

INSPECTION REPORT

QUEEN ELIZABETH'S GRAMMAR SCHOOL

Ashbourne

LEA area: Derbyshire

Unique reference number: 112967

Headteacher: Dr. A. R. Wilkes

Reporting inspector: Mr. D. Driscoll
11933

Dates of inspection: 8th – 12th May 2000

Inspection number: 187074

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive
School category: Voluntary controlled
Age range of students: 11 to 18
Gender of students: Mixed

School address: The Green Road
Ashbourne
Derbyshire
Postcode: DE6 1EP

Telephone number: 01335 343685
Fax number: 01335 300637

Appropriate authority: The Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Mrs. E. G. Neale

Date of previous inspection: 12th February 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
David Driscoll	Registered inspector		The characteristics and effectiveness of the school
			The school's results and students' achievements
			Teaching and learning
			Issues for action
Joanna Illingworth	Lay inspector		Students' attitudes, values and personal development
			Students' welfare, health and safety
			Partnership with parents and carers
Anne Axon	Team inspector	Mathematics	
Clifford Blakemore	Team inspector	Geography	Quality and range of opportunities for learning
John Vanstone	Team inspector	History	
Ray Woodhouse	Team inspector	Science	
Eryl Hughes	Team inspector	Physical education	
Joanna Peach	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	
		English as an additional language	
John Ayerst	Team inspector	Art	
		Music	
Eileen Metcalf	Team inspector	Religious education	
Lorraine Small	Team inspector	Design and technology	
Paul Hartwright	Team inspector	Information technology	
Bernard Treacy	Team inspector	English	
Cheryl Jackson	Team inspector	Equality of opportunity	
		Special educational needs	

The inspection contractor was:

QAA Education Consultants Ltd

Herringston Barn
Herringston
Dorchester
Dorset
DT2 9PU

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The Office for Standards in Education
Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London WC2B 6SE

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Queen Elizabeth's Grammar School is a voluntary controlled, large, mixed comprehensive school educating students between the ages of 11 and 18, which has been designated as a specialist technology college. There are 1171 students on roll, very few of whom are from ethnic minority backgrounds. Ten students have English as an additional language, although all are relatively fluent in English. Students' attainment on entry to the school is broadly average overall, but is very polarised in that there are high proportions of both high and low achieving students joining the school each year. The school receives extra funding for its role in providing a base for students with special educational needs. Almost one in four students have special educational needs; a proportion that is above the national average. Over one in twenty students have Statements of Special Educational Needs; well above the national average. The socio economic circumstances of the students are broadly average.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a good school where students of all levels of attainment achieve well. The school achieves results that are above average at the end of Key Stage 4 and well above average at A level. There are no major weaknesses in its provision and only a few minor ones. The school receives a very low basic budget but through its own efforts raises substantial sums to bring its funding up to a figure that is below the national average. Overall, the school provides very good value for money and the sixth form is cost effective.

What the school does well

- Results at GCSE are above average and at A level are well above average.
- Students of all levels of attainment achieve well as a result of the consistently good teaching that they receive.
- Students behave very well as a result of the high expectations that teachers have of their behaviour.
- The school's very good emphasis on improving students' spiritual, moral and social development results in students having a very good understanding of the impact of their actions on others.

What could be improved

- Targets on individual education plans are too vague to help those teachers who have difficulty setting work of an appropriate standard for students with special educational needs.
- Attendance is not recorded properly.
- Reports do not provide enough information and not all parents receive a written report on their child's progress in information technology.
- Religious education is not provided for all students in the sixth form.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made good progress since the previous inspection. High standards have been maintained, despite a doubling in the proportion of students with special educational needs, and the school is on course to meet its targets. The quality of teaching has improved and there is now no unsatisfactory teaching in the school. The school's management has been rigorous in addressing the weaknesses identified in the previous report and some, such as the provision for personal development, have been converted into strengths.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	Compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1997	1998	1999	1999
GCSE examinations	A	B	B	E
A levels/AS-levels	A*	A	A	

Key	
Very high	A*
well above average	A
above average	B
average	C
below average	D
well below average	E

Students' performances in the 1999 national tests at the end of Key Stage 3 were well above the national averages in English and science and above average in mathematics. The proportion of students gaining five or more passes at GCSE grades A* to C was above average, with a particularly high proportion of passes at grades A* and A. The proportion of students gaining one or more GCSEs at grades A* to G was broadly average and the proportion gaining five or more GCSEs at grades A* to G was below the national average. These results represent good levels of achievement for a school where almost a quarter of students have special educational needs and more than one in twenty has a statement of special educational needs. Results, using the average GCSE points score per student, have been maintained above the national average but have risen at a rate that is slower than that found nationally. This slower rate is mainly as a result of the increase in the number of students with special educational needs at the school. The comparison with similar schools is based on the proportion of students eligible for free school meals and takes no account of the proportion of students with special educational needs. Results at A level are well above average, as they have been for several years.

The work seen during the inspection generally confirms the results of tests and examinations. Standards of attainment are above average in most subjects, with particularly high standards in English, history, science and religious education. In no subject are standards below the level expected for the age group.

The school's management sets appropriately high targets for examination performance.

STUDENTS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good: Students demonstrate a willingness to learn. Attitudes are very good in the sixth form.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good: students respond well to the high expectations of behaviour. Permanent exclusion is very rare and the rate of other exclusions is low.
Personal development and relationships	Very good: Students demonstrate a great respect for the feelings and beliefs of others, which leads to very good relationships throughout the school.
Attendance	Satisfactory, according to the school's figures. However, these are not accurate and attendance is almost certainly better than they would suggest.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of students:	Aged 11-14 years	aged 14-16 years	aged over 16 years
Lessons seen overall	Good	Good	Good

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

Teaching is at least satisfactory in all lessons and is good or better in 69 per cent of lessons. Teaching is very good or better in 20 per cent of lessons. The proportions of lessons reaching these standards were similar in all years, although there was a higher proportion of teaching that was very good in the sixth form than there was at Key Stages 3 and 4. The consistency of good teaching is a major strength of the school and leads to students of all abilities acquiring skills, knowledge and understanding at a good rate. Teaching is good in English and science and satisfactory in mathematics. Literacy skills are taught well through a coordinated approach across the subjects. There is no such approach to the teaching of numeracy skills, although the teaching of such aspects is still satisfactory. Teaching is effective in meeting the needs of all students.

The strengths of the teaching lie in the teachers' knowledge of their subjects; the way in which they plan interesting lessons that challenge students of all levels of attainment, the way that homework is used to extend the time available and, most of all, the way that they manage their students in class, employing consistently high expectations of their students' behaviour. Such teaching leads to students being interested in their work and showing a good level of concentration throughout the school.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory: The curriculum is appropriately broad and balanced. The curriculum in the sixth form meets the varied needs of the students well, although there is no core religious education programme, which is a statutory requirement. The school does not provide a daily act of worship for all students and a very small number of students do not study music at Key Stage 3.
Provision for students with special educational needs	Satisfactory: Students generally make good academic progress, but the progress made in their personal skills is satisfactory. Targets on individual education plans are too vague.
Provision for students' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good: The school makes good provision for cultural development and very good provision for spiritual, moral and social development.
How well the school cares for its students	Good: There are good procedures for monitoring both personal and academic development, but the systems for recording attendance are unsatisfactory.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good: There is a clear focus on raising standards and a commitment on the part of all staff to meeting the targets for improvement.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Satisfactory: The governing body has a very good knowledge of the school but fails to meet some statutory requirements.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good. A good level of data analysis is used to target specific weaknesses.
The strategic use of resources	Very good: The school targets its spending most effectively by calculating the cost of educating an individual student in each of the subjects. The principles of best value are applied well.

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 good quality of the teaching. • The progress made by students. • The ease with which they could approach the school with problems • The standards expected of the students • The students' personal development. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Too much homework is set. • Some parents do not feel part of the school community. • There is not enough information provided on students' progress. • The range of extra curricular activities is too narrow.

