickly to instructions and develop good social and co-operative skills in group work. Pupils demonstrate fair play and good sporting behaviour in competitive team play. By the end of Year 9, pupils are beginning to take the responsibility for their own warming up activities. Boys in a Year 10 lesson worked consistently well in planning their own fitness programme and were independent of the teacher.

153. Teaching and learning is good. All teachers are knowledgeable and confident in teaching a range of activities. They are good role models and have high expectations in standards of clothing, participation, safety, behaviour and attitudes to work. In a Year 11 trampolining lesson, the teacher provided a challenging pace, which improved pupils' stamina and flexibility. Teachers manage the pupils well and develop positive relationships fostering confidence, trust and respect. In a Year 8 football group, the teacher used praise, encouragement and evaluative comments well and this improved pupils' learning and performance. Lessons are well planned and organised with a balance of activities, however in some games lessons tasks are mainly teacher directed with an emphasis on performance and too few opportunities to plan and evaluate their work. No cool down was observed in most lessons. Pupils make good progress as they move through the school and understand what is expected of them. They are willing to practice, adapt and respond to the challenge of new skills and further develop their knowledge and understanding in a range of different activities.

- 154.Despite this good teaching and positive pupil attitudes, attainment across the programme of studies is not as high as it could be, because of some imbalance in the curriculum provision. The curriculum at Key Stage 3 is broad but not balanced because there is an emphasis on games, especially in the boys' curriculum. Girls and boys do not have access to the same curriculum. A significant amount of time is spent on fitness, which is not a programme of study. Dance has been introduced into the girls' curriculum this year and swimming continues to enhance the curriculum in Year 7, enabling pupils to develop an essential life skill and prepare them to participate in the outdoor education programme. The curriculum at Key Stage 4 is limited and pupils do not have an element of choice until Year 11. Post 16 physical education continues to be inadequate. The provision for extra curricular activities however, is good and they are well attended. A large number of boys and girls represent the school in a wide range of competitive sports.
- 155.The department is effectively and efficiently managed. The department work well together as a team and give generously of their time in organising extra curricular activities and competitions. The provision of specialist accommodation is adequate but the maintenance of the facilities is poor especially the gymnasiums and the offsite playing field. The use of information communication technology is unsatisfactory.
- 156.Two additional members of staff have brought new expertise to the department since the last inspection. GCSE examinations in physical education has been introduced. Extra curricular provision and numbers attending has greatly improved, especially for the boys and is a strength in the department. Games still dominate the boys curriculum at Key Stage 3 and 4 and the provision for Post 16 physical education has not improved. Storage for equipment in both the gymnasiums continues to be inadequate and the maintenance of specialist accommodation continues to have a detrimental effect on curriculum planning.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

- 157.Standards in religious education are broadly similar to those found nationally; pupils are achieving generally in line with the expectations of the Locally Agreed Syllabus. The lack of time for the course taken by all pupils at Key Stage 4 prevents the making of any meaningful judgement about pupils' achievement in this course. No external examinations were taken in 1999; numbers taking the subject in earlier years have been too small for any reliable statistical conclusions to be made.
- 158.In work seen by the end of Key Stage 3, pupils are attaining as well as expected, as was reported at the time of the previous inspection. There is variable achievement between some classes and within some classes; however, the depth of work of large numbers of pupils is greater than in many other schools with an extensive range of writing and drawing. The project on Buddhism in Year 9, for example, involves detailed research into the Buddhist way of life and Buddhist worship. Higher attaining pupils, in particular, produce work showing above expected achievement on major world religions with an emphasis on matters such as what it is like to be a Muslim; they reflect on aspects of Muslim prayer and successfully engage in practical activities like making a prayer mat. Indeed, a focus of pupils' work at Key Stage 3 is on prayer in different religions. Year 7 produce information sheets about Christian prayer, whilst Year 8 produce prayer leaflets for visitors to a synagogue. Whilst individual achievement is variable, pupils of all levels of attainment develop their spiritual thinking, sometimes expressing thoughts in diagrams. This type of thinking is well developed by the majority of pupils by Year 9 when boys and girls of all levels of attainment can make perceptive oral and written comments when they consider 'ultimate questions' about life and its purpose. Attainment is not always at the level of the best. Sometimes a lack of rigour in pupils' work means that not all appreciate, for example, some of the subtleties of Jewish customs and traditions. Literacy levels of the weakest pupils, including those with special educational needs, are limited; however, generally, the emphasis on reading, discussions, debates, presentations, and the use of specialised words (which are displayed around rooms) is raising literacy to at least expected levels. There is little evidence of achievement in numeracy and computer skills, though individual pupils make effective use of computers to present aspects of their work.
- 159.Pupils at the end of Key Stage 4 are attaining as well as expected in their GCSE course. They have a good knowledge of the principal aspects of Christianity and Judaism, and an increasing understanding of Christian perspectives on contemporary issues. In one lesson, there was intelligent and articulate discussion about a day of rest and the features of the Jewish Shabbat. Whilst the level of achievement of individual pupils varied, all were able to make valid contributions and share their understanding of, for example, the meal at the beginning of Shabbat. All pupils take a short module in religious education in each year at Key

