

INSPECTION REPORT

ROBERTSBRIDGE COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Robertsbridge

LEA area: East Sussex

Unique reference number: 114588

Headteacher: Mr Brian Hartley

Reporting inspector: Dr Paula Haes
16042

Dates of inspection: 30 April – 4 May 2001

Inspection number: 187032

Full inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

© Crown copyright 2001

This report may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that all extracts quoted are reproduced verbatim without adaptation and on condition that the source and date thereof are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the School Inspections Act 1996, the school must provide a copy of this report and/or its summary free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 11 to 16 years

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Knelle Road
Robertsbridge
East Sussex
TN32 5EA

Postcode:

Telephone number: 01580 880360

Fax number: 01580882120

Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mrs Ann Moore

Date of previous inspection: November 1995

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
16042	Paula Haes	Registered inspector	German	What sort of school is it? How high are standards? How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed?
9958	Tim Page	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development. How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
19043	David Lewis	Team inspector	Science	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
19528	Roland Portsmouth	Team inspector	Mathematics	
31129	Jeffrey Pickering	Team inspector	Art	
20124	Joanna Peach	Team inspector	Modern languages	
27662	Elizabeth Schofield	Team inspector	Religious education	
31821	Brian McCann	Team inspector	Physical education	
10391	Valerie du Plergny	Team inspector	Music, special educational needs	
1990	Graham Preston	Team inspector	Design and technology, information and communication technology	
10666	Patricia Wheeler	Team inspector	History, geography	
15372	Patricia Walker	Team inspector	English	
12164	Roderick Passant	Team inspector	Equal opportunities	

The inspection contractor was:

Cambridge Education Associates Ltd.
Demeter House
Station Road
Cambridge
CB1 2RS

Any concerns or complaints about the inspection or the report should be raised with the inspection contractor. Complaints that are not satisfactorily resolved by the contractor should be raised with OFSTED by writing to:

The Complaints Manager
Inspection Quality Division
The Office for Standards in Education
Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London WC2B 6SE

REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	7
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?	11
The school's results and pupils' achievements	
Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development	
HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR PUPILS TAUGHT?	14
HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS?	16
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?	19
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	26

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Robertsbridge Community College is a mixed 11-16 comprehensive school situated in the village of Robertsbridge, East Sussex, close to the border with Kent. It has 569 pupils on roll: 282 boys and 287 girls, much smaller than many other secondary schools. The standard admissions number is 100 and the roll has increased by roughly 25 per cent since 1995. Many of the pupils travel a considerable distance to the college. The college educates six Traveller pupils at present and plays a very important role in providing educational and leisure facilities to the local community.

The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals, 14.6 per cent, is broadly in line with the national average. The proportion of pupils identified as having special educational needs, 15.3 per cent, is broadly in line with the national average, while the proportion of pupils with statements of special educational needs is below the national average. In the year 2000, pupils' attainment on entry to the school, as measured by results in the core subjects in the national tests at the end of Key Stage 2, was close to the national average. Approximately 88 per cent of pupils leaving Year 11 in 2000 continued into school or further education, 11 per cent entered employment, and one per cent went into other areas.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Robertsbridge Community College is an effective school with some strong features. Standards of attainment are in line with national expectations. Results in national tests at the age of 14 are above the national average and at 16, the results at GCSE are in line with the national average. The majority of pupils achieve as well as they should do, although there is evidence that some boys and higher attaining pupils do not, in some subjects, make satisfactory long-term progress. Pupils' attitudes to work and their behaviour in the classroom are good. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall and much improved since the last inspection. However, at Key Stage 3, the quality of teaching is unsatisfactory in approximately 11 per cent of lessons. There are a few gaps in the curriculum, but overall it is broad and ambitious, and much improved since the last inspection. The leadership and management of the school are satisfactory overall and, at senior level, good. The school's leaders implement values very well and create a very caring and supportive community. The school has made satisfactory improvement since the last inspection and offers satisfactory value for money.

What the school does well

- Pupils achieve good results in national tests and examinations at the ages of 14 and 16
- There is a high proportion of good teaching in Years 10 and 11.
- The moral, social and cultural development of pupils is very good, with a strong emphasis on community values.
- The school cares well for pupils from all backgrounds, in partnership with parents and local institutions.
- The attitudes to learning and the behaviour of pupils are good.
- The headteacher and his deputy provide intelligent and sensitive leadership and implement the school's values very effectively.
- The finances of the school are managed well.

What could be improved

- The monitoring and evaluation of teaching, and the quality of support offered, are inconsistent, resulting in too high a proportion of unsatisfactory teaching, especially in Years 7 to 9.
- Not all the boys and higher attaining pupils are performing to their best levels in all subjects.
- The strategies for teaching literacy and number skills are not fully developed.
- The procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress are inconsistent and the results of assessment are not always used to set meaningful targets for pupils, including the boys and pupils with special educational needs.
- A few aspects of the accommodation and the supply of specialist teachers in geography are inadequate.
- The provision of design and technology and information and communication technology is not as comprehensive as it should be in Years 10 and 11.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Since the last inspection in November 1995, the school has made satisfactory progress both with the key issues identified and in other important areas. Attainment at the age of 14 has improved. Overall, the quality of teaching has improved substantially: unsatisfactory or poor teaching has been reduced from 25 per cent to 9 per cent overall, although it is still too high at Key Stage 3. The amount of good or very good teaching has increased. The provision of information and communication technology has improved in quality and quantity, although inadequate funding has meant that there are still gaps in provision in Years 10 and 11. Personal and social education is of much higher quality and the time with tutors is now used effectively. The quality of the Individual Education Plans, compiled for pupils identified as having special educational needs, is more satisfactory and the support for them deployed more effectively. The recording of pupils' progress is much improved. Procedures for gathering information on attainment are more consistent, but the information is not yet used fully to raise standards further. The accommodation and stock of the library have been extended and upgraded to facilitate good independent learning. There is now much more substantial planning for the long-term development of the school, although the review of success with targets sometimes lacks rigour and pace. There has been some progress with the provision of a daily act of collective worship, but the law is still not fulfilled. Spiritual education is, however, generally satisfactory now, with further room for development. The school is very committed to improvement and has the necessary structures and systems in place to improve further in the future.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 16 year olds based on average point scores in GCSE examinations.

Performance in:	compared with				Key
	all schools			similar schools	
	1998	1999	2000	2000	
GCSE examinations	C	C	C	B	well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E

In the 2000 National Curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 3, standards of attainment were well above average for similar schools in English and mathematics, and above average in science. This was an improvement on 1999. In the 2000 GCSE examinations, pupils' results were in line with the national average but above average for similar schools. The proportion of grades A*-C and A*-G was well above average for similar schools and an improvement on previous years. Pupils' best results were in design and technology and German. Their poorest results, compared to other subjects, were in religious education and geography. The school sets realistic targets overall at GCSE, and in 2000 it exceeded these. It is, however, the performance of girls which achieves these targets: the results of the girls were well above the national average in 2000, while the boys' results were close to the national average. In work seen during the inspection, the standards reached by pupils are in line with those expected nationally. Pupils' achievement during Key Stages 3 and 4 is satisfactory, given their prior attainment. In some subjects, however, achievement is not satisfactory: in modern foreign languages at Key Stage 3, information and communication technology at Key Stage 4, and in religious education and geography at both key stages. Some higher attaining pupils do not do as well as they should, but in Mathematics, English and Science, the more able pupils make good long-term progress.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. Pupils persevere with their learning.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. There were no permanent exclusions last year.
Personal development and relationships	Good. Pupils are keen to grasp the many opportunities for personal development.
Attendance	In line with the national average.

Pupils display mature attitudes to their work and to their responsibilities, within the school and the wider community. Attitudes and behaviour are especially good in Years 10 and 11.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged 11-14 years	aged 14-16 years	aged over 16 years
Lessons seen overall	Unsatisfactory	Satisfactory	N/A

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.

In 91 per cent of lesson, teaching is at least satisfactory and in 62 per cent it is at least good. In 20 per cent of lessons, teaching is very good or excellent. In Years 7 to 9, teaching is not as good as in Years 10 and 11: in 11 per cent of lessons seen, teaching was unsatisfactory and in 50 per cent good or better, with no outstanding teaching. However, at Key Stage 4, the proportion of unsatisfactory teaching falls to 6 per cent, with 72 per cent of lessons at least good. At Key Stage 4, the quality of teaching is very good in music. Overall, teaching is good in the majority of subjects, including the three core subjects of mathematics, science and English, but in religious education and geography, teaching is unsatisfactory overall. The major strength of the teaching is the way in which teachers manage the behaviour of pupils in the classroom, which enables satisfactory learning to take place. The main weakness is that some teachers do not always mark pupils' work thoroughly or make full use of the results of their assessment to raise the quality of learning. As a consequence, pupils are not always fully aware of how well they are doing, or what steps they need to take to improve their standards. The teaching of basic skills in literacy and numeracy across the subjects is unsatisfactory. The teaching of pupils from different backgrounds is satisfactory, although a few subjects fail to motivate and challenge boys and the higher attainers appropriately. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory. Although the curriculum is broad, not all pupils study design and technology or information and communication technology at Key Stage 4.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Satisfactory, particularly when additional adult support is provided.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Satisfactory. No additional support is required.

Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good overall. Moral, social and cultural education are very good.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Procedures for ensuring pupils' welfare are good overall and personal development is carefully monitored.

Careers and personal and social education are good. The local community and local institutions contribute well to pupils' learning. The provision for extra-curricular activities is good. The school ensures that pupils from all backgrounds, including the Traveller community and religious minorities, have equal access to the curriculum. Communication with parents is good. Overall, the partnership with parents is strong and contributes to pupils' achievements. Pupils' progress is not always monitored fully, nor is the information available always used to set meaningful targets.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher and deputy provide clear educational direction leading to improvements in many areas.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and are mostly effective in fulfilling their responsibilities.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The monitoring and evaluating of the quality of teaching by senior staff is good, but remains unsatisfactory in some departments.
The strategic use of resources	Satisfactory. The school is very skilled in obtaining best value for money in its expenditure.

The provision of resources is generally satisfactory and the learning resource centre is much improved. The lack of specialist accommodation in some areas affects the quality of education provided. There is some non-specialist teaching in geography, which has a negative impact on the quality of education. The system for appraising the performance of teachers is not fully in place, and professional development is not always adequate. Sensible priorities for development are identified at whole school level, but within subjects, planning for development is still inconsistent. The statutory requirements to provide a daily act of worship and design and technology / information and communication technology at Key Stage 4 are not fully met.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The school expects hard work from pupils Pupils make good progress and enjoy school Staff at the school are approachable The school is well led and managed The school helps children to become mature and responsible 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The range of activities outside lessons is too narrow Partnership with parents and information on children's progress are underdeveloped The amount of homework is unsatisfactory

Inspectors agree with parents' positive views of the school, on the whole. The increase in pupils' maturity and social and moral responsibility is particularly striking. Inspectors feel the use of homework is satisfactory. Other areas identified by parents for improvement are judged to be already good.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. In the 2000 National Curriculum tests at the age of 14, pupils' results were above the national average in English and mathematics and in line with the national average in science. When compared with schools with pupils from similar backgrounds, results were well above average in English and mathematics and above average in science. Results have risen over the last few years, but at a rate slower than the national one. Overall, results have improved since the last inspection when they were closer to the national average. Girls gain better results than boys in English and mathematics, as they did five years ago.
2. In the 2000 GCSE examinations, the proportions of pupils obtaining five or more passes at grades A*-C and A*-G were above the national average and well above similar schools. The total GCSE points score per pupil was close to the average for all schools and above average for similar schools. The girls' points score was well above the national average. There has been an improvement in results at GCSE over the last five years, largely due to the girls' success. Overall the improvement has not been as large as that nationally.
3. The proportions of pupils gaining the higher grades A*-C in design and technology, English literature, German and mathematics are significantly higher than the national averages. The proportion of higher grades A*-C is lower than the national average in geography.
4. Pupils' best overall results in 2000, compared with their achievements in other subjects at GCSE, were in design and technology and German. The poorest results were in religious education and geography.
5. The school sets itself realistic targets at GCSE, based on a careful analysis of pupils' attainment on entry and at the age of 14. In the year 2000, these targets were exceeded. As the overall target for Year 11 did not take gender into account, it is impossible to judge whether the targets for the boys were challenging enough.
6. In work seen in English, standards of attainment at the age of 14 are higher than national expectations for pupils of that age. Speaking and listening are especially strong, with above average skills in oracy. Pupils of all abilities use the full range of their vocabulary appropriately. They display good understanding of the themes of their reading and the way words are used to create literary effects. Standards of writing are good, with good punctuation, sentence structure and spelling. Standards of handwriting and presentation are, however, inconsistent. At the age of 16, standards of attainment in English are in line with national expectations. Standards of speaking and listening remain good. Standards of writing are satisfactory overall, although the quality of writing by some higher attaining pupils is exceptional. Some lower attaining pupils, mainly boys, do not write at length and their inadequate presentation skills make it difficult for them to plan work properly.
7. The teaching of literacy across the subjects is unsatisfactory and so pupils do not attain the levels of which they are capable, in general. However, in subjects such as science and history, high expectations of literacy lead to independent writing of good quality. Spelling and the use of technical terms are promoted well in geography, as is note taking in music.
8. In work seen in mathematics, standards of attainment at the age of 14 are above national expectations. Pupils perform at a level appropriate for their ability in most aspects of mathematics. Very challenging work in Year 7 raises the more able pupils to very high levels of attainment. However, lack of opportunity to apply mathematics and to complete investigational work leads to lower levels than expected in these areas among the gifted and talented pupils. At the age of 16, standards are also above expectations and the gap between the attainment of boys and girls, evident in summer 2000, has been closed. Higher attaining pupils reach very high

standards, using skills in trigonometry from the “exceptional performance” level of the National Curriculum. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, attain standards above what would be expected at the age of 16.