The inspection team agrees with most of the parent's views. However, the amount of homework is not too much and is an important factor in the achievement of high standards. The school provides a satisfactory range of extra curricular activities, despite being constrained by its situation and accommodation.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1. Students of all ages and abilities achieve well at the school. Students enter the school with levels of attainment that, overall, are broadly average, although standards in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science tend to be slightly better than in most other subjects. By the end of Key Stage 4 standards are above average. Levels of attainment are well above average by the time students leave the sixth form.
2. Attainment in the Key Stage 3 National Curriculum tests in 1999 was well above the national average. The proportions of students reaching level five or above were well above the national averages in mathematics and science and close to the national average in English. The proportions reaching level six or above were well above average in mathematics and science and above average in English. Overall, results were well above average in English and science and above average in mathematics. Although the average results over the past four years show little difference between the performances of boys and girls in science, the girls usually outperform boys in English and mathematics, as they do on entry to the school. Results overall have been well above the national average since 1996, with the exception of 1997 when results dipped but still remained above the national average. Results have been rising at a rate that is similar to that found nationally.
3. Overall, results are below those of schools taking students from similar backgrounds. However, this is based on the proportion of students eligible for free school meals and does not take into account the high proportion of students with special educational needs at the school.
4. The standards of work seen during the inspection confirm the results of the national tests, in that students are attaining above average standards in mathematics and well above average standards in English and science. This represents a good level of achievement for students in English and science and a satisfactory level of achievement in mathematics. In mathematics, higher attaining students achieve well but students with special educational needs make only satisfactory progress because their targets for improvement are too vague to be of use to the teachers. In the work seen, students also achieve well, compared to their attainment on entry to the school, in design and technology, history and information technology. Students achieve very well in religious education. Standards are above the level expected in design and technology, history, information technology and religious education, and at the level expected in all other subjects. No work was observed in physical education in Year 9 as the students were sitting examinations.
5. In the GCSE examinations in 1999, the proportion of students gaining five or more passes at grades A* to C was above the national average. The proportion gaining one or more passes at grades A* to G was close to the national average and the proportion gaining five or more passes at grades A* to G was below average. The average points score per student in 1999 was above the national average. The above average results are a result of the good progress made by the students throughout the school. Higher attainers are really stretched and this results in a very high number of passes at grades A* and A. One in four students have special educational needs and these students make good progress in academic terms, bringing the proportion gaining one or more

passes at grades A* to G up to the national average. The below average proportion gaining five or more passes at grades A* to G reflects the very high proportion of students with statements of special educational needs at the school. Whilst these students do not pass five GCSE examinations, they do leave the school with a range of other qualifications.

6. Results, using the average GCSE points score per student, have been maintained above the national average but have risen at a rate that is slower than that found nationally. This slower rate is mainly as a result of the increase in the number of students with special educational needs at the school. The proportion has doubled since the previous inspection. Girls performed significantly better than the boys did, as they do on entry to the school.
7. Results in the 1999 GCSE examinations compared with schools with students from similar backgrounds were well below average. However, this is based on the proportion of students eligible for free school meals and does not take into account the high proportion of students with special educational needs at the school. Results were very high in English literature and well above average in geography, history, information technology and religious education. Results were above average in all other subjects except design and technology, French and German, where results were broadly average, and in art where results were well below average. Students performed particularly well in history and poorly in art, compared to their performance in the other subjects that they studied.
8. In the work seen during the inspection, attainment is above the level expected nationally at the age of 16 in all subjects except history and religious education, where attainment is well above average, and art, mathematics, the foreign languages and physical education where attainment is at the level expected nationally. The standards of work seen during the inspection generally reflect the standards suggested by the GCSE results. However, there are some differences. The management team has successfully addressed the problems in art and standards of attainment have risen again to a level that is in line with the standards expected nationally. In some subjects, the standards vary according to attainments of the particular group of students studying the subject. The work seen in geography and music, for example, is not quite up to the high standards of last year's GCSE results. In design and technology, the current standards reflect the continual improvement in performance over recent years and so the work seen is of a better standard than the GCSE results from last year. Students achieve better standards than would usually be expected, given their levels of attainment at the start of the course, in design and technology, English, geography, information technology, music and science. Achievement in history and religious education is very good.
9. Since the previous inspection, standards of attainment have either been maintained or improved in all subjects except art and German. In art, results declined dramatically but have now improved again to a satisfactory level. The GCSE results in German have fallen considerably since the previous inspection, although the school now enters far more students for the examination.
10. The average A level points score per candidate was well above the national average in 1999 and maintained the high standards of recent years. The best results were in English literature and the worst were in mathematics. Two students studied for, and passed, advanced GNVQ in manufacturing. Of the ten students studying for intermediate GNVQs, two gained distinctions, three gained merits and four gained

passes. In the work seen during the inspection, attainment was above the level expected nationally in all subjects except business studies, English and religious education, where standards are well above average and art, mathematics, the foreign languages and music, where attainment is at the level expected nationally. These standards are generally reflected in examination results, although there are some differences caused by differing levels of attainment of the groups of students starting the courses. Students achieve very well in English and religious education, and achieve well in all their other subjects except design and technology, mathematics, the foreign languages and music, where achievement is satisfactory.

11. The progress made by students with special educational needs is satisfactory overall, but there are significant differences between different aspects of their development. Their progress in academic terms is good and they achieve well in relation to their attainment on entry to the school. This good progress is a result of the good level of provision that is made both within subjects and when they are withdrawn for specialist support. Their progress in other aspects of their development, such as cooperation and concentration, is satisfactory but the targets on their individual education plans are too vague, and the progress that they make towards them insufficiently monitored, to ensure that students are able to make good progress in these aspects.
12. Standards of literacy throughout the school are good. The literacy strategy has been carefully and effectively planned and has contributed to all areas of the curriculum being used as a means of developing students' skills. Students read widely and accurately and in the sixth form students read a wide range of literature and literary criticism. Students develop well their capacity to read in order to find information. In geography, in particular, students read a wide range of material when conducting their research, including technical journals and newspapers. In modern foreign languages, whilst students have satisfactory opportunities to read literature at A level, lower down in the school reading is usually limited to extracts from text books. Good opportunities are provided for writing. Students are required to use language in a concise and accurate way. Some of the longer pieces of work produced are of a very high quality. Students learn how to use language clearly and precisely when answering examination questions, particularly in religious education. Overall, standards have improved since the last inspection.
13. Levels of numeracy are above the standard expected, however, there are no strategies in place for improving standards and co-ordinating numeracy across the whole school. There are good examples of the application of number across the curriculum. Students generally handle number fluently in their work. In design and technology they demonstrate this frequently when marking out and calculating the cost of the materials. In geography students acquire skills in measurement and have a good sense of spatial awareness in developing cross sections from contour maps. In science they apply skills effectively in algebra where there is extensive use of formulae. Their ability to use graphs and charts is illustrated in history and science where they use and analyse graphical representation. In the sixth form geography course, students handle statistical information very well where it is a frequent feature of their work. In Key Stage 3 design and technology, students are taught the basic skills of data handling and apply them well. They use spreadsheets for handling information and present results in the form of charts and graphs. This competency in data handling is also seen in religious education where students analyse responses to issues such as war and social questions.
14. The rate at which students make progress is usually a result of the quality of teaching that they receive, so that where teaching is good, the standards achieved by students

are higher than expected. However, there are some notable exceptions to this rule. Teaching is now good in art but the students are only achieving satisfactory standards as they have been underachieving in the past and are only now catching up. The accommodation also reduces attainment in music and the foreign languages. In the languages, students' progress in their listening skills is slower than in other aspects of their work because the acoustics are so poor that it is very difficult indeed to hear tapes. The music rooms are too small for the size of groups and, together with the poor acoustics, this leads to a limited breadth to the curriculum so that students make slower progress than expected in the use of acoustic instruments.