Stage 4; there is insufficient evidence to judge attainment in this course, and, at present, no religious education is taught in the sixth form.

160. Pupils' attitudes, behaviour and personal development in religious education are judged to be good overall. There is, however, some variability with a range from very good to satisfactory. At Key Stage 3, in some lessons, despite good humoured behaviour and good relationships with each other and the teacher, attention and concentration are not complete, and, when not firmly managed, some pupils, especially those with special educational needs, tend to shout out. However, in other lessons, there is good or very good behaviour with very positive attitudes with all pupils remaining on task. In one lesson, very good relationships between the teacher and the pupils led to high levels of concentration from the majority who showed great interest. Pupils following the GCSE course are well motivated with very good attitudes and behaviour. In a lesson in the course taken by all pupils, despite a very well planned and structured lesson, there was some misbehaviour, reflecting the disjointed nature of the course and the lack of opportunity to instil disciplines and routines.

161. Teaching is good at both key stages. Some is very good, and all is at least satisfactory. In one lesson at Key Stage 3, clear questions and explanation identified key elements for pupils, and simplified task sheets for pupils with special educational needs aided their learning very effectively; in the same lesson, good planning and very good help from a learning support assistant helped pupils develop their knowledge and understanding. Indeed, good planning is a feature of all lessons, and teachers' expert knowledge of their subject enables them to direct pupils' learning logically and with appropriate examples and background information. In another Key Stage 3 lesson, lively and interesting teaching engaged pupils' interest and helped them to focus on the things that really matter to them. The combination of group and paired work, interspersed with teacher led class discussion, took pupils on a logical progression from simple questions to more complex and fundamental questions; there was much progress in pupils' intellectual and personal development with an impressive depth to their learning. At Key Stage 4, similar qualities of teaching lead to good learning, though in one lesson, the teacher had to work very hard with good planning and resources to motivate some reluctant pupils. In other lessons, very good relationships make for a good learning atmosphere with pace being maintained by moving things on at the right moment. In one very good lesson, the teacher created a lovely atmosphere using music and candles for pupils to celebrate the Jewish Shabbat; it was conducted with great sensitivity, involving pupils in role play, and included an apt and moving example from the film 'Schindler's List'. It was a very good contribution to pupils' spiritual development, and their learning about the symbols and practices that mark the preparation for and beginning of Shabbat was of a high order.

162. The overall quality of pupils' learning in lessons is good, though there are variations from satisfactory to very good, reflecting the close link between the quality of teaching and learning. By the end of Key Stage 3, pupils have made satisfactory progress from the wide range of attainments they have on entry to the school. There are few opportunities for substantial progress in the Key Stage 4 course for all pupils because there are only two short modules, separated by a considerable length of time. On occasions pupils gain particular insights in their own personal development, and generally, religious education makes a very good contribution to progress in pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

163. The subject is well led with much enthusiasm and commitment. The scheme of work now provides a very good basis for teaching and learning. There are coherent assessment procedures to track pupils' progress and to guide curricular planning; it is, however, too early to judge the effectiveness of the new systems. Improvement in religious education since the last inspection has been unsatisfactory as far as the allocation of time at Key Stage 4 is concerned, and statutory requirements are still not met at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. However, there are plans for the introduction of a course for all pupils at Key Stage 4 from September 2000 that will meet statutory requirements. In other respects, the relatively newly appointed head of subject has led significant improvements in what is taught and how it is taught. The subject is well poised to take on the challenges that lie ahead.