9. The skills of number are not promoted satisfactorily across the subjects and the levels of attainment are therefore not as high as expected in this area. There is, however, in mathematics, efficient and effective use of number skills. In science, the higher attaining pupils make good use of calculation, graphical measurement and drawing skills, but other groups of pupils have only limited use. Number skills are well promoted in music and there is some use in design and technology and information and communication technology (ICT). In other respects the skills of number remain underdeveloped and sometimes hinder access to the curriculum. This is the case in science, in which a lack of understanding of fractions is an obstacle to learning at times.
10. In work seen in science, attainment at the age of 14 is in line with expectations. Pupils of all abilities show good levels of scientific understanding, although the lower attainers find it difficult to express their understanding in writing. Scientific knowledge is generally satisfactory and good among the higher attainers. Attainment at the age of 16 in science is still in line with expectations, but the higher attainers produce work of very high quality. They are particularly adept at analysis, discussion and at defending their viewpoint on ethical issues. Pupils of all abilities lack the opportunity to lay the foundation in practical skills, which would deliver higher standards in this area by the age of 16.
11. In work seen during the inspection, standards of attainment at the age of 14, in subjects other than the three core ones, are in line with the level expected in design and technology, history, music, ICT and physical education, Attainment is below the level expected in art, modern foreign languages, geography and religious education.
12. In work seen during the inspection, standards of attainment at the age of 16, in subjects other than the main three, are above expected levels in design and technology, history and music, in line with expectations in art, modern foreign languages and physical education, and below expectations in geography, religious education and ICT.
13. Pupils' standards in the work seen are not as high as in most public examinations and tests because the school is particularly strong at preparing pupils for external tests and examinations, through, for example, the use of homework and out-of-lesson clubs. Pupils, especially girls, attend the clubs well and work hard to achieve results often higher than their work in the classroom would indicate. Other support systems, such as mentoring, also promote good results.
14. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory overall and most pupils do as well as they could. Pupils enter the school with levels of attainment in line with national expectations for their age and achieve close to the national average across the subjects at the ages of 14 and 16.
15. During Key Stage 3, achievement is good in English, mathematics, history, music and physical education, with pupils achieving standards better than their previous attainment would imply. However, in modern foreign languages, geography and religious education pupils do not generally make as good progress as they could. This slower rate of progress is associated with unsatisfactory or barely satisfactory teaching, sometimes by non-specialists. In modern foreign languages it is linked in part to the very wide range of ability in some of the groups.
16. At Key Stage 4, achievement is very good in music, good in English, mathematics, science, design and technology, history and physical education. In geography and religious education, achievement remains less than satisfactory for the reasons outlined above. In ICT, the gaps in curricular provision mean that too many pupils cannot make the progress of which they are truly capable.
17. The school is aware that the standards of attainment reached by boys are not always as high as they should be at either key stage. There is evidence that boys do not complete homework and coursework to as high a standard as the girls, and in class do not always produce as much work as they could, for example in science. Consequently, girls progress faster than boys. Some subjects, such as modern foreign languages, have yet to tackle rigorously enough the problems of

motivating boys of all abilities, and ensuring that they achieve their full potential. Other subjects have tackled the problem firmly, bringing into the lessons the challenge and extension work previously provided through the clubs outside lessons. The result is that the attainment of boys and girls is now more equal in those subjects, as in mathematics at Key Stage 4, and in English, for example.

18. Pupils identified as having special educational needs make satisfactory progress over the longer term, especially when supported in class by additional adults. Although the targets in individual education plans (IEPs) are very general, the learning support assistants and the classroom teachers implement them well and IEPs support the progress of this group of pupils. The IEPs of the small number of pupils from the Travelling community contain more specific targets, generated by the Traveller Education Service. This group of pupils makes satisfactory progress over the longer term and one former pupil has achieved entry to further education.
19. Gifted and talented pupils make satisfactory long-term progress in the main. Indeed, in English, mathematics and science, the high levels of challenge in the work offered to this group lead to good progress and attainment. In modern foreign languages, in contrast, partly due to the constraints imposed by the wide range of ability in most classes, higher attaining pupils are not fully extended, especially in the more active skills of speaking and writing. In religious education, the level of the work is not appropriate for the more able.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

20. Pupils' attitudes to school are good overall. This confirms the findings of the previous inspection. In four out of five lessons in Years 10 and 11, pupils' attitudes are at least good. In classrooms, attitudes are best when lessons are interesting and cover new concepts, and opportunities arise for "hands on" participation. This is particularly evident in science and design and technology lessons, and creates a learning environment where pupils work closely together and are eager to help each other. In contrast, they lose concentration when lessons are dominated by the teacher, which is often the case in modern foreign languages. There is some evidence that the attitudes of some boys to learning are not as positive as those of the girls. They do not keep records of work as conscientiously as the girls, their presentation is not as neat and they are more reluctant to attend the out-of-class revision sessions, which have formed an important part of the school's success in raising standards. In those subjects in which the teachers have made a substantial effort to motivate and challenge boys, the attitudes and attainment of boys are equally good.
21. Behaviour is usually good. Pupils remain orderly even when they become inattentive because of insufficient challenge. There have been no permanent exclusions over the last two years, but short fixed period exclusions are higher than the national average. They principally relate to a small number of pupils, with recurrent exclusions, whose behaviour falls below the high personal standards insisted upon by the school. There is little oppressive behaviour.
22. Personal development and relationships are good. The school is founded on very democratic principles, which foster a high level of involvement in school affairs among pupils. There are class captains, a prefect system, and school councils, which include pupils at all levels. The pupils are very good at identifying charities to support and successful at raising large amounts of money. Older pupils take responsibility for monitoring and maintaining good behaviour on the school coaches, and were justifiably commended for their initiative and assistance during the recent local floods. Personal development is enhanced for many pupils by the opportunities provided by the college to travel abroad, and take part in The Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme.
23. Pupils respect other peoples' differences. Minority groups, including Travellers and pupils from the local Bruderhof religious community, are valued members of the school. Relationships between pupils and staff are based on mutual understanding, which leads to an easy rapport.

24. Attendance is satisfactory, being close to the national average. There is very little difference in attendance levels across the age range, but there is a small group of pupils who have a below average attendance rate.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

25. The quality of teaching in the school is satisfactory overall. It is at least satisfactory in 91 per cent of lessons, and at least good in 62 per cent of lessons. This represents a substantial improvement in teaching since the last inspection, when only 75 per cent of teaching overall was at least satisfactory and less than 50 per cent at least good. In recent years, the headteacher and deputy have conducted a rigorous system of monitoring of teaching, in consultation with pupils and overseen by the governing body. This has cut the amount of unsatisfactory and poor teaching considerably. The smaller amount of unsatisfactory or poor teaching which remains is chiefly associated with inappropriate teaching methods and low expectations, which do not lead to effective or efficient learning by pupils.
26. At Key Stage 3, the quality of teaching is at least satisfactory in 89 per cent of lessons, at least good in half the lessons and very good in ten per cent. The quality of teaching is unsatisfactory in 11 per cent of lessons, including one poor lesson, and is unsatisfactory overall at this key stage. The quality of teaching is, however, good in the majority of subjects including the three core ones, satisfactory in modern foreign languages and art, but unsatisfactory in geography and religious education.
27. At Key Stage 4, the quality of teaching is better than at Key Stage 3: higher expectations underpin more appropriate and effective teaching methods and assessment. The quality of teaching is at least satisfactory in 94 per cent of lessons, at least good in 72 per cent of lessons and very good or excellent in 27 per cent of lessons. The quality of teaching is less than satisfactory in six per cent of lessons, including one poor lesson. The quality of teaching is very good at this key stage in history and music, and good in all other subjects, except modern foreign languages in which it is satisfactory. Teaching is unsatisfactory in geography, religious education and poor in Spanish. Teachers generally have a satisfactory level of expertise in their subject, so that they challenge most pupils to fulfil their potential. In geography, however, there is some non-specialist teaching which is affecting the knowledge and skills acquired by pupils. The teaching of literacy and number skills, which would strengthen work, is unsatisfactory in most subjects.
28. The planning of lessons is generally satisfactory and objectives for each lesson are clear. Not all teachers plan their lessons in terms of the skills to be acquired as well as the content.
29. Teachers generally select a variety of appropriate teaching methods and conduct their lessons at a swift pace. In many lessons in modern foreign languages, however, teachers make too frequent use of a limited range of methods, for example listening tests, which do not match the needs of all pupils or enable them to fulfil their potential. Pupils, especially boys, lose interest and concentration. Generally teachers set high expectations for pupils, particularly at Key Stage 4, and are not satisfied with mediocre levels of attainment. Expectations in religious education are too low.
30. The way in which teachers manage the behaviour of pupils in the classroom is a strength of the teaching, particularly at Key Stage 4, and greatly enhances pupils' learning. Excellent relationships are created between teachers and pupils in art. Only in a few lessons is the discipline of pupils a problem for the teachers.
31. The use of homework by teachers was judged to be inconsistent at the last inspection. There is now a satisfactory level of use, except in art at Key Stage 3, where opportunities for drawing from life outside the classroom are not fully exploited.
32. In general, teachers introduce a good range of resources into their lessons, but in most subjects,

computers are in short supply and therefore underused. The quality of both homemade and commercial resources is especially high in modern foreign languages. Teachers use the support staff well to cater for the special educational needs of pupils, a great improvement since the last inspection.

33. The quality of day-to-day assessment is satisfactory overall, with some helpful and accurate marking. In some subjects work is not marked rigorously or frequently enough. At Key Stage 3, the quality and use of day-to-day assessment is unsatisfactory overall. Some teachers are reluctant to link the marks given for work with the levels of the National Curriculum in Years 7 to 9. Even when they do, pupils have little detailed knowledge of what the levels mean in some subjects, and hence little understanding of how well they are doing or what they need to do to improve their standards.
34. The quality of pupils' learning in work seen during the inspection is judged to be satisfactory overall at both key stages, and therefore slightly better than the quality of teaching. This is because pupils sometimes persevere with their individual learning in an independent way, even when, in a minority of lessons, methods are repetitive and the control of some pupils' behaviour is unsatisfactory. At both key stages, the quality of learning is good in most subjects. In music and history at Key Stage 4, learning is very good. In Spanish at Key Stage 4 and in religious education and geography at both key stages, learning is overall unsatisfactory, and skills and knowledge are not acquired as rapidly as they could be.
35. At Key Stage 3, pupils work hard and concentrate well, showing interest in their work. At Key Stage 4, all aspects of learning are at least satisfactory overall. Again, pupils concentrate and work well and the amount of work they produce is good.
36. The quality of teaching of boys is generally satisfactory in lessons. In mathematics and English, teachers gear the lessons well to both boys and girls, ensuring that the level of content and the variety of teaching methods motivate and challenge boys and keep them working hard. In some other subjects, there is insufficient challenge and interest to motivate all the boys. When, for reasons of staffing or curriculum, lessons are supplemented by substantial amounts of homework or revision clubs, boys do not always respond or learn as well as girls.
37. Teachers, with the help of support staff, generally manage to focus work successfully on the special educational needs of pupils, and as a result the quality of learning is satisfactory. Individual support for pupils with special educational needs is offered in nearly all science lessons. In modern foreign languages, this group of pupils is provided with good, well-planned work. Much of the teaching in religious education is geared to the needs of the slower learners. Pupils from the Traveller community are well integrated into the school and acquire appropriate knowledge and skills at a satisfactory pace.
38. The teaching and learning of the higher attaining pupils are satisfactory in general. In modern foreign languages, this group is not always challenged because of the wide range of ability in the classroom, but homework is adapted to extend classroom work. In art, however, homework is not designed to develop the potential of the more gifted and talented. In religious education, there is considerable underachievement among the higher attaining pupils. In mathematics and English, however, teachers set a level of challenge for their more able pupils which often results in learning, both in lessons and over the longer term, which is of outstanding quality.