15. The school has set appropriate targets for its performance, based on the attainment of the students when they join the school, and has met its targets.

Students' attitudes, values and personal development

16. The school is an orderly place in which students' attitudes and values enhance the quality of their learning and attainment. Most parents think that behaviour is good.
17. The majority of students is loyal to the school, happy to attend it, and is committed to achieving well. They enjoy many subjects of the curriculum, such as history, and are well motivated. They display positive attitudes in the classroom, are interested in their lessons and take pride in their work, as shown by the care they devote to good presentation. They are eager to improve and keen to succeed. They are therefore willing to attend extra classes in order to do well in examinations. The response to extra-curricular activities is generally good. A few students lack confidence and in consequence are reluctant to take part in class discussions. Attitudes to learning are very good in the sixth form, where students are enthusiastic, willing to take responsibility for their work and enjoy explaining what they have done.
18. Overall, the quality of behaviour in and around the school is very good. The school has high expectations regarding students' conduct, which are largely fulfilled. Students are courteous, responding politely to visitors and members of staff. They behave sensibly when moving between sites and are very orderly at break times and lunch hour. They require only minimum levels of supervision at these times. Standards of behaviour in assemblies, lessons and registration are high. Students treat school equipment with care and in general can be trusted to respect other people's property. For example, they leave their bags around the site without fear that their belongings will be stolen. Some parents said that there was a problem with bullying. However, students take a different view. They say that bullying and other forms of aggressive behaviour are rare, and that there is no disruption in the classroom. Their view is supported by the school's low rate of exclusion in recent years, and by evidence from observations during the inspection. No unsatisfactory behaviour was seen in lessons.
19. Relationships within the school are very good. In class, students work well together in pairs or groups. Although boys generally prefer to work with boys, and girls with girls, there is no sense of segregation or sexism, and inspectors observed boys and girls co-operating successfully in lessons. Students get on well together outside the classroom. Conversation and exchanges of views are generally good humoured and free from abrasive comment. Student/teacher relations are very good. They are characterised by mutual respect and trust, as shown by students' willingness to turn to their teachers for help.

20. Students show a high degree of consideration for the feelings of others. They help one another in class, and show respect for opinions that are different from their own. They understand the impact that their actions can have on others, and as a result behave with good sense and restraint. For example they do not make fun of other people's mistakes in class. No instances of teasing or racism were seen or reported to inspectors during the inspection.
21. There are relatively few opportunities for students to exercise responsibility. However they respond positively to those which are offered to them, as when GNVQ students act as supervisors in the school canteen. Students in the upper school, who are allowed to go into the town during the lunch hour, generally act sensibly and maturely when exercising this privilege. Students in all year groups are willing to take responsibility for their own learning. The majority is able to work independently, plan their homework timetable and organise their coursework successfully.
22. Attendance and punctuality are satisfactory overall. Attendance rates are good in the lower school, and exceed 90% in all year groups except Year 11. Most absence is authorised, with unauthorised absence being relatively infrequent. However, there are a few persistent truants in Years 10 and 11 and the school is now receiving appropriate support from the local authority to address the situation. The majority of students are punctual for registrations and lessons. Sixth form students' attendance at lessons is good. The attendance rate for Year 11 was 85.66% in 1998/99. According to the registers, the figure for the current academic year is similar. However, the data is drawn from the school's registers, which do not provide an accurate picture of students' performance. For example, students who are in school taking mock examinations are marked as absent in some registers and in others this is classed as unauthorised absence. Attendance in lessons was good during the week of the inspection and the attendance rate is almost certainly much better than that published by the school.
23. The high standards evident at the time of the previous inspection have been maintained.

HOW WELL ARE STUDENTS TAUGHT?

24. The quality of teaching, and of the learning that such teaching promotes, is good in all years. Teaching is at least satisfactory in all lessons and is good or better in 69 per cent of lessons. Teaching is very good or better in 20 per cent of lessons. The proportions of lessons reaching these standards were similar in all years, although there was a higher proportion of teaching that was very good in the sixth form than there was at Key Stages 3 and 4. The consistency of good teaching is a major strength of the school and leads to students acquiring skills, knowledge and understanding at a good rate.
25. At Key Stage 3, teaching is good in all subjects except geography, mathematics, modern foreign languages and music, where it is satisfactory, and in religious education where teaching is very good. Teaching at Key Stage 4 is good in all subjects except mathematics, modern foreign languages and physical education, where it is satisfactory, and in history and religious education where teaching is very good. In the sixth form, teaching is good in all subjects except mathematics and modern foreign languages, where it is satisfactory, and in English and religious education where teaching is very good. The quality of learning matches the quality of teaching in all subjects.

26. The greatest strength of the teaching lies in the very good way that teachers manage their students. They are adept at keeping students working hard simply by reinforcing the high expectations of the way that they expect students to behave in lessons. If a student starts to stray off task, a quick glance from the teacher is all that is required to remind the student of the standards expected. Students respond well to such expectations and make consistently good efforts to improve their standards of attainment.
27. The teachers also have high expectations of their students in terms of what they are able to achieve. In religious education, for example, no concession is given to the small amount of time that is provided for the GCSE course. Instead the teachers expect the students to work faster and harder and as a result achieve GCSE results that are well above the national average. This expectation that students can and will perform well is observed in many subjects and teachers are not satisfied with higher attaining students simply gaining GCSE grades at A* to C. Instead they push the students, who respond with a good level of productivity and as a result achieve a high proportion of passes at grades A* and A. Similarly, in the sixth form, the proportions of students gaining grades A and B at A level are high in several subjects as a result of the good gains in knowledge and understanding that are made by all students.
28. These high expectations also manifest themselves in the amount of homework that is set. A significant number of parents are concerned that the amount of homework is too high, but the good use that is made of homework is playing an important part in the attainment of high standards and in bringing about students' good levels of independence in activities such as research.
29. The high expectations that teachers have of higher attaining students usually holds true for lower attainers and those with special educational needs and these students make good progress in their studies. However, whilst many teachers have the skills to enable them to set suitably demanding work for all students, teachers of mathematics do not expect enough of students with special educational needs in the mixed ability classes. The students often spend their time ploughing through worksheets because the teachers are not aware of targets that have been set for them or the targets are too vague. This is the most significant difference between the good teaching in English and science and the satisfactory teaching in mathematics. Good use is made of the support staff in lessons, particularly in English. Here, the good teaching that students receive when they are withdrawn from lessons is reinforced by the good use of support staff and appropriate materials.
30. The planning of lessons and the effectiveness of the methods used are usually good, and in subjects such as religious education and history at Key Stage 4 they are very good. In these subjects, lessons are planned to make the most of the students' contributions with lively debates and questioning. In these lessons students concentrated very hard on listening to the views of others and were made to really think about their own responses. Revision activities are very well planned and keep students working hard to the very end of the very last lesson. In A level business studies, for example, students were taken through an activity that combined both consolidation of their understanding with examination technique in order to gain the most marks available for an examination question. In these activities teachers demonstrate their good subject knowledge in the way that they are able to talk knowledgeably about wider issues that students may raise.
31. Good attention is paid to developing literacy skills throughout the school. Many subjects

set tasks that require students to read widely. In English lessons, silent reading and the keeping of reading logs is a feature of work in Key Stage 3, and in the sixth form students read a wide range of literature and literary criticism. Students develop their capacity to read in order to find information through topics set in history, geography and design technology. In modern foreign languages, whilst students have satisfactory opportunities to read literature at A level, lower down in the school reading is usually limited to extracts from text books. Good opportunities are provided for writing. In science, students are required to use language in a concise and accurate way, as was seen, for example, in a Year 7 lesson on pollination. Very good opportunities are provided for students to produce extended writing in geography and history on such topics as river pollution, tourism and the causes of the First World War. In religious education students learn how to use language clearly and precisely when answering examination questions. Most teachers mark and assess basic accuracy in spelling, punctuation and grammar and students pay attention to the detail of their work.