VOCATIONAL COURSES

164. Pupils in Key Stage 4 follow the Part 1 GNVQ business course at both intermediate and foundation level. By the end of the key stage in 1999, attainment was in line with the national average for pupils attaining the higher grades A*-C and above average for the proportion of pass grades A*-G. For sixth form students, attainment in 1999 over all vocational courses was below the national average for higher grades but all those

who entered gained a grade. The attainment of students achieving vocational qualifications in business, at both intermediate and advanced levels, and leisure and tourism at advanced level, was well below the national average, with 50 per cent of the students failing to complete their studies within the designated time period. Though some students left school for employment, most of those failing to complete returned to school to finish their course. Moreover, this outcome is very similar to that recorded in 1998. Students completing their courses of study frequently gained good grades. In the GNVQ intermediate business course, the five students who completed their studies all gained at least a merit; two gained distinctions. In contrast, no students completed their advanced GNVQ course in leisure and tourism.

165. The attainment of present Key Stage 4 GNVQ business pupils is below national expectations but represents satisfactory achievement for the pupils concerned. Most pupils are gaining a basic understanding of business terms and can undertake simple analytical tasks. For example, a Year 10 class appreciated that the terms 'costs' and 'expenses' meant the same and they were able to show by use of calculations how some costs varied according to time. Year 11 pupils are developing their ideas on customer care and higher attainers produce good aide memoirs on telephone answering skills for example. A significant majority of pupils undertake basics challenges, but are not able to develop the underlying analysis. Attainment is above expectations in the sixth form. In both vocational areas, students can identify problems and offer reasons for the outcomes. For example in a Year 13 advanced GNVQ business lessons, students gave reasons for market penetration that went beyond a basic analysis of price theory. They made references to variables such as quality and showed a good level of understanding. These students also understood how technological changes affect markets, often with a generation of technology being ignored. For example, students recognised the reasons why, in a country such as Chile, conventional telecommunications technology had never established a hold over the whole country, yet the sales of mobile telephones were booming. Where achievement was less good, the level of expectations and challenges presented were unsatisfactory and at both Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form, the attainment of a significant number of pupils is impeded by their rudimentary information technology skills.

166. Pupils studying vocational courses show satisfactory achievement at both Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. All pupils are learning and acquiring new skills, though the pace of acquisition of is variable. At Key Stage 4, pupils are learning effectively about businesses and the environment in which business operates. Pupils are developing an understanding about the importance of customer care and are developing their numeracy and literacy skills. Some progress is being made in the use of information technology, though the speed of progress is unsatisfactory. For example a group of lower attaining pupils in Year 11 were using a spreadsheet programme to enter cost data, but they were unable to use formulae to hasten their calculations. Sixth formers are likewise developing new skills and further improving their literacy and numeracy. Good progress was witnessed in a Year 12 A-level business studies lesson where students were using moving three and four year averages to analyse the sales performance of a firm. Higher attainers were able to use the data to analyse outcomes and appreciated each series presented a different picture of the firm's success. Leisure and tourism students had recently organised a major school social event and had acquired much knowledge about health and safety issues, marketing and accounting, but this cohort of students made less use of information technology than is expected when presenting their work.

167. The attitudes and behaviour of pupils is good, though classroom conduct varies with the quality of teaching. In the majority of lessons, pupils behave well, work with interest and show a capacity to study both independently and collaboratively. On rare occasions, the behaviour of a significant minority of pupils is unsatisfactory when they are not well managed and this affects the pace of learning for all. In some lessons, especially in the leisure and tourism course, students are developing effective team working skills; they show initiative and their confidence in decision making and performing presentations is improving.

168. Teaching is satisfactory overall but does vary from very good to the occasional unsatisfactory or poor lesson. In the most effective lessons, staff had prepared well, there was a clear desire to challenge the pupils and expectations were high. Teachers employed a range of strategies and pupils were well managed and controlled. An appropriate use was made of praise and good use was made of searching and challenging open questions. In such cases, pupils responded positively. This was seen in a Year 10 class of mainly lower attainers who worked well on a task requiring various calculations of business costs and in a Year 13 business class, where a good discussion developed about comparative cost advantage. In less effective lessons, the quality of the teaching was inconsistent and, in some cases, staff were less comfortable acting as facilitators for pupils' independent learning. Another feature of unsatisfactory teaching was inadequate preparation. Though the subject knowledge of the staff was consistently good, in some cases they had not planned well how to teach the theoretical aspects of the subject.

169. Vocational education is making an important contribution to the curriculum offered by the school at both Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. The management of vocational education is good and supported well by the recently appointed head of sixth form; there is a clear vision for future improvements. Issues arising from the previous inspection report have been addressed and the staff work well as a team and have a good understanding of the administrative procedures associated with GNVQ courses. However, the unsatisfactory completion rates need to be improved and the information technology skills of the teachers is variable. Where staff are less confident in their own use of information technology, pupils tend to avoid using computers and as a result, information technology skills of a significant number of pupils are below the standards expected by the end of both key stages.