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

39. The school offers a broad and, for the most part, balanced curriculum which includes all the subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education to pupils at both key stages. The course in personal and social education has been reorganised since the last inspection and now supports pupils' development well in a range of areas, including sex education, and careers guidance, and draws attention to the dangers of drug misuse. The course in religious education uses the Agreed Syllabus and fulfils statutory requirements. The school does not meet the statutory requirements in relation to a daily act of corporate worship.
40. The statutory requirement to provide lessons in design and technology at Key Stage 4 is not met, since some pupils exercise the option to take GNVQ information and communications technology or GCSE business studies or art, in place of design and technology. Other pupils are legitimately disapplied from the subject, in order to take an NVQ course in building, at Level 1, run jointly with a local college.
41. All pupils study French and German in Years 7 and 8 and about two thirds of them study one foreign language at Key Stage 4, leading to GCSE. About ten per cent of pupils do not study any foreign language in Year 11. The remaining quarter choose to study two foreign languages to GCSE. These pupils follow a science double award course, with a time allocation, which is significantly less than that recommended nationally. There has been some impact on the levels of attainment they are able to reach in science. This has now been remedied by starting the GCSE syllabus in Year 9. Vocational courses, available as part of a work-related course provided jointly with the local college, include GNVQ in information and communications technology and make an effective and useful addition to the curriculum.
42. In general, classroom teachers provide satisfactory day-to-day support for pupils with special educational needs, those who are gifted and talented and minority groups. Individual education plans have been produced where necessary, and a summary of their content, including individual targets, is available to all teachers. However the targets are very general, and, with large classes and relatively little adult support, teachers sometimes have difficulty in adapting their subject to meet the needs of all pupils. On the whole, however, teachers and support staff build satisfactory provision on shaky foundations.
43. Individual teachers take the requirement to teach basic skills in all subjects seriously, but there is no whole-school literacy policy, and the teaching of numeracy is limited to a few subjects. The effectiveness of the strategies in place for teaching these skills is therefore restricted.
44. Pupils speak highly of the range of extra-curricular activities, which cover music and the arts, sports, and academic activities such as homework and revision clubs. Activities closely linked to the curriculum include field trips in biology and geography, and overseas visits in connection with art, history and modern foreign languages. The school has extensive and productive links with partner institutions in the area, as well as with the Sussex Education Careers service. It prides itself on following up the progress of every pupil who leaves the school. The school encourages pupils to take responsibility for aspects of school life and the school councils contribute significantly to the high regard in which pupils hold the school.
45. The provision for the spiritual development of pupils is satisfactory and has improved since the previous inspection. Although there is still not a daily act of collective worship for all pupils, arrangements for assemblies are now organised far more effectively than at the time of the last inspection. All suitable indoor spaces are used to ensure that pupils attend three assemblies each week. The programme for assemblies is well planned, with themes clearly identified for the whole year. Opportunities for reflection are provided in some assemblies and in several subjects of the curriculum. For example in art, when studying the work of Picasso, pupils focus thoughtfully on the horrors of the Spanish Civil War. The First World War features prominently in pupils' work in history. In English, the literature course provides pupils with many opportunities for personal reflection. However, religious education does not provide the level of spiritual development normally associated with this subject.

46. Provision for the moral development of pupils is very good. Moral values are promoted very effectively within the school. Teachers know the pupils well and relationships are consistently good. Following the last inspection, the approach to the delivery of personal and social education was completely revised. There is now an excellent scheme of work that is delivered by a small group of teachers. The scheme includes a wide range of moral issues relevant to the pupils' own lives. Pupils clearly know right from wrong and the school consistently fosters their sense of self-esteem.
47. Provision for social development is very good. Pupils are provided with many opportunities for collaborative working, in subjects such as English, history, art, music and physical education. Pupils are given many opportunities to exercise individual initiative. There are two school councils. All Year 11 pupils act as prefects, and forty are designated as senior prefects. They made a particularly helpful and constructive contribution during the problems caused by the flooding towards the end of last year. Their response to that emergency was valued highly by the school. Pupils support a number of different charities, and they are also responsible for the upkeep of four war graves in Salehurst cemetery. The very successful Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme provides further opportunities for constructive social interaction. Assemblies also make a positive contribution to the pupils' moral and social development.
48. The school takes a very active approach to the pupils' cultural development. Provision includes trips to the theatre and to musical events. The Shakespeare Touring Company has visited the college. As well as annual ski trips to the Alps, opportunities are provided for pupils to visit places not usually featured in trips abroad. These include the North Pole and Silicon Valley, California. Just before the inspection began, a group of pupils returned from work experience with the Mayo Clinic Foundation and IBM in Rochester, Minneapolis. Pupils are also given an opportunity to undertake one European cultural tour each year. Last year, pupils visited Barcelona; this year they will be going to Arles. Music makes a particularly strong contribution to multi-cultural development as does food technology. The dance element of the physical education syllabus also contributes to the pupils' multi-cultural development, as do subjects such as geography and art.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

49. Procedures for the wellbeing and safety of pupils are good, as they were at the time of the last inspection. All staff have undertaken training recently in child protection, and are aware of the correct procedures to follow. The school operates a safe environment; equipment is checked regularly, and first aid is managed effectively from a designated medical room. Extensive and secure links with external agencies have been established, and are used successfully to support pupils.
50. The monitoring of personal development and the range and scope of pastoral support available are good. Tutor periods, and the personal and social education curriculum, provide the main points of contact between form tutors and pupils, but much more is available to support pupils whenever there is a need. The pupil support programme, (PSP), involves all relevant staff in the help provided for individual pupils. A comprehensive record of self-evaluation, overseen by form tutors, is maintained by all pupils in their planners and in their Records of Achievement. During the inspection, teachers conducted a whole-school survey on the effectiveness of planners: the findings will be analysed to see if the content of next year's issue can more fully address the needs of the pupils.
51. The school has good and effective systems for monitoring and improving attendance and promoting good behaviour, including strategies to counter oppressive behaviour. Attendance is rigorously monitored by senior management, assisted by the educational welfare officer. A wide range of initiatives has been introduced to promote the importance of attendance to pupils, including the award of certificates, self-monitoring through records in pupils' planners, and the recording of attendance in most lessons. The provision of counselling through the PSP, and the provision of a vocational curriculum at Hastings College, have proved to be very effective in retaining potentially disaffected pupils on roll.

52. Good behaviour is supported by the general climate in the school, which is reinforced through assemblies and tutor time. Formal support strategies such as day reports and incident referral forms are targeted towards particular pupils and provide form tutors and pastoral heads with a system for tracking pupils' development regularly and consistently. Staff regularly survey pupils about bullying and it is not perceived as a significant problem by the majority of pupils.
53. The procedures in place for assessing pupils' academic attainment and progress are, however, unsatisfactory. The school has an appropriate policy on assessment, which sets out clearly the purposes of assessment and the uses to which it should be put. This policy states, however, that most decisions about the procedures to be used are delegated to individual subjects, with the inevitable result that the quality of assessment practice is patchy. All subjects are, however, required to carry out formal end of year testing for each pupil, and this is executed consistently. Assessment at other times in the school year remains inconsistent between departments and key stages: some departments, for example English and history, carry out regular and effective assessments. Others, such as religious education and art, have few procedures for regular, planned assessment.
54. There is a system whereby pupils and teachers together set targets to raise the standards of academic work, but it is not effective in informing pupils about their current levels of attainment, or what they need to do in order to improve. Pupils fill in their "planners" conscientiously with their target levels for each subject, which are discussed with them once a year. However, there is a widespread lack of understanding amongst pupils about the significance of these levels. They are, in the main, expressed simply as numbers: some pupils are not even aware these numbers relate to levels of the National Curriculum, still less what skills and knowledge they refer to. There are a few exceptions to this, with a more meaningful use of targets in geography and music. Very limited use is made of self-assessment, which also restricts pupils' ability to fully understand their own progress.
55. There is inconsistent use of assessment information to guide curriculum planning for groups and individuals. In history, the information is used appropriately and in English it is used, for example, to identify those pupils who have underachieved during Year 7 and to offer additional support during Year 8. The information gathered on pupils identified as having special educational needs could be used in a much more focused way.
56. To improve the consistency of assessment was an issue for action in the previous inspection report and insufficient progress has been made towards this.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

57. A large proportion of parents expressed positive views about the school in the pre-inspection questionnaires. Areas of disquiet expressed by a relatively small number of parents included the use of homework, the information on pupils' progress, and how closely the school works with parents. The use of homework is judged to be satisfactory overall, whilst the school's communications with parents appear to be good. Inspectors agree with the overwhelming majority of parents who say they feel the school staff are approachable and understanding.
58. The school has maintained good links with parents, which are effective for the majority. Regular year group meetings inform parents about their children's progress and specific issues such as options and coursework. The school takes special steps to post information to those parents who are unable to attend meetings. Parents of children with special educational needs are involved in reviews of their individual education plans, and are effectively informed when additional support is provided by external agencies.
59. The involvement of parents has a positive impact on the school. A parents' forum has been formed which seeks their views on school related issues. Although attendance at this forum has been disappointing, those who do attend have been consulted on a wide range of issues, including the curriculum, canteen arrangements, and school uniform. In each of these cases, parents' views have been taken into account fully, and have been used to modify school policy. Parents have also been consulted on community issues, such as the provision of a new sports hall, which, it is

- hoped, will benefit both the school and the wider community.
60. The quality of written information available to parents is good. The school prospectus and governors' annual report are both well written and provide a wide range of information. The half-termly newsletter contains interesting articles and is important in keeping parents from a wide-spread catchment area aware of the many school and extra-curricular activities. Pupils' annual reports, supported by interim reports, provide parents with a clear picture of curriculum coverage and their children's attainment, as well as helpful targets for improvement.
61. The contribution of parents to their children's learning at school and at home is good. The majority of parents subscribe to and have signed the home/school agreement. They show interest in attending parents' meetings, and ensure that their children are punctual to school and properly equipped. Many parents support the activities of the Parents and Teachers Association, which raises funds and provides additional resources for the school.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

62. The headteacher offers the school clear educational direction. He leads by his example of honesty, kindness and outstanding dedication. With thoughtful intelligence and great sensitivity, he has implemented change and improvement at the school, raising the quality of education and standards, whilst maintaining the caring and inclusive spirit of the community college. Very well supported by his deputy, the headteacher is particularly able in implementing through his teams the school's strong values of mutual respect, equal opportunity and commitment to the community. Within the departments, teachers are very aware of the school's aims, and work to implement them at that level, creating good relationships as a result.
63. Over the last few years, the head and deputy have instituted a strong system for the monitoring of the quality of teaching, unusual in several ways: pupils appraise the work of the teachers, for example, and a governor monitors the work of the senior staff to ensure fairness and consistency. Appropriate action has been taken in the majority of cases, and is one of the reasons for the substantial reduction in the amount of unsatisfactory teaching. The system provides a strong foundation for the new performance management system. The latter involves heads of department in the monitoring of teaching and the setting of objectives for teachers. Until now, these middle managers have undertaken very little observation or appraisal of their staff, a weakness identified at the last inspection. As a result, there are still deficiencies in the teaching methods of some teachers, who are not receiving the appropriate support and professional development. Professional development in areas of importance to the whole school is, however, ambitious.
64. The quality of planning for the longer-term development of the school has improved greatly since the last inspection. Plans are the topic of full consultation with staff and governors. Priorities are sensible and targets very clear and detailed. Responsibilities for the success of developments are delegated wisely and criteria for judging success are identified. However, the review of how well targets are achieved is still not frequent or effective enough, which explains in part why some issues from the last inspection, for example assessment, are still not fully resolved. At departmental level, the implementation of the school's policy on planning for future development is still inconsistent.
65. The governors now play a much more important role in the leadership and management of the school. They have a good knowledge of its aims and objectives, its strengths and weaknesses, and support the school well in all its endeavours. Governors operate a very good formal and structured system for linking with the different departments: their work with departments is carefully focused on the priorities of the school. They gather important information on the fulfilment of the school's targets at departmental level, as well as the performance and needs of the different subjects. There are a few breaches in the provision of the National Curriculum and there is not a daily act of collective worship for all pupils, but the school is constrained in complying by the inadequacy of the accommodation in some areas.
66. The senior management team monitors the academic progress of pupils from their time of entry to the school. Some of this information is used to raise pupils' performance, for example at GCSE, and in particular to set challenging targets overall for the more able pupils. However, the process

is not yet extended to the full range of pupils, and valuable information on the relative performance of boys and girls is still not fully used. At departmental level, there is very little evidence of the use of the data to monitor performance and inform the targets pupils set themselves. Middle managers are not all aware of the power of the available data to shape the curriculum and add value to pupils' achievements.