32. The teaching of numeracy skills is not coordinated and is left more to the individual department. So it is that good work is observed in subjects such as geography and science whilst there is little emphasis on this aspect in others.
33. The marking of work is the only area that is unsatisfactory in some subjects. Overall, marking is satisfactory, but only in English, mathematics and religious education is it consistently good. In these subjects, the comments explain exactly where the student has gone wrong or where the weaknesses are in the work. In science at Key Stage 3 and in modern foreign languages the marking is too infrequent and is often cursory, with ticks rather than comments. This leads to clear differences in the students' understanding of how they are doing.
34. There have been significant improvements in teaching since the previous inspection and there is now a greater consistency of teaching that is good or better. Teachers continue to work extremely hard to overcome the difficulties of having to move from one side of the town to the other several times each day.

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

35. The curriculum is satisfactory in meeting statutory requirements at Key Stage 3 and 4 but unsatisfactory in the sixth form as it does not meet statutory requirements for religious education.
36. The school's accommodation is on three sites and places major constraints on curriculum organisation. The school day is divided into four 70-minute lessons with longer breaks between lessons than is normal to allow movement between sites. The length of the taught week is below the national average as a consequence of having the longer breaks, but the length of the school day is still quite long for the students.
37. The curriculum in Key Stages 3 and 4 is broad and balanced and satisfies the requirements for the National Curriculum and religious education. A very small number of students do not study music at Key Stage 3, but have not been formally disapplied from the National Curriculum. This is a breach of statutory requirements. A good range of courses is provided for students with special educational needs at Key Stage 4, leading to several different types of accreditation.

38. The curriculum in the sixth form is good and offers students a wide range of opportunities, but fails to meet the statutory requirements for religious education. The school draws its sixth form students from a wide area and provides a range of A level and GNVQ courses to meet the students varied needs. The curriculum is strengthened by a core programme that includes general studies and a broad, well-planned tutorial programme that includes studies in health, community service and careers education. There are specific courses for lower attaining students and for those with special educational needs. All students study information technology and a course in foreign languages for business.
39. Provision for students with special educational needs is satisfactory overall. In many subjects such as geography, history and science, teachers meet the students' needs well through well-chosen resources. In English there is both in-class support and withdrawal to target specific need in both key stages. In subjects such as these, students with special educational needs make good progress. However, there are subjects, most notably mathematics, where the individual teachers do not provide such good support and it is in these cases that the failings of the individual education plans become apparent. The individual education plans do not provide sufficient guidance for the individual teacher to focus on the needs of the student. Targets such as "work in an acceptable manner" or "improve literacy" are not clear targets and no time periods are indicated for the meeting of targets. Students with special educational needs still make satisfactory progress in these subjects, but it is not as good as in those subjects where support has been specifically targeted at the individual. The school makes good provision to meet the needs of gifted and talented students through the high expectations of teachers. This results in, for example, entry for GCSE as early as Year 7 and a very high proportion of students achieving the very highest grades at GCSE.
40. Throughout the school there are good arrangements for teaching literacy both within subjects and through whole-school initiatives. These include summer schools for incoming Year 7 students and a lunch time literacy club. Most department policies incorporate effective strategies for reading and writing, such as a word glossary and correction of spelling, and this is improving students' understanding and accuracy in writing. Planning for whole school promotion of students' numeracy skills is at an early stage of development and not significantly contributing to raising numeracy standards. However, the provision is satisfactory because, in addition to mathematics, good practice is evident in subjects such as science and geography where there is regular and well-developed use of graphs for example.
41. Students in all year groups have lessons in personal and social education, which include the required aspects of health education, sex education and drugs awareness. The school's arrangements are satisfactory. The course is well planned and promotes student acquisition and understanding of a broad area of life skills, that complements the academic studies.
42. The overall arrangements for careers education and work experience are satisfactory. Careers lessons begin in Year 9 for all students as part of the tutorial programme and continue into the sixth form, but the quality is reduced by the limited time available. There is effective support from the careers' service and local employers and this improves students' awareness of the working environment. All Key Stage 4 students participate in a one-week work experience in Year 10 and usually longer for sixth form students. Sixth form students are encouraged to accept responsibility for planning and arranging placements and to seek experience beyond the locality in order to broaden their experience. The school organises a highly successful bi-annual careers

convention in conjunction with regional universities and employers.

43. The school has well-established links with the local community and this makes a good contribution to students' learning opportunities. The technology department participate in the Neighbourhood Engineers project, J.C.B. sponsor the school and the Peak Park authority support students' research in geography. The support of many companies and individuals has been fundamental to the gaining of technology college status.
44. Links with partner institutions are satisfactory overall. The school has good relationships with its many partner primary schools and arrangements are well-established and effective in ensuring students settle quickly and happily in their new environment. Good curricular links have been established in science in promoting the use of computers in lessons but such co-operation is the exception rather than the norm. There are satisfactory arrangements to inform students about opportunities when they have completed their sixth form education. There are good links with local centres for higher education and students are well supported in preparing applications and developing interview skills.
45. The school provides a satisfactory range of extra curricular activities and makes good use of the longer than normal mid-day break by encouraging students to participate in the many sports and subject based opportunities. Most subjects organise extra classes for revision purposes. The additional programmes provided by the special educational needs staff, such as Starspell 2001, Toe-by-toe, electronic library and paired reading, are well attended and highly valued by students in both lower and upper school. The modern foreign languages department organises annual residential opportunities abroad for Year 7 in addition to work experience for the sixth form. There are several music groups and sports activities. However, the accommodation places great constraints on the activities that can be organised as students do not have sufficient time to travel between sites, have lunch, take part in an activity and travel back to the other site. Getting students from different year groups to meet together for activities is very difficult and activities after school are constrained by the very large number of students who come to school on busses. Overall, the staff are working very hard to provide as wide a range of activities as possible under the circumstances.
46. Good progress has been made since the last inspection in improving the curriculum at Key Stage 3. However, the weaknesses identified in the provision of religious education and withdrawing students from music still persist.
47. Provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good overall. Teachers have had training in this aspect of the curriculum following the criticism in the last inspection report. Provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development now pervades all subject areas, and all subjects have a policy in their handbooks to this effect. The school does not fulfil the statutory requirement to provide a daily act of collective worship for all students although there are daily assemblies.
48. There is very good provision for spiritual development in religious education. In all key stages the philosophies of the major world religions are explored in good depth. The spiritual aspects of faith are examined in detail as appropriate. In English there are moments of awe, wonder and reflection as students listen to a tape recording of Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone, aware of the important symbolism of the event. In science students are fascinated by the immensity of space. Mathematics provides students with the opportunity to develop spiritual awareness of the beauty of geometric patterns and of number. In geography students are made aware of the natural wonders

of the world. History shows the importance of the church in the Middle Ages and Christian beliefs including charity, the spiritual needs of the Crusaders and religious justification. The spiritual elements in art and music are acknowledged but opportunities are not fully explored.