67. Whilst the quality of leadership and management is very good in music and history and good in English, science and physical education, there is currently no head of department in religious education, which is having a serious impact on the quality of provision. The co-ordinator of the learning support department has a very good knowledge of individual pupils, which is now shared with the learning support assistants and finds its way into the classroom to be used there. The system is, however, very informal and open to inconsistency. Some aspects of the provision for pupils with special educational needs could be planned and co-ordinated in a much more rigorous manner: for example the identification of needs, the formulation of individual targets, which are often too general, and the review of statements.
68. There are generally enough teachers to match the needs of the curriculum, but there is some non-specialist teaching in geography, which is having an adverse effect on the quality of education. There is insufficient technical support for the teaching of information and communication technology.
69. The accommodation of the school is not adequate to deliver the full curriculum. Some teaching rooms are small and this restricts the range of teaching styles and strategies that can be used. The best accommodation is in music, where very good use is made of the specialist room and the two practice rooms, and in humanities. The art room is inadequate: there are no effective specialist areas to support the different aspects of the subject. Information and communication technology has only one dedicated room with a suite of computers for the whole school to use on a booking system. There are only six occasions during the week when this can happen, as the room is used for examination work at other times. Some specialists have to teach outside their specialist area on occasions: modern foreign languages, for example. The science accommodation is barely adequate, and the laboratories are not well suited to practical work. Physical education has a shortage of an indoor specialist area.
70. Resources are just adequate to support the curriculum in most subjects. There is, however, a lack of computers for the teaching of information and communication technology. This situation should be improved greatly in the autumn. There is a lack of suitable artefacts and books in religious education. There are limited resources in art, resulting in few opportunities for printmaking. The resources for physical education are, in contrast, good in quantity and quality. The learning resource centre benefits from greatly improved accommodation and resources and is well used by pupils.
71. Educational priorities are identified in the current year's school development plan. These are mostly initiated by the senior management team and brought to governors for ratification. Governors oversee expenditure and are successful in achieving best value. They also monitor and evaluate success. Major projects are carefully costed. When funding is secured, it is managed well to obtain a good return for the school. Longer-term planning is less detailed because of funding uncertainties, but there is now an agreed three-year development strategy for the school, which is formally recorded and kept under review. This document is focused on pupils, resources, and the community, with clear overall objectives and specific targets.
72. Administrative and financial controls are managed efficiently. The school uses the local education authority's budget management model to track income and expenditure within the delegated budget. Specific funding is identified and used appropriately. Information is easily accessible and the bursar can provide a clear and updated synopsis whenever it is required. Information and communication technology is used effectively throughout the school office to manage finance, communications and attendance. The last full financial audit took place in 1999: systems and controls were found to be satisfactory and all recommendations have been taken up.
73. The school embraces the principles of best value. Comparison with similar schools has alerted

senior management to boys' under-performance, and this now appears as a key target in the school development plan. The school challenges itself to provide cost effective and competitive quality resources and services, and regularly consults pupils and parents to ensure that developments meet the needs of the school community.

74. Expenditure per pupil is above the national average, partly because the basic budget is supplemented by income from facilities and services. Pupils' attainment on entry and their socio-economic circumstances are close to the national average. Teaching is good in the majority of subjects and attainment is above that of similar schools in national tests and examinations. The school is effective in fostering good attitudes and values amongst its pupils, and is providing satisfactory value for money.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

To raise further the standards of work and the quality of education provided, the governors and senior management team should:

1. Implement effectively the new performance management system, to identify areas for development in the quality of teaching and provide the support which will lead to improvement. *(paragraphs 25-27, 63)*
2. Ensure that boys and more able pupils are offered the curriculum and teaching methods which will enable them to fulfil their potential in all subjects, by spreading the good practice which exists in several subjects. *(paragraphs 17, 38)*
3. Develop and implement better strategies for the teaching of literacy and number skills across the subjects, by extending the good techniques exemplified in some areas. *(paragraphs 7, 9, 27, 43)*
4. Ensure that all work is marked and assessed well, so that all pupils, including those with special educational needs, can be set meaningful targets and know exactly what they need to do to improve. *(paragraphs 33, 53-56)*
5. Ensure that there is sufficient specialist teaching in all subjects and that accommodation is adequate to deliver the full curriculum to all pupils. *(paragraphs 68, 69)*
6. Ensure that the curriculum in Years 10 and 11 matches statutory requirements, by filling the gaps in the provision of design and technology and information and communication technology. *(paragraphs 40, 65)*

The school is aware of all of these issues and has built them into their planning for the development of the school.

Other issues:

There is insufficient technical support for the full curriculum in information and communication technology. *(paragraph 68)*

The school still does not provide a daily act of collective worship. *(paragraphs 45, 65)*

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	124
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	43

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
2	16	44	30	7	2	0

The table gives the percentage of teaching observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons. These figures may not add up to 100, as a result of rounding up.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 - 11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	569	
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	61	

Special educational needs	Y7 - 11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	6	
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	87	

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	4

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	23
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	7

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	7.1
National comparative data	7.9

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.6
National comparative data	1.1

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	58	52	110

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	34	41	32
	Girls	41	38	32
	Total	75	79	64
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	68 (65)	72 (73)	58 (54)
	National	63 (63)	65 (62)	59 (55)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	34 (30)	45 (39)	33 (18)
	National	28 (28)	42 (38)	30 (23)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	34	45	33
	Girls	43	45	31
	Total	77	90	64
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	71 (72)	83 (77)	59 (65)
	National	64 (64)	66 (64)	62 (60)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	41 (36)	49 (47)	28 (25)
	National	31 (31)	39 (37)	29 (28)

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4

Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	50	40	90

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	18	45	46
	Girls	28	41	41
	Total	46	86	87
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	51 (47)	96 (87)	97 (95)
	National	47.4 (46.6)	90.6 (90.9)	95.6 (95.8)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	39
	National	38.4 (38)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	1
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	2
White	566
Any other minority ethnic group	0

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	32	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 - 11

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	34
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	16.7

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y7 - 11

Total number of education support staff	7
Total aggregate hours worked per week	166

Deployment of teachers: Y7 - 11

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	77.1
---	------

Average teaching group size: Y7 - 11

Key Stage 3	22.9
Key Stage 4	19.3

Financial information

Financial year	1999/2000
----------------	-----------

	£
Total income	1365624
Total expenditure	1359683
Expenditure per pupil	2576
Balance brought forward from previous year	47425
Balance carried forward to next year	53366

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	569
Number of questionnaires returned	163

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	48	46	4	2	0
My child is making good progress in school.	48	48	4	0	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	28	61	7	1	2
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	26	52	17	4	1
The teaching is good.	34	57	3	1	5
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	29	48	15	6	2
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	56	37	4	1	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	59	36	2	1	1
The school works closely with parents.	27	50	18	2	2
The school is well led and managed.	50	42	4	1	4
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	45	47	6	1	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	28	46	10	2	13

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

ENGLISH

75. Attainment of 14 year olds in National Curriculum tests in 2000 was above the national average and well above what is found in similar schools. There has been a steady and significant improvement in these results over the past four years and the margin by which the school's results outstrip the national average has also widened. The attainment of girls is significantly higher than that of boys, and although this disparity has decreased significantly over the past two years, it remains higher than that found nationally.
76. The percentage of 16 year olds attaining the higher grades A*-C in GCSE English in 2000 was lower than the national average and shows a considerable decrease over the previous year. The percentage of pupils attaining A*-G was similar to the national average. The attainment of boys is considerably lower than that of girls and the difference is much greater than the national gap. In general, pupils did less well in their English examination than they did in their other subjects. The percentage of pupils attaining grade A*-C in English Literature was considerably higher than in the previous year and well above the national average. The percentage attaining the two highest grades of A* and A was higher than the national average. All pupils entered for the examination attained grade A*-G which is higher than the national average. The attainment of girls was higher than that of boys but the difference was smaller than that found nationally.
77. In lessons and work seen during the inspection, standards at the age of 14 are higher than national expectations for pupils of that age. This represents an improvement since the previous inspection, when they were reported to be similar to the national average. Speaking and listening is a particular strength, with nearly all pupils speaking clearly, confidently and at a volume appropriate to the purpose. Average and higher ability pupils are articulate and use the full range of their vocabulary to express their ideas precisely and convincingly. Although the vocabulary of lower attaining pupils is rather limited, they use it appropriately and avoid the use of colloquialisms, speaking in correct, complete sentences. Pupils show good understanding of the plot, setting and characters found in their reading and all make informed observations about these. Nearly all pupils understand clearly the purpose or theme of what they are reading and how the way in which the writer uses language enhances this. For example, pupils reading a poem about male/female relationships were able to explain the effect of vocabulary used in an innovative and unusual fashion. Higher attaining pupils were able to spot that this was because a noun was being used as a verb in a way that commands the reader's attention. On many occasions pupils show a sensitive and thoughtful attitude to the beauty or effectiveness of what they have read, and this is a strength of their response to reading. Although boys occasionally need a little more encouragement than girls to participate in discussions, there is no difference in the quality of their understanding or contributions.
78. The standard of writing is good overall. Nearly all pupils across the ability range write in complete, correctly structured sentences, which are correctly punctuated. The spelling of basic words is accurate and all pupils take care to check the spelling of words unfamiliar to them. All pupils attempt to make their writing as interesting as possible, and average and higher attaining pupils vary the length of their sentences and select vocabulary adventurously. Many pupils, both boys and girls, write very effective verse. The handwriting and presentation of some pupils is inconsistent and shows little evidence of thought about the most effective way of presenting their work.
79. Standards of work at the age of sixteen seen during the course of the inspection are in line with national expectations. The standards of speaking and listening are good and represent a strength. All pupils across the attainment range make use of discussion as a very effective learning tool to compare, extend and review their understanding, expressing their ideas clearly, concisely and diplomatically. The vocabulary of nearly all is at least adequate to their depth of discussion. All pupils, including those with lower attainment, show confidence in their ability to express their ideas. The quality of pupils' listening is good and does much to enhance their

knowledge and understanding. Pupils' understanding of what they read is generally thoughtful and reflective, showing appreciation of the writer's theme and intentions. Nearly all pupils are able to go beyond the level of plot, theme or information to understand the ways in which the writer achieved the effect for which they are aiming. For example, many pupils in Year 11 recognised that in "La Belle Dame Sans Merci" Keats presents a picture of love which is both romantic and also "true to life", while higher attaining pupils were able to identify the language which achieved this effect. Lower attaining pupils experience difficulty with recalling what they have read and their interpretation is sometimes marred by basic misunderstandings about meaning or plot. Higher attaining pupils discuss poetry at a fairly profound level, making good use of examples and quotations to exemplify and justify their ideas.

80. The written work of most pupils is satisfactory and the quality of writing by some higher attaining pupils is exceptionally good. Lower attaining pupils do not have confidence in their ability to express their ideas in writing and some, mainly boys, are reluctant to write more than the basic minimum. Most pupils make appropriate use of the process of drafting and editing in order to produce researched and refined written assignments. The inadequate presentation skills of some pupils mean that they do not always make and present their notes and plans in a way which makes it easy for them to use. The written style of higher attaining pupils is mature and very "readable"- they vary the length and pace of their sentences very effectively and use a wide vocabulary. Most pupils punctuate their work and spell accurately, but those whose attainment is lower spell and punctuate inconsistently, sometimes, for example, spelling a basic word correctly on one occasion and incorrectly on another.
81. In comparison with their prior attainment on entry to the school, pupils in Key Stage 3 achieve well over time. The group of pupils who attained above average results at the end of Key Stage 3 in 2000 entered the school at age 11 with attainment levels only in line with national expectation for pupils of that age. This represents good progress during the key stage. Pupils whose overall attainment in GCSE English in 2000 was below the national average had attained below average results at the end of Key Stage 3. These results therefore show satisfactory progress during the key stage in comparison with earlier attainment. Pupils are taught in groups based broadly on levels of attainment, and within these groups the level of challenge and support meets the needs of each group. Average and higher attaining pupils have the additional opportunity to take the English Literature examination at the end of Key Stage 4 and here their achievement is good.
82. Attitudes and behaviour are at least satisfactory in nearly all lessons and good overall. In three quarters of lessons they are at least good and in a quarter they are very good. Pupils respond well to the expectations of their teachers by listening carefully and by working hard and enthusiastically. Pupils have good relationships with their teachers and each other and they make good use of the many opportunities they have to work in pairs and groups. The good standard of discussion is partly due to the fact that pupils are helpful and supportive to each other, and take care to be polite and diplomatic. Because of this, they feel able to share their thoughts and opinions without fear of embarrassment or derogatory comments. In the one lesson where behaviour was less than satisfactory, pupils allowed their enthusiastic response to the text they were reading to get out of hand, resulting in the disruptive and inconsiderate shouting out of answers.
83. Teaching and learning are good in both key stages. In Key Stage 3, all teaching was at least satisfactory, half was at least good and a third was very good. In Key Stage 4, all teaching was at least satisfactory, and more than half was at least good. One lesson was very good. In both key stages, teachers know their pupils well, foster good relationships with them and listen to them carefully. In this way, the good teaching is planned to meet pupils' identified needs and offers a range of activities, which promote and support progress. For example, in a lesson in Year 9, lower attaining pupils revising "Macbeth" were encouraged to discuss the aspects they were finding difficult, were offered clear advice and explanation by their teacher and were given a range of tasks designed to reinforce their previous work. In this way, all members of the group made good progress in the key areas of the understanding of characterisation and the use of quotations. A particular strength is the good use of probing, challenging questioning to prompt pupils to extend their knowledge and understanding through reflection. All teachers offer a wide range of structured opportunities for pupils to work in pairs and groups and on these occasions pupils make good progress by listening to the ideas of others and comparing them with their own.

84. All teachers have a firm expectation that all members of the group should contribute to lessons. In particular, boys at all levels of attainment are encouraged to participate in discussions and to share with the class what they have already written. For example, boys who were encouraged by skilled questioning to contribute their ideas to a discussion about a poem, made good progress in understanding original and unusual ways in which writers use language to achieve an effect. Teachers make good provision for lower attaining pupils and those with special needs by ensuring that materials and tasks meet their needs. Marking is regular and supportive, but does not usually set targets or offer specific advice on what pupils need to do to improve. Comments on the quality of neatness or presentation are seen infrequently, even on those occasions when the standard of presentation is unsatisfactory, or when advice on improving methods of presentation would enhance progress.
85. The standards of teaching represent an improvement since the previous inspection, when some teaching was judged to be unsatisfactory. There has been improvement in the way in which the needs of lower attaining pupils are met.
86. The subject is well led and managed. There is a strong commitment to the raising of standards and particularly those of boys. Effective and occasionally innovative measures are now in place to interest and involve boys and to change the perceptions of some of them about their ability to succeed in the subject. In particular, there are a range of initiatives either in place or planned to increase boys' interest in reading as a leisure pursuit, involving not only the pupils themselves and their teachers, but also their parents. These measures are proving effective, particularly in Key Stage 3, where the disparity between the attainment of boys and girls in National Curriculum tests has narrowed considerably over the past two years. The use by pupils of information technology skills is severely limited by the great difficulty in gaining access to appropriate facilities.
87. Procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and measuring their progress are satisfactory, although there are some areas where further development is needed. Pupils' targets for improvement are set annually and all pupils are aware what these are. However, the targets are expressed simply as a number relating to the National Curriculum level for which the pupil should be aiming, with no advice about what the pupil needs to do to reach it. Since pupils' work is not marked with a National Curriculum level, pupils find it difficult to track their own progress towards their target during the year. Satisfactory use is made of assessment to guide curriculum planning and support pupils' academic progress. For example, pupils who have not made sufficient progress during Year 7 are clearly identified through their assessment records and advice and support is offered on an individual basis before their underachievement becomes embedded. Insufficient use is made of pupils' self-assessment, which means that their understanding of their own progress is limited.

Literacy

88. Strategies across the whole school for teaching literacy skills are unsatisfactory. There is no policy for the whole school for the promotion and support of pupils' literacy skills and plans to produce one are only at an embryonic stage. The way in which these skills are taught varies from subject to subject and practice is very inconsistent. In some subjects, for example science and history, there is an expectation that pupils will produce independent writing. Consequently, standards are high: Year 11 pupils studying genetics write about their personal response to the issues raised by this topic; in history, pupils produce writing of very high quality when evaluating the value of source material. In other subjects, there is good emphasis on some aspects of literacy: in geography, emphasis is placed on the use and spelling of technical terms: in Year 11 music, pupils make good notes, but other areas of literacy receive little attention. Little evidence was seen of the use of whole-school procedures common in other schools, such as the display of subject specific vocabulary on classroom walls.

Drama

89. Attainment in drama at the age of 14 is in line with national expectations for pupils of that age.

Pupils are able to plan and rehearse a performance using either a script, their own improvisations, or by incorporating some of their own ideas into a script. A particular strength is pupils' ability to evaluate their own performances and those of others, and to make improvements in response to the advice they have been given.

90. In 2000, the percentage of pupils who attained the higher grades A*-C at GCSE was very high, but the number of pupils entered was too small to make valid comparisons with national statistics. The percentage was slightly higher than in the previous year. In lessons seen during the course of the inspection, standards were in line with what is seen nationally. Pupils show a clear understanding of the way in which performance can be improved by rehearsal and by following advice. They are able to identify potential problem areas in a performance and spot where improvement is required in their own and other performances. Pupils make appropriate use of tone, pitch and intonation to make their performances convincing and show understanding of the techniques of "blocking" in order to plan moves.
91. The attitudes and behaviour of pupils in all lessons were at least good and in three quarters of lessons they were very good. Pupils work very hard and maintain good levels of concentration, even when not under direct supervision. They behave very sensibly at all times. Pupils are supportive and helpful to each other, taking great care to express their opinions diplomatically.
92. All teaching seen in Key Stage 3 was at least satisfactory and half was good. All teaching in Key Stage 4 was good. Teachers have good subject knowledge and place firm and appropriate emphasis on the need for pupils to take responsibility for their performances. They have good relationships with their pupils and inspire their trust and respect. Teachers employ a range of methods to ensure that all pupils are able to participate and make progress in their lessons, regardless of confidence or basic talent.
93. There is currently no teacher with overall responsibility for drama. The subject is taught by a temporary member of staff and another teacher who has heavy responsibilities in other areas of the school.

MATHEMATICS

94. In the national tests in 2000, pupils' results at the age of 14 were above the national average for all schools and well above when compared to similar schools. Boys achieved slightly better results than girls, but the gap was not as wide as at national level. There is a rising trend over time that is slightly higher than the national trend. The GCSE results for 2000 were also well above those of all schools nationally, with all candidates entered gaining a grade A*-G. Girls achieved better results than boys, and the difference was greater than the national difference. The overall trend for these results is rising.
95. Standards of work seen at the age of 14 are above national expectations. The higher attaining pupils confidently use algebraic skills in a range of situations. They analyse questions and solve problems involving several stages. Average attaining pupils use their knowledge of shape and space to transform two-dimensional shapes in a variety of situations. Lower attaining pupils are numerate and use angles with confidence in a range of situations. There was little work seen in pupils' folders on using and applying mathematics and opportunities for investigation to extend the gifted and talented pupils are limited.
96. The standards of attainment at the age of 16 are above expectations. In the 2000 examinations, there was a large gap between the results of boys and girls, which the department is now tackling. From work seen and in lessons observed, there was no significant difference in the attainment of boys and girls in the current Year 11. Higher attaining pupils confidently work from the most demanding topics in the National Curriculum, using trigonometry skills from the "exceptional performance" level. Average attaining pupils follow a GCSE Intermediate level course that suits their needs and they can use their knowledge of algebra to form and solve a range of equations. Lower attaining pupils use percentages in a variety of situations. There are only a few pupils for whom English is an additional language: their command of English is such that it does not hinder their mathematical development in any way.

97. Pupils enter the school with standards in mathematics at about national expectations. By the end of Key Stage 3, results are above average when compared to all schools. Pupils are offered a very demanding level of work, so that by the age of 14 they confidently demonstrate knowledge, skills and understanding across all the attainment targets at high levels. This good progress is continued through Key Stage 4. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress as they are taught in small groups, and their lessons are relevant to their past experiences and build upon prior understanding. Pupils who are gifted and talented are in the high sets for mathematics. The mature approach adopted by their teachers and the extension work provided as part of the course assist them to develop a wider appreciation of mathematics. Books in the school's resource centre further enhance this provision.
98. Overall teaching at both key stages is good. The only incidences of unsatisfactory teaching occurred in lessons taken by a non-specialist supply teacher. Teachers have good subject knowledge, which is used to plan effective lessons. Teaching methods are generally dominated by explanation by the teacher and practise subsequently by the pupils, but a majority of lessons also contain opportunities for paired discussion. Practical work makes lessons relevant and interesting to pupils with special educational needs. Well-presented lessons, with neat, clear work on the board, set high standards of presentation for pupils to imitate. Lesson planning is based on a sound knowledge of pupils' abilities, and in the lessons seen, the needs of all pupils were effectively met. The material used is relevant to both boys and girls. Assessment is regularly used to monitor progress, but the results are not used effectively to develop the teaching and thus address pupils' difficulties.
99. The success of the department stems from the productive interaction between pupils and their teachers. Pupils' attitudes to mathematics are very positive. They arrive at lessons promptly, settle quickly and work productively and at a good pace. Their work is generally neat and well presented. Pupils readily discuss their work with their teachers to confirm understanding and are mutually supportive towards their classmates. Good behaviour enables lessons to proceed at a brisk pace and pupils are prepared to issue and collect equipment as required. When asked, they work on the board or provide solutions to the class without embarrassment.
100. An experienced teacher leads the department, but a high teaching load limits his time for management. There have been some opportunities for monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning: the head of department observes lessons and makes regular checks on pupils' work. The department is housed in a suite of adjacent rooms. This is convenient, but two of the rooms are small for the number of pupils, and hence there are restrictions in the teaching strategies that can be used. Some lessons have to be taught away from the specialist area. There are adequate resources to support the work of the department at present, but there is a shortage of computer facilities for departmental use in lessons.
101. There have been several improvements since the last inspection. Teaching has improved and examination results have risen. There have been some improvements in marking. Pupils' involvement in lessons has increased and pupils now have more interest in their work.

Numeracy

102. There is no whole-school policy on numeracy at present, although there is a policy within the mathematics department. The amount of practise in number skills across the subjects, and the levels of attainment achieved are therefore unsatisfactory. A majority of mathematics lessons start with mental arithmetic, and pupils do not rely too heavily on electronic calculators. The use of these is efficient and effective. Higher attaining pupils in science use a range of calculation, graphical interpretation and drawing skills to good effect. Other pupils have limited use of these skills and some lower attaining pupils do not encounter much numerical work. The numerical skills used in music notation are used with confidence and pupils also interpret data accurately. There are some spatial concepts used in art. Accurate interpretation of scale drawings and weighing and measuring were used in design and technology and spreadsheets are used in information and communication technology to calculate and predict future trends.

SCIENCE

103. When they come into the school, pupils' attainment in science is below average, with boys gaining slightly better results than girls. By the end of Key Stage 3, results are in line with the national averages, though slightly more pupils than average gain Level 6 in the national tests. Pupils' results are above average when compared with similar schools. Girls do better than boys by a small margin. Although these results have improved every year for the last three years, pupils do slightly better in English than in science, and significantly better in mathematics.
104. At the end of Key Stage 4, results in GCSE examinations show that pupils are broadly in line with national averages. However, a higher proportion gain the highest grade, A*, and more gain the higher grades, A* - C. As at Key Stage 3, pupils' results have improved steadily over the last three years. Results in science are close to the average for all subjects in the college. Girls' results are, however, much better than those of boys.
105. In work seen standards of attainment are also in line with national expectations. At the age of 14, the highest attaining pupils have a good knowledge of scientific facts at their disposal and a good level of understanding. For example, they explain clearly why a coloured object may appear to change in coloured light, and undertake an analysis of results from a biological experiment which shows really sharp analysis. Presentation is excellent, and couched in appropriate scientific terms. Lower attaining pupils link scientific facts to show how, for example, the eye can focus on objects at different distances, and their class discussions show a good level of scientific understanding. But this group sometimes finds it difficult to show their understanding in their written work, and this slows down their progress.
103. At the age of 16, the highest attaining pupils produce work of very high standard. They have a very good grasp of scientific concepts, for example, the nature of a chemical reaction, or the implications of the genetic analysis of humans. They participate confidently in discussions and defend a viewpoint well, whilst having respect for different views on the moral dilemmas which may confront scientists in their work. In their written work, they often use information and communication technology to help them to analyse their results and to present their work well. Lower attaining pupils have a clear understanding of many of the simpler concepts covered in science, for example the circulation of the blood in humans, but find abstract concepts difficult. Their presentation skills are often quite limited. Numeracy skills, except for the highest attaining pupils, are underdeveloped and occasionally prevent pupils doing as well as they should, for example when they need to understand and use fractions. Practical skills are satisfactory and generally in line with scientific understanding. Generally, teachers support pupils well so that those with special educational needs, or who are gifted and talented, make good progress. However, in a few classes, groups of pupils tend to give up and produce little or inadequate work. Such pupils are usually boys.
104. In Key Stage 3, pupils learn how to use the basic tools of science well. Teachers' emphasis on making pupils think for themselves produces satisfactory progress. Many excellent class discussions prepare them well for the National Curriculum tests and help pupils to analyse new information and deduce the conclusion. These class discussions also help teachers to understand their pupils well, and provide the opportunity for more able pupils to be challenged to the limit of their understanding. In Key Stage 4, the good practices of Key Stage 3 are continued and nearly all pupils make good progress. However, there are in some classes groups of pupils (nearly always boys) who become disaffected and who learn very little as a result. Teachers are aware of this problem and lessons were seen during the inspection week which fired these pupils' imagination well and enabled them to progress well.
105. Behaviour in lessons is generally good with pupils' enthusiasm fuelled by teachers' own interest in the subject. Most pupils enjoy their science lessons, respect their teacher and work hard to get the best out of lessons. In many classes, pupils are keen to extend their work at home. In only a few lessons do the considerable efforts made by teachers to enthuse their pupils fail to capture their imagination.
106. The quality of teaching in science is good overall. In two thirds of lessons it is at least good, and in a quarter it is either very good or outstanding. Throughout the school, teachers conduct good

class discussions, present pupils with a good range of well-chosen activities and actively develop their thinking skills and the ability to work independently. Such good teaching inevitably leads to good learning, with pupils fully engaged with the task. This may be designing a practical investigation, undertaking experimental work, or working to arrive at an explanation of a scientific observation. The pace of teaching is usually well judged to keep pupils working hard and at the limit of their ability. Support for nearly all pupils is good, though, in groups with a large number of pupils identified as having special educational needs, there is insufficient adult help available. In the few unsatisfactory lessons, there was too much direction by the teacher, and too little variety of activity. The pace of the lesson tended to flag and pupils lost interest, becoming more interested in private conversations. Not surprisingly, progress by such pupils was poor.