49. There is very good provision for moral development. Students are taught a clear understanding of right and wrong. They study moral issues formally in religious education. They examine issues such as poverty, wealth, war, abortion and the environment from a moral standpoint. Moral issues are studied formally in other subjects. In history, students study the slave trade and the treatment of black people in America; social reform; care of the weak; public health and the welfare state. In the sixth form students study Nazi Germany and the morality of power. In science, students look at issues such as genetic engineering, nuclear power and the potential for science to help overcome Third World hunger. In physical education students understand the need for rules and in practice are prepared to accept decisions.
50. Provision for social development is also very good. Students are expected to behave very well in class and around the school. They are taught to be polite and courteous and generally very gracious. Throughout the school there are high expectations of behaviour and students rise to meet these expectations. The drop-in centre for students with special educational needs makes very good provision for social development. In most subjects students develop social skills as they co-operate in group-work, sharing responsibility and discussing their findings. Social issues are also studied formally. In English, for example, they discuss racist issues emerging from a study of their class reader in Year 8.
51. Provision for cultural development is good. Students study the multicultural traditions associated with the major world religions. In English they study a variety of different cultural traditions in literature. In history field studies, students look at the vestiges of town and village life as it existed in medieval and later ages. In geography, students study aspects of life in France, Kenya, Japan, Brazil and Bangladesh. In physical education, students are aware of sporting role models from different cultures. Both art and music support cultural development well. There is a good range of extra-curricular activities. Students visit theatres and engage in musical activities, There are a range of trips and exchanges to European countries. Students are made aware of the cultural traditions of France, Spain and Germany. There are skiing trips to Europe and the USA, the latter taking in a visit to New York. The school has played a leading part in the 'Comenius' project whereby students from the school study alongside students from France and Germany.
52. There has been a significant improvement in the provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development since the last inspection.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS STUDENTS?

53. The school's pastoral system provides good care for students and makes a positive contribution to raising their standards of attainment. The only unsatisfactory feature is the recording of attendance. Parents value the care that students receive. The vast majority says that their children like school, make good progress, and are helped to become more mature and responsible.
54. Despite the run down condition of the buildings on the lower school site, the school is a

safe environment. There is adequate provision for risk assessment, and equipment is regularly examined and tested in accordance with legal requirements. The arrangements for first aid are satisfactory. The school has put in place proper procedures for child protection, and members of staff are well briefed on their responsibilities.

55. Arrangements for monitoring and promoting attendance are unsatisfactory. Although teachers take roll calls at the beginning of morning and afternoon school in accordance with legal requirements, procedures for recording attendance are very poor. Form registers are often poorly maintained. For example, attendances and absences are rarely totalled on a weekly basis, original entries are overwritten, and in a few cases the reason for absence is not recorded. On some days, the attendance for some classes is not recorded at all. The registers are inadequate for the purpose of analysing and comparing the attendance rates of form and year groups. There are further weaknesses in the school's arrangements. There is no first day contact with the homes of students who are absent without explanation, procedures for checking attendance at the start of lessons are not consistently applied in practice, and there are instances of tutors arriving late for registrations. In other respects the school makes satisfactory provision for promoting good attendance. Form tutors and heads of year regularly check form registers and take effective action when students are away from school without valid explanation. The school knows when and why students are absent, it just doesn't record it properly.
56. The school's measures to promote good behaviour and discipline are good. There are effective formal policies at whole school and departmental level, and a sound system of sanctions and rewards. Exclusion is used only as a last resort, and the school has good strategies for dealing with difficult students and keeping them in education. Many students who have been excluded in their previous schools are integrated well. Staff involve parents at an early stage and where necessary call on the services of support agencies such as the local student referral unit. The school also provides an alternative curriculum for seriously disaffected students. Measures to deal with bullying are successful and are sufficient to ensure that, although the problem is not wholly eradicated, it is not a feature of life in school. The tutorial programme includes work on the prevention of bullying. It encourages students to be open about the issue and, where necessary, to seek help from members of staff.
57. In all matters of discipline the school's good policies are well supported by good practice. Teachers and classroom assistants are skilled in managing students' behaviour in lessons. They set high standards and clearly define boundaries of acceptable conduct. Students are well aware of what is required of them, and respond very positively to the school's high expectations.
58. There are good arrangements for monitoring and supporting students' academic progress. In particular, the arrangements are successful in the early identification of students who are underachieving and in providing effective support in order to raise their standards of attainment. Subject departments monitor attainment, set targets, and provide assistance to those students who need extra help. In the best cases, teachers promote improvement through constructive marking of work. Students have access to a good range of extra classes and homework clubs, which helps them to raise their attainment. Year 9 students receive good guidance on GCSE options and older students are well informed about the choice of courses in further education. Selected members of Year 11 also get the benefit of individual mentoring during their preparation for examinations. The school makes satisfactory arrangements to monitor and support

students with special educational needs. Their academic needs are met well in many subjects, but their social needs, such as the ability to work in a group, are not adequately monitored.

59. The monitoring and support role of departments is firmly underpinned by the work of pastoral staff. Form tutors are responsible for overseeing and encouraging students' progress across all subjects. Their duties include monitoring merits, recording achievements and assisting members of the tutor group with self-assessment. Although form tutors have relatively limited time for their role, the support that they give to students nevertheless makes a significant contribution to academic progress and standards of attainment.
60. The school makes good provision for monitoring and supporting students' personal development. Members of staff know them well as individuals and have a good understanding of their strengths and weaknesses. This begins when Year 7 transfers from primary to secondary education. There are good arrangements for the induction of new students and effective liaison with feeder schools over the exchange of information. The school builds successfully on these foundations via its pastoral structure. This allows form tutors and heads of year to remain with the same student groups from the beginning of Year 7 to the end of Year 9, and promotes relations based on friendliness and trust. Students are therefore able to turn to pastoral staff for appropriate guidance on personal problems. There are adequate alternative sources of advice for those who feel unable to turn to a teacher. For example, younger students have access to a welfare assistant who is based on the lower school site.
61. Students' personal development is also supported by the school's arrangements for personal and social education. The "tutorial programme", as it is known, is taught in the main by form tutors, which has the advantage of strengthening the student/tutor relationship. Students also benefit from guidance from speakers from outside agencies, who are brought in to deal with topics that require specialist knowledge. Heads of year monitor use of tutorial time as far as possible, given the constraints of time and the split site. Careers education and guidance are major components of the programme in Years 9 to 11, with a particular focus on work experience in Year 10. The school makes good arrangements for students in this year group to get a taste of the world of work. Placements are well organised, and students are thoroughly briefed before going into the workplace. Nearly all benefit from the experience, which makes a valuable contribution to their personal development and preparations for life after school.
62. The school has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection in the areas of support and guidance. Standards of care have been maintained and enhanced.
63. The school's procedures for monitoring students' progress and the use made of assessment to guide curriculum planning are both good.
64. A substantial amount of data on students' attainment is collected and recorded when they enter the school, including Key Stage 2 scores and a number of standardised tests covering a range of verbal and non-verbal skills. This information is communicated to all teachers for their guidance. As students progress up the school, more information is gathered on their attainment. In particular, in February each year students in Years 7 to 10 are given a common assignment and this provides the basis for them being awarded a notional National Curriculum level or GCSE grade. A level and GCSE results are scrutinised and compared to the expected results for students. These systems are effective in enabling the school to determine the extent to which it is "adding value" in

the way it is educating students. Whilst systems are good in most departments, there are some variations. Thus in music, art and modern foreign languages they are satisfactory and in geography they are very good.

65. The use made of assessment in planning the curriculum is satisfactory in modern foreign languages, where it is still in the early stages of development, and art and music, where only limited use is made of formative assessment. In other subjects the use of assessment is good. The school also has good procedures in place to identify gifted and talented students. In 1997, for example, a Year 7 student sat his GCSE in mathematics and is now studying for A level in Year 10.
66. The school accurately identifies students with special educational needs and monitors their academic progress. The targets set on individual education plans are too vague to allow regular monitoring of progress towards the targets and monitoring of this aspect is unsatisfactory.
67. Progress since the last inspection has been good. In particular, the school has made rapid progress in its use of value added procedures.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