107. The department is well managed and the curriculum in science well thought out to cover the requirements of the National Curriculum. Facilities for the storage of scientific equipment and materials, and for preparing and setting up activities and experiments are cramped. Nonetheless, the quality of what is produced is very good and makes a significant contribution to the overall quality of science lessons. Resources including books are generally adequate except for the use of information and communication technology, and some laboratories are in need of refurbishment.
108. The department has made good progress since the last inspection. The quality of teaching has improved and pupils' longer-term progress is higher at both key stages.

ART AND DESIGN

109. Standards in art have improved since the last inspection. In 2000, more than three quarters of candidates were awarded a higher grade A* - C in the GCSE examination, well above the national average. Every girl was successful at this level, as were three quarters of the boys: well above the national average. Every pupil was awarded a pass between A* and G, also above the national average. Pupils perform better in art than in many of their other subjects at GCSE.
110. Standards of attainment in work seen at the age of 14 are below national expectations. Pupils do not fully develop either their skills or the capacity to investigate and record the world around them. As a result, their work lacks personal response based on careful observation. There is a lack of understanding of the basic elements of drawing and painting, and insufficient investigation and experimentation. Pupils resist drawing from observation, preferring instead to copy images from books or magazines. However, they have a good knowledge of the work of a range of art and artists, both European and non-European and their willingness to discuss this work is impressive. Standards by the age of 16 are broadly in line with national expectations: the present Year 11 pupils do not reach the levels of attainment reached by Year 11 in 2000. While the pupils' finished work is large, bold, ambitious and attractive, poor drawing skills limit the full development of their work. Their work shows the effects of insufficient research and an inability to analyse their surroundings and make reference to real life.
111. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory overall. Allowing for their varied and, often, very limited prior experiences of both practical art and critical studies, pupils' achievement during Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory. They continue to progress at a similar rate to the age of 16, concentrating on the development of technical skills in painting and sculpture. The achievement of those pupils who have special educational needs is satisfactory throughout the department, although there are occasions when their teachers lack details of the particular special educational needs of some of these pupils. The achievement of those who are Travellers is satisfactory also. The lack of emphasis on first-hand research limits the opportunities for the more able pupils to fully develop their creative and critical skills. In many cases the pupils' physical and technical efforts far outstrip their creative and intellectual efforts. Classwork and homework do not always require pupils to make personal interpretations or encourage appropriate research. The gifted pupils do not have access to the wider range of processes and techniques, including printmaking, creative textiles and computer generated imagery.
112. Teaching and learning in the art department are good, an improvement since the last inspection. Teaching and learning in Years 7 to 9 are satisfactory; in Years 10 and 11 teaching and learning are good. Teachers have good subject knowledge, which they are pleased to pass on to their

pupils. They also have the ability to engage their pupils in constructive discussion and to stimulate sensible, mature responses. In a good Year 9 lesson, pupils discussed Picasso's painting of "Guernica" with maturity and it was clear that they had the ability to express their opinions in constructive, sensitive ways. They then went on to use imagery from Picasso's painting, to produce their own compositions and portray the horrors of war. The teacher made effective use of work produced by another class to illustrate ways these pupils might carry their work forward. Classes are well managed and, occasionally, very well managed in Years 10 and 11. Excellent relationships are a particularly strong feature of the department, as is the pupils' open-mindedness and their willingness to learn. The way teachers move amongst their pupils, to redirect, encourage and maintain the pace of the lesson, makes a strong contribution to the pupils' learning in Years 10 and 11.

113. The department makes a significant contribution to pupils' cultural development, not only by including critical studies in the daily activity of the department, but also by arranging visits to a number of foreign countries. The benefits of these visits are apparent during discussions about artists and their works. Pupils respect their teachers, their subject and the lesson activities. In the only unsatisfactory lesson seen during the inspection, the teacher failed to control the poor behaviour of a minority of younger boys. This poor behaviour linked to insufficiently challenging work, led to very limited learning by the majority of pupils: gains in knowledge were well below expectations. There are occasions when teachers could increase their own use of words specific to art and design, thus developing pupils' literacy.
114. The curriculum in art is balanced but narrow. There is no use of information and communication technology in Years 7 to 9. Pupils have regular opportunities to work with painting and sculpture, but creative textiles or printing processes are not available. There is inadequate assessment of pupils' attainment and progress at Key Stage 3.
115. The head of department provides particularly strong and sensitive leadership, which pupils and teachers alike are very pleased to follow. There are, however, weaknesses in the monitoring and evaluating of teaching and learning in the department. Strategic planning for the development of the subject lacks detail. The accommodation is poor and interferes with the quality of both teaching and learning. It is most unsatisfactory that very little of the pupils' sculpture is retained or preserved because the acute lack of storage space causes clay sculpture to be photographed, then re-cycled by other pupils. The main art room is too small for larger classes and limits the scale of the pupils' work. The second art room is a former drama studio; a wooden building which amplifies the sound of even the lightest footstep. Other art lessons are taught in a classroom furnished and arranged for use by the mathematics department, without access to water. Much of the department's furnishing requires repair or replacement. Learning resources are adequate for the current, narrow curriculum, but investment is needed if the department is to offer a richer range of processes, including the use of computers.
116. Examination results have improved significantly since the last inspection. There remains a need for an assessment system to aid progress, particularly for pupils in Years 7 to 9.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

117. Since the last inspection design and technology has maintained above average results at GCSE and in some years, results have been well above average. In 2000, for example, 72 per cent of pupils gained grades A*-C, compared with 50 per cent nationally. On average, girls, and to an even greater extent boys, perform better in the GCSE examinations in resistant materials, food technology, graphic products and textiles technology, than they do in their other GCSE subjects.
118. Across the different strands of the subject, standards at the age of 14 are in line with those expected nationally. Pupils have significantly better than average practical making skills, which are evident in the range of products in food, timber, plastic and metal. For example, in a Year 7 resistant materials lesson, most pupils demonstrated sound numerical skills in understanding an engineering drawing, and measuring and marking with accuracy. Pupils also demonstrate

strengths in understanding and evaluating food products and make effective use of modelling to develop their ideas. Research and design skills are less strong comparatively, in part because of more limited opportunities to use graphical techniques and information and communication technology, including computer aided design and manufacture. In consequence, the standards of theoretical work in pupils' folders are lower than those of the products made.

119. In lessons and work seen, standards of attainment at the age of 16 are above national expectations. Manufacturing skills in the GCSE courses continue to be of a high standard in food, timber, metal and textiles. In graphic products, the higher attaining pupils are able to produce scaled models with a high level of accuracy and finish. In resistant materials, there are strengths in redesigning everyday objects and producing accurate making plans, though for some of the middle and lower attaining pupils the design solutions are modest. The department also provides a GCSE child development course and the work seen reflects the above average results achieved in most years.
120. Pupils come to the school with relatively little knowledge of design and technology or experience of the range of equipment used, and the great majority achieve as well as they should. Pupils' technical language develops slowly. However, this is offset by the growing confidence shown by almost all pupils, including those with special educational needs, when handling different tools and making products successfully. This was evident in a Year 9 lesson in which pupils learnt how to solder accurately as part of an electronics project. In the Key Stage 4 courses, the good teaching has greater impact in helping most pupils make good progress and achieve well. Pupils continue to strengthen their making skills with, for example, those taking food technology competing successfully in local 'chef of the year' awards. Pupils also improve their relatively weaker research and design skills, though the use of information and communication technology is still limited. Most pupils with special educational needs make good progress enabling them to achieve a grade at GCSE. The successful National Vocational Qualification in building provides a worthwhile alternative for those pupils wanting a more practical programme. These pupils work with increasing initiative and independence through links with a local college of further education and participation in community projects.
121. In lessons, pupils work with interest and care, and it is therefore surprising that a significant proportion take advantage of the opportunity to opt out of the subject in Key Stage 4. Many of those taking the GCSE and vocational courses work with enthusiasm and effort and show better than average attendance throughout the courses.
122. The quality of teaching was judged to be good overall in the last inspection and this continues to be the case. In the lessons seen, all teaching was at least satisfactory, over three quarters was at least good with a fifth very good. Teachers are enthusiastic about their subject and are able to engender interest and commitment in most pupils. They use their specialist knowledge well and set high expectations of quality and through this, pupils learn to work with accuracy and care. Class management is generally good, so ensuring that pupils concentrate on their task and work safely. The learning activities have been developed and improved over time and are mostly effective in ensuring that pupils achieve well.
123. The Key Stage 3 curriculum is sound and meets National Curriculum requirements, though schemes of work in some areas need to be updated to include the planned use of information and communication technology. In Key Stage 4, the vocational course in building gives valuable breadth alongside the courses in food, textiles, resistant materials and graphics. However, the decision of the school, albeit temporary, to allow 40 per cent of pupils to withdraw from design and technology, breaches the National Curriculum requirement. In Key Stage 3, the department has not fully addressed the need identified at the last inspection to improve assessment in Key Stage 3. Good practice exists in food technology, but elsewhere there is a need to link learning to assessment, use National Curriculum assessment criteria more regularly and explicitly, and involve the pupils in the process.
124. Resources are good except for some deteriorating work surfaces in food technology and a lack of computer aided manufacture facilities. Good use is made of community links to acquire learning materials and enhance learning, and greater effort is being made to monitor and evaluate the work of the department. The need identified at the last inspection, namely for the team to work more

closely together to develop and share good practice, has yet to be addressed.

GEOGRAPHY

125. In 2000, GCSE results at A*-C in geography were well below the national average when compared with pupils in all maintained secondary schools. However, all pupils who were entered obtained a GCSE grade A*-G and this result was above the national average. Almost twice as many girls as boys were entered for the examination, and although the highest four grades were awarded to boys, girls marginally outperformed boys. Pupils did less well in geography in 2000 than in almost all other subjects.
126. In work seen within the school attainment at the age of 14 is below the national expectation. Pupils have satisfactory oral and listening skills and most can write well enough to describe geographical patterns or processes in simply constructed sentences, using appropriate geographical vocabulary. However, examples of extended written work using appropriate diagrams with explanations of geographical processes, or of in-depth case studies of places or topics, were few in all three years of the key stage. Most pupils attain appropriate geographical skills: for example in Year 7 they can locate places on maps and draw sketch maps and diagrams using the correct symbols. Fieldwork and enquiry skills are weak. Although, by the end of Year 9, most pupils can collect primary data such as traffic counts, tools of analysis are restricted to pie charts or simple bar or line graphs. Presentation skills are also weak. Most pupils have a basic knowledge and understanding of the patterns and processes they have studied. For example, Year 9 pupils know and understand that fossil fuels are responsible for pollution. Overall, pupils have a better knowledge of geographical facts than an understanding of geographical concepts.
127. At the age of 16 attainment remains below the national expectation. Pupils who follow the GCSE course increase their knowledge and understanding of geographical processes. Year 11 pupils, for example, show a good understanding of glaciation. However, their fieldwork investigations show that skills of analysis and interpretation remain weak, and enquiry skills generally are underdeveloped at this stage. The situation is better in Year 10, where pupils' attainment is in line with national expectations.
128. At Key Stage 3, a substantial number of pupils are underachieving and failing to make satisfactory progress over time, because of some unchallenging and unsatisfactory teaching. Achievement in terms of prior attainment is better for lower attaining pupils and those identified as having special educational needs because teachers' expectations tend to be matched to these pupils; suitable learning opportunities, together with support from additional adults, enable them to achieve at least satisfactorily. Higher attainers often underachieve because teachers do not sufficiently challenge them or extend them by building on skills already developed. At Key Stage 4, the situation is slightly improved, but even here the majority of pupils could do better. There is underachievement by higher attainers, as is demonstrated by the failure of pupils to attain the higher grades in GCSE.
129. The quality of teaching and learning in the department are unsatisfactory. In one third of lessons, teaching is unsatisfactory or poor. Where teaching is poor, it is mainly due to lack of specialist knowledge, with too much reliance upon unchallenging worksheets. This, combined with insecure discipline and ineffectual class management by the teacher, means that learning is unsatisfactory. However, there are areas where teaching is good or very good. Where teaching is good, planning leads to well-focused activities, which challenge pupils appropriately and lead to effective learning. Good teaching is based on good relationships: teachers use humour to motivate pupils, as was seen in a Year 10 lesson on coastal erosion.
130. The majority of pupils respond positively to their lessons. They behave well in class, respect their teachers and get on with their work willingly. Where unsatisfactory behaviour was seen, pupils were not suitably challenged and their interest in geography was not engaged by the teacher. Pupils are willing to take responsibility for their own learning when given the opportunity, but the majority are passive learners and dependent upon their teachers for their learning.

131. The geography department is seriously handicapped by its lack of geography specialist teachers. Two of the three teachers who teach the subject have no geography qualifications and one has no geography experience or training of any kind. Furthermore, they both teach in several other areas of the curriculum leaving them with limited time to devote to geography. This is having an impact on the quality of education delivered and on standards achieved by pupils. It is also having a demotivating effect on pupils' attitudes towards geography.
132. There has been very little improvement in geography since the last inspection. Most of the observations made in the last inspection are still relevant. The more able are not sufficiently challenged and there is still unsatisfactory teaching in the department.

HISTORY

133. In the past three years, GCSE results in history have remained above the national average both in terms of A*-C and A*-G grades. Pupils have been consistently successful in obtaining the higher A and B grades, well above average when compared with results in all schools nationally.
134. Inspection evidence shows attainment at the age of 14 is broadly in line with national expectations. Pupils' knowledge and understanding of historical events, people and concepts are sound and they can place these in a chronological framework with accuracy, though most lower attaining pupils have weak recall and short-term memories. Pupils understand that the study of history is based on evidence and are beginning to reach conclusions about the bias, reliability and usefulness of sources. They can extract information from a variety of written and pictorial material as was demonstrated by a Year 7 class working with information communications technology (ICT). They have good oral and debating skills and are confident in expressing their own ideas. The quality of writing of higher attaining pupils is good, with a number of examples of extended essay writing seen in all three years. The department has worked hard to improve the writing skills of pupils with special educational needs and of lower attaining pupils, so that all pupils can write confidently in a variety of styles. Some examples of Year 9 poetry about the First World War were seen in wall displays.
135. At the age of 16 attainment is above the national expectation. Evidence from scrutiny of work and lessons indicates that pupils have highly developed skills in analysing sources of historical evidence. Pupils' knowledge and understanding of events and concepts is good. Higher attainers use their own judgements to support their arguments in extended well-written essays: all can describe or explain historical events in logically constructed pieces of writing.
136. Pupils arrive at the school with few skills in the subject. They make good progress over time largely due to focused teaching of key historical knowledge and skills. Lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs make similar rates of progress as their peers because of well-focused support. Higher attaining boys and girls are given more challenging work, though boys achieve less well than girls at the end of Year 9. At Key Stage 4, those pupils who study history to GCSE continue to make good progress; gifted and talented pupils make very good progress, and largely achieve their potential. At this stage there is little difference between the achievement of boys and girls. Girls from the Bruderhof religious community are fully included in the learning and also make good progress.
137. Pupils have good attitudes to learning and behave very well. They show interest in their work, sustain their concentration and develop good study skills. Relationships in the classroom are very good and pupils are courteous and polite. Most are able to work independently when asked to do so. Such is the interest in the subject that a significant proportion of the current Year 9 have opted to continue the study of history next year.
138. Overall, the quality of teaching is very good. Teaching is challenging and lessons are planned to ensure that all pupils learn effectively. Teachers maintain a good balance between imparting knowledge and developing historical skills. Occasionally, however, they devote too much of the lesson to explanation and exposition. Skilful questioning is used to make pupils think for themselves and to build on prior knowledge to promote effective learning. Very good subject knowledge, confidently delivered, helps pupils to focus appropriately. Good relationships promote a lively interest in pupils, which is then structured and exploited by the teacher. Appropriate,

stimulating resources are used to aid learning, as was seen in a Year 11 revision lesson on matching sample examination questions to their objectives.

139. The history department is managed very well. There is a commitment to raising standards, which is reflected in the atmosphere of the department. The department has successfully addressed all the issues raised in the last report. The quality of teaching has improved considerably.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

140. At the last inspection, information and communication technology (ICT) was judged to have weaknesses, including standards, curriculum, assessment and management. A number of these have been addressed and the school, through the work of the governors and staff, has a clear commitment to developing the subject. Improvements have been made in facilities, which will increase significantly in the near future. However, at the time of the inspection, the levels of staffing and resources were still limiting the implementation of the school's strategy.
141. The school has no previous examination results in the subject, though about a third of Year 10 are now pursuing the GNVQ Intermediate examination in ICT.
142. Standards of attainment at the age of 14 are close to national expectations, and improving, as the challenging courses now followed in Years 7 and 8 raise standards. For example, in a Year 8 lesson, the higher attaining pupils demonstrated considerable independence in their use of ICT: they researched advertising on the Internet and were able to apply appropriate software to produce a web-site. Most pupils in the lesson could use spreadsheets with confidence to make calculations, and were beginning to use the application for business modelling. In contrast, pupils in a Year 9 lesson, who had not benefited from the additional challenge, were learning LOGO, as a first stage of understanding computer control, an activity that now forms part of the learning activities in Year 7.
143. Standards of attainment at the age of 16 are below national expectations, because pupils in Years 10 and 11 have had limited access in Key Stage 3. Only a minority are benefiting from continued experiences in ICT by following the GNVQ course, or GCSE business studies. The GNVQ pupils demonstrate above average ICT skills by making appropriate and informed use of the different applications in their assignments and showing considerable independence in their planning and completion of work. The other two thirds of pupils make limited use of ICT in their other GCSE work, enhancing their coursework through research on the Internet, as well as using word processing and spreadsheets for text and graphical presentation.
144. The separate lessons in ICT at Key Stage 3 ensure that pupils make satisfactory progress over the longer term, despite the limited use of computers in other subjects. Higher attaining pupils make particularly good use of the separate lessons to develop their understanding and skills, and increasing numbers make sound progress through the use of their computer facilities at home. The lower attaining pupils, including those with special educational needs, also make steady progress, though at times, lack sufficient support in tackling the more challenging learning and assessment tasks. Those taking the GNVQ course in ICT or GCSE business studies are achieving at least as well as they should and often better in the case of the well motivated, higher attaining pupils. However, the majority of pupils have few planned opportunities to use computers in school and pupils' achievement in ICT overall is unsatisfactory.
145. Pupils are very positive about ICT and take advantage of the opportunities to use the computer suite at lunchtimes. Behaviour in lessons is good, and pupils are interested and involved and stay on task. The GNVQ pupils are mostly hardworking and mature in the way they are prepared to supplement the ICT lessons with considerable amounts of work out of lessons, in order to complete their assignments.
146. Teaching in the Key Stage 3 programme and the GNVQ course is good overall. The knowledgeable co-ordinator is able to anticipate learning difficulties and provide constructive

support, so enabling pupils to develop their understanding and skills. Calm class management is effective in settling the groups, in spite of the large teaching groups in earlier years and the cramped computer suite. The best practice was seen in the GNVQ course, where pupils had a clear picture of their learning goals and assessment, and so knew what was required and worked with growing independence and maturity. These strengths were less evident in some of the Key Stage 3 teaching, where the learning and assessment activities were less well matched to the needs of all pupils, particularly those with special educational needs. The needs of the latter group were less clearly identified, though support by additional staff and the ICT technician facilitated better progress than might have been expected.

147. The separate lessons in ICT cover the National Curriculum programme of study. Particular aspects of 'making things happen', especially control, are less well covered. However, the school does not make any planned or co-ordinated provision for all pupils in Years 10 and 11, and so does not cover the Key Stage 4 programme of study. Assessment practice in Key Stage 3 is insufficiently linked to the learning activities, and does not involve pupils in the process. This contrasts with the good practice developed within the GNVQ programme. Most staff are positive about the use of ICT within their subject areas and most have plans for its development. However, the lack of facilities has meant that there have been few opportunities to implement those plans. Where some facilities exist, as in modern foreign languages, science, music and design and technology, there has been some planned use.
148. In terms of the overall strategy for ICT, the school has a clear vision of what it would like to provide and, within its financial constraints, has made satisfactory progress in raising standards in Key Stage 3 and improving the quality of teaching. The ICT co-ordinator has necessarily focused on planning and delivering the Key Stage 3 programme and more recently the GNVQ course. She has also been effective in helping staff complete their ICT training as part of the current national initiative. Though supported by governors and senior staff, the management and delivery of ICT is nevertheless borne by one person, with just one computer suite that requires pupils to share workstations in many lessons. The school only has about half the national average in terms of computers to pupils. The belated funding from current national initiatives will enable the school to implement improvements in its staffing and resources and address many of the above issues, with effect from September 2001.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

149. The proportion of pupils attaining grades A* - C in the 2000 GCSE examination in French was around the national average and was well above average for German. In French, girls achieved better results than boys did, despite the fact that more boys than girls achieved the very top grade. Pupils achieved better results in German than the other subjects that they studied in the school, but marginally worse results in French. Over the past three years the trend has been upward: results have improved dramatically in German but have fluctuated in French.
150. In the work seen during the inspection, pupils were attaining standards below those expected by the age of 14 in both French and German. This represents unsatisfactory achievement: a significant proportion of higher attaining pupils make less progress than they should, as their needs are not always met in the large mixed ability classes. The study of two languages reduces the amount of time available to cover necessary topics in each language. Pupils with special educational needs, however, make good progress, as their needs are clearly identified and met in their smaller groups. All pupils make better progress in their ability to understand the language than they do in writing and speaking it themselves, because of the way that the course is taught. Most pupils can understand conversations on a range of topics such as their family or their school life and the majority understands at least two tenses.
151. In French and German standards of attainment are in line with expectations by the age of 16 and achievement during Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory. In both languages pupils work on a range of topics, but do not often write at length using a variety of tenses, except for coursework purposes. The writing and speaking of the highest attaining pupils is not always accurate and only sometimes includes opinions. In German, pupils are less confident when speaking: they often lack the language necessary to reply spontaneously to questions and do not get sufficient opportunity to practise this in class. Lower attaining pupils perform well overall, but they continue

to find speaking and writing more difficult. Pupils work hard at home and are well prepared for the examinations through the use of the revision booklets and the clubs in the lunch hour and after school. All of these have played an important role, especially in German, in helping pupils to perform well at GCSE.

152. In both French and German, the quality of the teaching is satisfactory and brings about satisfactory learning. Relationships between staff and pupils are good: pupils work well and generally listen carefully to the teacher and to each other. Pupils are very clear about what they have to do. In the best lessons, especially in Year 7, teachers plan lessons so that there is a variety of activities and work hard to incorporate games and songs to interest the pupils. Much of the teaching concentrates on developing listening skills; consequently pupils are stronger in this area. Pupils are clearly motivated by the deadlines set by coursework and this benefits those with special educational needs in particular. Homework is used well and helps to reinforce the learning. Pupils are particularly well prepared for the examination and this preparation helps pupils to perform well: in a Year 11 French lesson, pupils were working well in pairs, testing each other on role-play and conversation for the oral examination. Pupils use computers to produce well presented work, and software specifically designed to improve pupils' knowledge of French or German is also well used. Pupils in French are usually able to refer to work they have done previously, because they have filed their work carefully and many take pride in the way that their work is presented. In German, less care is shown in the management of the many worksheets.
153. Writing skills are underdeveloped. The higher attainers are rarely encouraged to produce work unaided. In German there is an over-reliance on worksheets which do not encourage pupils to work at length or to use complex language. In many lessons seen, but especially in German, pupils did not have sufficient opportunities to speak the language at any length and pronunciation was very anglicised. When pupils do not learn enough during lessons it is often because they are given insufficient opportunities to practise language for themselves; the activities are too repetitive (such as three listening exercises in one lesson) and the pace is too slow. Teachers also often have difficulty meeting the needs of all pupils, especially in Years 8 and 9 in large classes with a wide range of ability. In these lessons, teachers and pupils have to sit and listen a lot of the time, instead of actually using the language. This is a particular problem for the boys in Years 9 and 10. There is an inadequate variety of reading materials and pupils are not given many opportunities to work independently of the teacher, for example when choosing reading materials. Marking does not tell pupils, especially those in Years 7 to 9, how they are performing, or give precise and immediate information about how they might improve. The teaching in Spanish at Key Stage 4 is poor, although this trial arrangement is being discontinued.
154. The department is satisfactorily led and managed. The introduction of coursework has been very successful, both in terms of motivating pupils and in releasing time at the end of the year for teachers to focus on the other elements of the examination. Similarly, the increasing focus on ICT has improved motivation, especially of the boys in Year 8, and is contributing to much improved writing. The curriculum is in need of review to ensure that the higher attaining pupils do not suffer from being placed in large mixed ability groups where their needs cannot always be met. Similarly, in Year 10, Spanish is taught for one lesson a week to pupils who find languages difficult, and this is insufficient time for them to make satisfactory progress. Accommodation is limited and means that several lessons are taught in unsuitable rooms, where acoustics are poor and teachers have to limit their approaches because they do not have access to the proper equipment.
155. Since the last inspection there has been satisfactory progress. Relationships between staff and pupils continue to be good. Teaching remains satisfactory at Key Stage 3 but is now only satisfactory at Key Stage 4, whereas in the previous report it was good. This is largely because the teaching methods have not kept pace with the increased emphasis in the modern languages curriculum on active learning by pupils. Standards of attainment are similar.