68. Most parents are satisfied with their partnership with the school and the education which their children receive. In the inspection's survey of parental opinion more than 90% of respondents said that they were happy with the school's expectations of students, standards of teaching, the progress that students made, and the approachability of members of staff. Although the majority of parents had positive views on all issues, a significant percentage of replies expressed dissatisfaction with the amount of homework that children are expected to do, information on progress, the degree of co-operation between home and school, and the range of extra-curricular activities. Several parents voiced concerns over bullying and the state of the buildings. The findings of the inspection generally concur with parental opinion, including the reservations concerning buildings, information on students' progress and the extent of home/school links. However there is no evidence to support the view that bullying is a major problem or that the amount of homework is not appropriate.
69. The school has a satisfactory partnership with parents, and the part that the latter play in their children's education enhances standards of attainment. Parents are strongly supportive of the school. They are willing to sign home/school contracts, and the vast majority will co-operate closely with members of staff when there are concerns about children's attendance or behaviour. Many devote considerable time to providing transport or helping with sporting activities. There is an active parent teacher association which raises money to fund extra resources for students' education. The home/school partnership is effective because of the goodwill that exists on both sides. Parents have positive attitudes to the school and members of staff are open and approachable. Formal arrangements to involve parents actively in the life of the school are not as well developed. There is no systematic policy of exploiting their skills or formally consulting them about their views. Parents do make significant contributions, for example by forming "painting parties" to redecorate rooms, but this takes place on an ad hoc basis and rarely concerns academic matters.
70. The quality of information for parents is uneven and unsatisfactory overall. There are also some strengths, notably the separate sixth form and middle school prospectuses

which contain good information on the curriculum, and some sound features, such as the arrangements for parents' consultation evenings and regular letters from school to home. On the other hand, both the school prospectus and the annual report of the governing body fail to comply with the law. Neither includes a proper account of the school's provision for students with special educational needs or provides national comparative figures for advanced level and GCSE results. The school prospectus is also weak on information on the curriculum. It tells parents of prospective students very little about what children will learn and how subjects are taught, although this information is provided when they actually join the school. Written reporting on students' progress is also unsatisfactory. The interim reports are adequate, but the main annual reports lack rigour. The subject sections do not analyse students' strengths and weaknesses or give guidance on how they can improve the quality of their work. Furthermore, there are no reports on progress in information technology in some years, which is a breach of legal requirements on reporting to parents.

71. Parents' involvement with students' learning at home and at school is satisfactory. Parents have high expectations, want their children to do well academically, and are keenly interested in their progress. This is shown by high levels of attendance at parents' consultation evenings. Many parents also contribute to standards of attainment by providing books and equipment that help children to work effectively at home. Parents are keen that students should complete their homework and coursework, and will support teachers if there are problems regarding lack of effort and missed deadlines. The school does not involve all parents of students with special educational needs in the preparation of individual education plans. Many are not involved in identifying their child's needs or reviewing their child's progress and so are insufficiently informed about their child's work at school.
72. The school has introduced measures to foster parents' interest and to encourage them to be partners in their children's learning. For example, all students have a homework planner, which their parents are asked to read and sign. However, the system is stronger on paper than in practice. Planners are not consistently filled in by students or checked and signed by form tutors. This impairs their usefulness as a means of informing and involving parents in their children's learning at home.
73. On the subject of the partnership between home and school, the last inspection report stated that parents were supportive of the school, and that the annual report of the governing body was unsatisfactory. The position is broadly unchanged. However, the inadequacies in the information provided to parents mean that, overall, the links with parents are unsatisfactory.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

74. The school is well led and managed by the headteacher and senior staff. There is a shared commitment to maintaining high standards and improving those that are merely satisfactory. The good direction provided by the headteacher has ensured that examination results at GCSE level have remained above the national average despite a doubling of the proportion of students with special educational needs and a significant increase in the proportion of students with statements. The school is particularly effective in meeting its aim of ensuring that all students reach their potential.
75. The headteacher does not accept low standards, so that when they arise they are dealt with swiftly and effectively. For example, the quality of teaching in art declined and

standards started to fall. A plan of action was put into place and the new staff are now raising standards rapidly. Good use is made of data from tests and examinations in this respect and overall the monitoring and evaluation of the school's work is good. The monitoring of teaching is generally satisfactory. The school is currently piloting a new self evaluation system for departments which is proving very effective in geography and history. Other monitoring has been through whole department reviews, with fairly long periods of time between them. However, the system is backed up by further monitoring that responds to concerns that arise from the analysis of results, for example, or concerns raised by students.

76. Each year the management team reviews the progress that has been made by the school, draws up appropriate priorities for the next year's work and initiates satisfactory plans to address them. Responsibilities are delegated to staff in posts of responsibility who respond well to their tasks. Many subjects are managed well, although there is a clear link between the quality of management of a subject and the standards achieved. There is, for example, very good management in history where the results are some of the best in the school.
77. The financial planning in the school is excellent. The school receives a basic budget that is very low and through its own efforts raises considerable sums of money. When the funding for technology college status is added, it brings the school's total budget up to a figure that is still below average. The bursar keeps a very tight rein on spending and the detail that the school goes to in its planning is outstanding. For example, all departments carefully calculate how much it costs to educate a student in their subject for a year. The school maintains a small surplus for contingency purposes each year, despite having the substantial extra costs of having to run a school on three different sites. The grants from the technology college funding have been targeted very well and have helped to raise standards in areas such as information technology where GCSE results are now well above the national average.
78. The school applies well the principles of best value. It compares its performance with the highest attaining schools in the authority and analyses these schools' results by comparing them with their students' attainment on entry and sets challenging targets. The management are rigorous in applying competitive tendering systems to ensure that they gain the best value for money. There is, however, insufficient consultation with parents on major decisions.
79. The one weakness in the school's management is the failure of the governing body to fulfil its statutory requirements. Attendance is not recorded properly; two students do not have access to the full National Curriculum in music; there is no provision for religious education in the sixth form; not all parents receive a copy of a report on their child's progress in information technology; the frequency of acts of collective worship do not meet requirements and there is information missing from the prospectus and annual report of the governing body. However, governors have a very good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and can discuss knowledgeably the performance of individual subjects. They play a satisfactory part in shaping the school's future, keeping a watchful eye on performance and are willing to challenge any perceived weaknesses. Overall, the governing body discharges its responsibilities in an appropriate manner.
80. The school has sufficient teachers to meet its requirements and they are well matched, by qualifications and experience, to the demands of the curriculum. The arrangements for the professional development of teachers are very good. The monitoring and

evaluation of the quality of teaching has been conducted according to teacher appraisal regulations. Additionally, several departments are involved in a self review and evaluation pilot scheme that involves observation of lessons and evaluative feedback to teachers. These experiences mean that the school is well poised for the introduction of Performance Management Regulations in September 2000. In-service training of teachers is well planned and is linked to school and departmental development plans and individual needs. Regular reports are provided for governors on training undertaken by teachers. Good support is provided for newly qualified teachers and other staff new to the school and it is well planned through the school's induction programme. The provision is strong within departments and also offers newly qualified teachers a 'buddy' contact with a more established teacher, as well as appropriate contact with members of the school's senior management team.

81. Most subjects have sufficient resources, although there are not enough dictionaries in foreign languages, which is having an impact on standards of writing. The accommodation at the school is unsatisfactory. The school has sufficient rooms, but they are in the wrong place. For example, there are insufficient rooms at the lower school for all the classes so that every lesson one or two classes must go to the upper school. This means that the school must allow time for them to move from one side of the town to the other. As a result, students spend a relatively long time at school but the amount of time spent in lessons is below average. The school faces great difficulties in extending the school day as so many students have long bus journeys to and from school. The traffic between the sites can be very heavy, particularly in the mornings. This can lead to some teachers being stuck in traffic and arriving late for registration. The acoustics in some rooms are very poor and have an impact on standards of listening in foreign languages and the breadth of the curriculum in music. Extra curricular activities are very difficult to arrange when groups of students from different years are required to meet together.
82. The good leadership and management evident at the time of the previous inspection has been maintained. All the key issues from the previous report have been successfully addressed, with the exception of improving the accommodation where the school is awaiting the results of a planning enquiry.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

83. The school has no major weaknesses that are affecting standards. There are, however, some minor weaknesses that need to be addressed. In order to raise standards and the improve the quality of education still further, the school should:

- (1) Ensure that targets on individual education plans are more precise to help those teachers who have most difficulty in setting work of an appropriate standard for students with special educational needs. (Paragraph 39)
- (2) Ensure that attendance is recorded properly. (Paragraph 55)
- (3) Provide more information about attainment and progress on written reports and ensure all parents receive a written report on their child's progress in information technology. (Paragraph 70)
- (4) Provide a course in religious education for all students in the sixth form. (Paragraph 38)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	172
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and students	67

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
2	18	49	31	0	0	0

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

Information about the school's students

Students on the school's roll	Y7 – Y13
Number of students on the school's roll	1171
Number of full-time students eligible for free school meals	44

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y13
Number of students with statements of special educational needs	68
Number of students on the school's special educational needs register	296

English as an additional language	No of students
Number of students with English as an additional language	10

Student mobility in the last school year	No of students
Students who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	26
Students who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	36

Attendance

Authorised absence	%
School data	7.8
National comparative data	7.9

Unauthorised absence	%
School data	0.9
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 students in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	95	112	207

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of students at NC level 5 and above	Boys	51	69	67
	Girls	89	86	86
	Total	140	155	153
Percentage of students at NC level 5 or above	School	68 (90)	75 (69)	74 (79)
	National	63 (65)	62 (60)	55 (56)
Percentage of students at NC level 6 or above	School	36 (54)	47 (46)	37 (43)
	National	28 (35)	38 (36)	23 (27)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of students at NC level 5 and above	Boys	58	66	61
	Girls	95	88	95
	Total	153	154	156
Percentage of students at NC level 5 or above	School	74 (73)	75 (76)	76 (88)
	National	64 (62)	64 (64)	60 (62)
Percentage of students at NC level 6 or above	School	47 (37)	45 (47)	32 (42)
	National	31 (31)	37 (37)	28 (31)

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
	1999	103	95	198

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A* to G	1 or more grades A* to G
Numbers of students achieving the standard specified	Boys	55	89	101
	Girls	55	88	92
	Total	110	177	193
Percentage of students achieving the standard specified	School	56 (46)	89 (88)	97 (97)
	National	46.3 (43.3)	90.7 (88.5)	95.7 (94.0)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score Per student	School	42.3 (40.8)
	National	37.8 (36.8)

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

Attainment at the end of the sixth form

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A level or AS-level examinations	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	28	42	70

Average A/AS points score per candidate	For candidates entered for 2 or more A levels or equivalent			For candidates entered for fewer than 2 A levels or equivalent		
	Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
School	20.3	24.6	22.9 (20.5)	1.0	N/a	1.0 (5.0)
National	17.7	18.1	17.9 (17.6)	2.7	2.8	2.8 (2.8)

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

Ethnic background of students

	No of students
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	6
White	1167
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	24	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	71.8
Number of students per qualified teacher	16.3

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y7 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	26
Total aggregate hours worked per week	725

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	76.3
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	24
Key Stage 4	22

Financial information

Financial year	1998/1999
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	£
Total income	2642100
Total expenditure	2652495
Expenditure per student	2231
Balance brought forward from previous year	39474
Balance carried forward to next year	29079

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	1173
Number of questionnaires returned	385

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	33	55	8	3	1
My child is making good progress in school.	42	53	4	0	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	22	56	12	3	7
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	20	59	16	4	1
The teaching is good.	30	61	3	1	5
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	27	53	16	3	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	43	48	7	2	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	50	44	4	1	2
The school works closely with parents.	22	54	16	3	5
The school is well led and managed.	36	51	7	1	6
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	34	54	8	0	4
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	24	45	16	3	11

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

ENGLISH

84. In the 1999 National Curriculum tests the proportion of students attaining Level 5 and above was close to the national average and the proportion attaining Level 6 and above was above the national average. The average National Curriculum points score attained in 1999 was well above the national average for all schools. It was below the average for schools with a similar number of students eligible for free school meals but this takes no account of the school's high proportion of students who have special educational needs. Results have improved from above to well above average over the past three years Results were slightly better than those in mathematics and below those attained in science.
85. In 1999 the proportion of students attaining GCSE grades A* to C in English was above the national average. In English literature the proportion attaining grades A* to C was far above the national average, although the school enters a considerably smaller proportion of students for the examination than is usually found. The proportion gaining the highest grades of A* and A was well above average. Results in English have remained above average in recent years whilst those in English Literature have improved significantly. Results in English in 1999 were broadly in line with the school's average for all subjects and results in English literature were above it. Results attained at A level in 1999 were well above the national average, as they have been in recent years.
86. Girls generally perform better than the boys do at Key Stages 3 and 4, as they do on entry to the school.
87. Evidence gathered during the inspection indicates that attainment by the end of Key Stage 3 is well above the national average. By the end of Key Stage 4 attainment in English and English literature is above the national average. This does not indicate that standards in English literature have dropped but rather that both the proportion of students entered for the examination and the prior attainment of the students fluctuate somewhat from year to year. in the sixth form examination results accurately reflect standards being currently attained. When their prior attainment is taken into account, students' achievement at Key Stages 3 and 4 is good and in the sixth form it is very good.
88. The progress of both the higher attainers and the students with special educational needs is very good at Key Stage 3. The high attainers are really extended and this accounts for the well above average National Curriculum points score. The weak literacy skills of many of the students with special educational needs are developed very well both in English and through the whole school approach to this aspect.
89. Standards of literacy throughout the school are good. The literacy strategy has been carefully and effectively planned and has contributed to all areas of the curriculum being used as a means of developing students' skills. Students read widely and accurately and in the sixth form students read a wide range of literature and literary criticism. Students develop well their capacity to read in order to find information. In geography, in particular, students read a wide range of material when conducting their research, including technical journals and newspapers. In modern foreign languages, whilst students have satisfactory opportunities to read literature at A level, lower down

in the school reading is usually limited to extracts from text books. Good opportunities are provided for writing. Students are required to use language in a concise and accurate way. Some of the longer pieces of work produced are of a very high quality. Students learn how to use language clearly and precisely when answering examination questions, particularly in religious education. Overall, standards have improved since the last inspection.

90. Students' attainment in speaking and listening is good at all levels in the school. Students take part in a range of whole class, paired and group discussions. They understand the basis upon which they are assessed and are willing to work together in order to improve their own skills and those of others. Higher attainers possess good vocabularies and contribute well to the discussion of a range of topics. Lower attainers tend to lack confidence in addressing the whole class but usually are able to express themselves clearly on a one-to-one basis. Most students listen attentively. This was seen, for example, in a Year 13 lesson in which students were revising for their A level examination. They listened intently to each other's outline answers on essay titles, noted the key points, asked for more evidence to test the view being suggested then offered an evaluation of what they had heard.
91. By the age of 14 students read novels and plays appropriate for their age group and develop their personal taste through the silent reading sessions that are a significant feature of most lessons. Higher and middle attaining students read with fluency and clarity but only a minority read aloud with the quality of expression, including the capacity to project their voices, that might be expected. Most students understand what they read and often display a maturity of insight. In a class discussion on JK Rowling's "Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone", for example, students showed good understanding of how the writer had used symbolism. By the ages of 16 and 19 students go on to study more complex texts and to develop their reading skills in greater depth. They are able to recognise a good range of literary devices and are able to evaluate how effectively how they are being used. Students also display an awareness of different styles of writing, and how they might be used to create particular comic effects, as was seen in a lesson on Oscar Wilde's "The Importance of Being Earnest". The capacity of senior students to examine what they read in a rigorous manner is a clear strength in the school.
92. By the age of 14 students are familiar with different types of writing, including descriptive, narrative and reportage. Most students have developed the routine of improving their work through re-drafting it. By the age of 16 students consolidate their skills in assembling information carefully and correcting early drafts before presenting their best copy for assessment. They also extend the scope of their writing to include, for example, discursive writing. However, a clear strength of students' written work at both 16 and 19 is their capacity to produce high quality, well reasoned and effectively presented literary criticism covering a wide range of classic and contemporary literature.
93. The quality of teaching and learning is good at both Key Stages 3 and 4 and is very good in the sixth form. When teaching is most effective, teachers display very good subject knowledge and have high expectations of their students. This leads to very good learning: students have to think carefully to find answers to searching questions; they become acquainted with the appropriate technical vocabulary and so can express themselves accurately and persuasively; their curiosity is aroused and so they read more widely. An example of this was seen in a Year 13 class where students were observed intently revising the poetry of Keats for the A level examination. Good, detailed lesson planning takes into account the prior attainment of students, breaks the