MUSIC

156. The proportion of pupils gaining the higher grades A*-C in the GCSE examination in the year 2000 was above average. This has been the trend for the last few years.
157. In work seen during the inspection, pupils at the age of fourteen attain in line with national expectations. They compose music in a variety of genres such as the soundscape pieces and pentatonic themes recorded by the youngest pupils in the school. They have a secure and expanding technical vocabulary, which they use with increasing ease, and they grow in confidence and ability when they play pieces on the keyboard. At the end of one lesson seen in Year 9, all pupils contributed to the playing of the piece being learned – 'Adiemus' by Karl Jenkins. The more musically able pupils played two parts, and those with less polished skills played a single line, but the result was an harmonic presentation by a group of thirty pupils, achieved from a 'standing start' at the beginning of the lesson.
158. By the age of sixteen, through their studies of the history of music, the pupils understand the development of its different aspects, and display standards of attainment above those expected nationally at that age. Thus they know that instruments used in the modal music of the Renaissance eventually develop into those used today, and can trace, for instance, the development of the stringed instrument 'family'. They also have a secure knowledge of the types of writing for these differing instruments, an advanced awareness for their age. They use the Internet as a tool to help with composition and research. Currently, they are composing their own very descriptive 'programme' music, which illustrates clowns, gladiators, trapeze artists, or a sunken wreck.
159. Pupils' achievements are good overall in Key Stage 3 and very good in Key Stage 4. The pupils enter the school with a fairly narrow range of skills and knowledge, and below average attainment. However, it is evident that they make very good progress during their first year, and reach average levels by the end of it, as was clear in the recordings of their musical compositions. They maintain this development, and extend their range of skills and knowledge throughout subsequent years. Until last year, the oldest pupils in the school had insufficient knowledge of the rudiments of music, or its theory – a weakness which was highlighted in the last report. However, pupils in the current Year 11 have almost completed their 'catching-up' of this basic and crucial knowledge, and are justifiably pleased with their achievements.
160. The attitudes and behaviour of the pupils are good overall in Key Stage 3. Although some anti-social behaviour was seen in two lessons, it says much for the teacher and the majority of pupils that most pupils continued to learn, thus thwarting the efforts of the would-be saboteurs. In other lessons, pupils worked together in pairs and threesomes with generosity and pleasure. Pupils in Key Stage 4 have a very positive and mature approach to their work, and take more responsibility for their own learning. One of the hallmarks of pupils' positive response is the way that they listen to each other's work, and criticise it in a very constructive way.
161. The quality of teaching in Key Stage 3 is good overall, and in Key Stage 4 it is consistently very good. Not surprisingly, the quality of pupils' learning and progress in lessons mirrors this successful picture. The music curriculum is very broad and wide-ranging, which enables the teacher to ensure that pupils experience music from a very wide range of cultures and genres – from Renaissance to rock, for example. The planning for each module of work is meticulous and takes account of all the different skills, knowledge and understanding present in the mixed-ability classes. Work sheets are carefully prepared, tasks are clearly presented, explanations are very clear, and expectations of success are high. Homework is used as an integral part of the course. Pupils respond readily to these strengths of teaching and become efficient learners. Their workbooks contain accounts of work done and problems encountered, as well as useful reminders about the development of the history of music.
162. All pupils know what their own targets are within music, and they work towards them systematically. These targets are based on the National Curriculum levels and displayed in the music room. This means that everyone has ready access to the targets: pupils can easily see what they have achieved so far and what they have yet to do.
163. The head of department has been in post for just under a year, and has already made significant developments in the music curriculum especially in the range and variety of experiences offered to the pupils. Careful planning of this very broad curriculum and the close attention paid to the

assessment of pupils' work done make a significant contribution to the standards achieved.

164. Since the last inspection, there have been two different heads of department. Pupils now make good progress in their knowledge of basic rudiments and theory, and they continue to maintain a good sense of ensemble when they work together, and to produce interesting written work. There is a choir, and the forthcoming production of 'Grease!' has created much excitement amongst would-be singers and performers. The first rehearsal showed that the pupils sing in tune, and have good diction when they are reminded about it. The peripatetic music tutors make a significant contribution to the life of the school, although the proportion of the school's pupils who learn instruments with them has dropped slightly since 1995.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

165. In the 2000 GCSE examination 45% of pupils entered gained the higher A* - C grades. This is just below the national average. Girls achieved slightly better than boys, although far fewer girls sat the examination. The results are below the exceptionally good results obtained in the previous year, but are in line with those achieved in 1998. All pupils entered in 2000 achieved grades A* - G.
166. Standards of attainment in work seen at the age of 14 are in line with national expectations for boys and girls. The range of activities observed in lessons during the inspection was limited to health related fitness, football and indoor athletic skills. All the planned outdoor athletics lessons had to be cancelled because of very heavy rain. The majority of pupils showed themselves to be competent in their movements. Younger pupils are beginning to develop their sprinting technique, whilst pupils at the age of 14 can undertake a series of circuit training exercises confidently. In some cases, however, the quality of pupils' work could be improved. Most pupils are able to organise their own warm-up and cool-down activities and they do so effectively.
167. At the age of 16, standards of attainment are also in line with national expectations. During the inspection, pupils performed well in football, netball and health related fitness, building on work undertaken previously. At GCSE level in Year 10, boys demonstrated good football skills in very difficult conditions. They are also developing a sound understanding of the principles of defence. In netball, the girls are able to effectively apply skills of passing, catching and shooting to a game situation. Pupils in Year 11 are able to devise their own exercise programme focusing on speed, flexibility and endurance.
168. Achievement is good for the majority of pupils at both key stages in relation to prior attainment. For example, pupils' learning was good in a Year 7 lesson that concentrated specifically on running technique, whilst older pupils are making good progress in developing their knowledge and understanding of physical fitness. Most pupils studying physical education at GCSE level are making at least satisfactory progress in both the practical and theoretical aspects of the work. A very small number of boys in Year 11 are finding parts of the theory work difficult and they are receiving additional support. Throughout the school, pupils on the register of special educational needs, who are fully integrated into all lessons, are also achieving well over time. For example, four such pupils are currently following the GCSE course.
169. The attitudes and behaviour of almost all pupils at both key stages are very good. In Year 10 for example, the commitment shown by boys during a football lesson was excellent, even though conditions were extremely cold and wet. Pupils co-operate with each other very effectively in practices aimed at improving their level of skill. They relate well to each other and to the class teachers. The standard of the kit worn by pupils is good and there are very few non-participants. The level of participation among girls at the age of 16 has improved significantly during the past two years.
170. The quality of teaching is good overall. It is never less than satisfactory. In 60 per cent of lessons teaching is good and in 20 per cent very good. Lessons are well structured and they are usually conducted at a good pace. Class management is very effective, and relationships between teachers and pupils are positive and encourage learning. During the inspection, it was necessary for teachers to cancel almost all the planned outdoor lessons and move classes into the gym

and, on occasions, the hall. Staff handled this re-arrangement calmly and efficiently, even though large numbers of pupils sometimes had to be taught together. The very bad weather that occurred for most of the inspection week did however highlight the shortage of specialist indoor accommodation. Good use is made of time and resources, and in some classes the more able pupils are set additional challenges. Pupils respond well to the teaching they receive. They are eager to work hard to improve their level of skill particularly in the GCSE groups.

171. Both members of the department, supported by a few other colleagues, contribute to a good range of extra-curricular activities at lunchtimes and after school. During the inspection, extra-curricular activities in football, physical fitness, tennis and table tennis were well supported by pupils, who worked enthusiastically and with commitment. The school competes against other schools in a range of different sports during the year. Successes include the netball teams in Years 8 and 10, who won the area tournament, and basketball teams in Year 9, who won both the boys and girls Rother district championship.
172. The head of department has been in post for less than two years, and there have been a number of significant improvements in that time. The programme of study now meets National Curriculum requirements. There is a suitable balance of activities for all pupils. A revised assessment system that takes account of the new level descriptors in the National Curriculum is also in place at the age of 14. Additional accredited courses, including the Junior Sports Leaders Award, have been introduced for older pupils, whose curriculum time has been slightly increased. Fifteen pupils in Year 11 have now completed the course successfully. Developments have also taken place in outdoor and adventurous activities, with pupils experiencing activities such as camping, abseiling and rock climbing. The number of pupils opting for physical education at GCSE level has increased. In recognition of the commitment to sports education and participation the college was awarded the 'Sportsmark' by Sport England last summer.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

173. The proportion of pupils, 48 per cent, gaining the higher grades A*-C in the GCSE examinations in religious education in 2000 was below the national average. Almost all pupils gained A*-G grades, which is above the national average. However, pupils did less well in religious education than in their other GCSE subjects. There were no marked differences between the results of boys and girls. In 1999, 61 per cent of pupils entered gained A*-C grades. The percentage of A*-C grades in religious education has been steadily declining from a high of 80 per cent in 1996.
174. Standards of attainment overall at the age of 14 are below the expected levels. Pupils have only superficial knowledge and understanding of individual religions and what is distinctive to each. Few are able to demonstrate what religions have in common and how and why they differ. At the end of Key Stage 3, low attainers can name two or three of the five pillars of Islam. Middle attainers can name all of them and high attainers can explain in greater detail and give a specific example for each of the five pillars. However, there is no depth in pupils' understanding. Pupils' oral skills are generally good, especially in question and answer sessions. Overall attainment for 16 year olds observed in lessons, books and discussions, is below expectations. This is partly due to the teaching of these groups by non-specialists and also teachers' low expectations of pupils.
175. In relation to their prior attainment, pupils' achievements are unsatisfactory both at Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4. At Key Stage 3, there is minimal development in basic literacy skills, apart from oral skills, when pupils make oral contributions to lessons. Pupils with low prior attainment, including those with special educational needs, make better progress over the long term, because most of the teaching and resources are directed to low and middle attainers. The high attaining boys and girls make unsatisfactory progress, because the work is not matched to their capabilities. During Key Stage 4, in relation to their prior attainment, pupils do not progress as well as they should, and often produce a minimal amount of work in class. GCSE and non-examination pupils are taught together, which is unsatisfactory, and GCSE pupils in particular are held back in their progress. This could, in part, explain why pupils' achievement in GCSE religious education is at least one grade below that of their grades in other GCSE subjects.

176. It was only possible to inspect four religious education lessons, because of staff absence, and in those the attitudes and behaviour of pupils were satisfactory overall. Pupils related well to one another and respected the views of others. They were not afraid to ask for help when it was needed and high and middle attainers assisted low attainers. In lessons which were relevant and interesting, the pupils responded with good attitudes.
177. In the limited sample of lessons available, teaching and learning were satisfactory or good. However, the quality of teaching and learning in religious education, overall, is unsatisfactory at both Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4. The analysis of pupils' work, for example class and homework, examination papers and some Key Stage 4 coursework, highlights much unsatisfactory teaching and learning.
178. In most lessons, teachers have clear objectives based on schemes of work which relate to the Agreed Syllabus. Teachers' methodology is often inappropriate to ensure that all pupils learn effectively. Although adequate for low and middle attainers, the content of the lessons does not sufficiently challenge high attainers or gifted and talented pupils. Generally, teachers' expectations are not high enough. There is an over-reliance on low level work sheets, which do not meet the needs of all pupils and lead to little independent writing. The department lacks stimulating resources such as artefacts; information and communication technology is little used in lessons. There are no computers available within the department and key words are not posted in classrooms.
179. Pupils' work is poorly and perfunctorily marked. Encouraging comments are occasionally used, but spelling errors are not corrected, nor is weak vocabulary challenged. Targets for improvement are rare, with the result that pupils lack understanding of how they could improve. The procedures for assessing pupils' work are very undeveloped and there is no use of the descriptors defined in the East Sussex Agreed Syllabus. At Key Stage 4, marking is better, particularly course work for GCSE and non-examination courses. The teaching of religious education rarely enriches pupils' spiritual development, but makes good contributions to their moral development. All pupils have equality of access and opportunity in religious education and pupils from a variety of faiths participated fully in a Year 9 lesson on the five pillars of Islam. Good cross-curricular linking between religious education and geography was observed in a Year 7 lesson on why the chancel is found at the eastern end of a church.
180. This department lacks a leader, as there has not been a head of department in post for almost three years. This is a major factor in the decline of religious education during that time. There is a caring atmosphere in the department and a desire to improve the quality of religious education in the school. However, the teachers do not work as a team; good practice is not shared and the quality of teaching is not monitored adequately. There is no coherent system of assessment and monitoring at Key Stages 3 and 4, and this prevents the accurate tracking of pupils' performance.
181. Improvement since the last inspection in religious education has been minimal and is unsatisfactory overall. Underachievement, then and now, is a major cause for concern. Since 1995, there have been difficulties with staffing, accommodation and a lack of appropriate resources. However, developments include: the acquisition of more suitable resources to meet the needs of lower attainers; updating textbooks, and producing a more appropriate subject handbook with schemes of work better matched to the East Sussex Agreed Syllabus. The purchase of display cabinets since the last inspection has enabled the celebration of achievement in good pieces of class and homework. The department has managed to sustain 25 to 30 pupils as candidates for the GCSE examination and introduced the Robertsbridge Community College certificated course in religious education for non-examination pupils in Year 11.