lessons down into sections so as to introduce variety into the tasks and enables the teacher to communicate to students the learning objectives of the lesson. Students are encouraged to be independent learners and to assess their own progress. This was seen in two lessons, one in Year 13 and the other in Year 8, when students were provided with marking schemes and looked in depth at what level of attainment was required for each grade. Only in a very few lessons was the prior attainment of students not taken into account so that the lessons lacked pace. Ongoing assessment is mostly of good quality, with teachers paying close attention to accuracy and providing helpful comments which explain to students what they need to do to improve. A small proportion of the marking is superficial and does not provide students with appropriate guidance.

94. Additional factors that contribute to students' progress are that relationships between students and teachers are notably good and students behave well, showing respect for the views of others and treating each other with courtesy. The leadership of the department is good with a clear emphasis placed on maintaining high standards. Increasing the number of students entered for GCSE English literature would recognise more appropriately the standards of work seen in the school.
95. Progress since the last inspection has been good. Students' attainment has improved at all levels in the school and the quality of both teaching and learning has improved. The book stock has been improved.

MATHEMATICS

96. In the 1999 National Curriculum tests the proportions of students attaining Level 5 and above and Level 6 and above were well above the national averages. The average National Curriculum points score attained in 1999 was above the national average for all schools, as it has been for the past three years. It was well below the average for schools with a similar number of students eligible for free school meals but this takes no account of the school's high proportion of students who have special educational needs. Results in mathematics were below those in English and science.
97. The proportions of students achieving grades A* to C in the GCSE examinations in 1999 were above the national average although the average points score per student was broadly in line with the national average. Results in mathematics in 1999 were broadly in line with the school's average for all subjects. There has been an improvement in results over the past three years in line with the national trend.
98. Results at A level in 1999 were well below the national average. Three different teachers taught students in one year and this significantly reduced their results.
99. Overall, students achieve satisfactory standards, given their prior attainment, at Key Stages 3 and 4 and in the sixth form. There are, however, significant differences between different groups of students. The most able and gifted students at both Key Stages 3 and 4 are identified and make good progress through the school. They follow an individual programme of study and are given extra support. This results in well above average proportions of students attaining Levels 5 and 6 at the end of Key Stage 3 and to an above average proportion of students gaining grades A* to C at GCSE. The progress made by students with special educational needs, on the other hand, is slower, although still satisfactory. Their progress is restricted by a lack of specific targets on individual education plans. The overall result is to lower the average points

score per student at both the end of Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4.

100. In work seen during the inspection, students are achieving standards above the levels expected of 14 year olds nationally. Students possess good skills in problem solving. High attaining students write clearly about their work. They make general statements about problems and then convert these statements to formulae. The middle attainers understand how to apply data handling techniques to problems. They use a variety of graphs and interpret the results to reach accurate solutions. The lower attainers struggle with simple problems. High attaining students acquire good techniques in algebra. They recognise the gradient and intercept of linear functions and solve simultaneous equations both graphically and by elimination. Middle attainers use Pythagoras' theorem competently when solving problems of right-angled triangles while low attaining students have a sound understanding of the probability scale and can calculate the probability of an event occurring.
101. By the time students are 16, standards of attainment in work seen during the inspection are above the level expected for that age. Low attainers have a good recall of number bonds and can add and subtract negative numbers in the context of temperature. Particularly good work is carried out with middle attaining students using graphical calculators to help them sketch graphs of quadratic functions and determine the characteristics of the graphs. Middle attainers have a good understanding of correlation, although a small proportion have difficulty in calculating combined probabilities. High attainers understand and use the sine, and cosine rules to calculate angles and sides in any triangles.
102. Standards of attainment at the age of 19 are in line with course expectations. This is based on work seen and information on examination results from teachers. Attainment at A level in previous years has varied significantly according to the prior attainment of the students starting the course. In the current Year 13, students demonstrate a sound understanding of the binomial distribution and confidently use it to calculate approximate values of expressions. The quality of curve sketching is good, with clear diagrams, and students structure answers to questions well. In mechanics, they have a sound understanding of the conservation of momentum and apply the laws of uniform acceleration appropriately. They use skills learnt in pure mathematics well. Students demonstrate their sound understanding of probability by applying, for example, the Poisson distribution.
103. Levels of numeracy are above the standard expected, however, there are no coordinated strategies in place for improving standards by developing and co-ordinating numeracy across the whole school. On the other hand, there are many good examples of the application of number across the curriculum. Students generally handle number and measure fluently in their written work. In design and technology they demonstrate this frequently when marking out and calculating the cost of the materials. In geography students acquire skills in measurement and have a good sense of spatial awareness in developing cross sections from contour maps. In science they effectively apply skills in algebra where there is extensive use of formulae. Their ability to use graphs and charts is illustrated in science where they use and analyse graphical representation. However, there are some concerns in science about the mathematical ability of A level students. In A level geography on the other hand, students manage statistical information very well. In Key Stage 3 design and technology, students are taught the basic skills of data handling and apply them well. They use spreadsheets for handling information on research and present results in the form of charts and graphs. At Key Stage 4, students make good use of their research skills as part of their coursework. This competency in

data handling is also seen in religious education when students analyse responses to issues such as war and social questions. In history, students illustrate a sound understanding of statistics when compiling graphs of imports and exports. They competently convert mining statistics into pie and bar charts.

104. The overall quality of teaching is satisfactory resulting in satisfactory learning. Teachers demonstrate a good knowledge and understanding of mathematics in all three key stages. This is illustrated by clear explanation of tasks and the confident and appropriate use of mathematical terms. Teachers manage students very well and students generally concentrate on their work. As a result, students' behaviour is at least good and frequently very good enabling them to make the best progress. They listen attentively to their teachers and are polite and courteous. The good relationship between teachers and students promotes a good working atmosphere. Consequently, students are keen to progress and they subsequently improve understanding and experience new mathematics. Students have a sound understanding of their level of attainment and this has a positive impact on their learning. In the best lessons, teachers use questions to probe the students' understanding but in other lessons teachers allow responses that are too short and do not give the students opportunities to explain concepts in their own words or to take part in discussions. At Key Stage 3 in particular, teachers rely too heavily on the use of worksheets. Whilst this approach works well for the most able students who are given plenty of extension work, it is much less effective for the lower attainers and those with special educational needs. Lower attainers tend to plod through worksheets and teachers are unsure of how to improve their rate of progress because the targets set for them are too imprecise. Homework is set regularly and relates well to classwork, enabling students to both consolidate and extend their work. Students' books are thoroughly marked and there are good diagnostic comments that help students see where they have made mistakes and to improve.
105. Students' work is assessed regularly and there is good monitoring and evaluation of their performance in mathematics. Although the procedures for monitoring attainment are good, there is insufficient rigor in the monitoring of teaching and learning to ensure that students make the best possible progress. Reporting to parents is unsatisfactory. Reports give parents general information about the attainment of students, but there is a lack of specific facts about what students know, understand and can do relating to mathematics.
106. The department has made satisfactory progress since the previous inspection. Students' attainment at Key stage 3 has improved and attainment at Key Stage 4 has been maintained, despite a doubling of the proportion of students with special educational needs. There has been a decline in A level results, but these results are highly dependent on the attainment of students on entry to the course and fluctuate from year to year. The quality of teaching has been maintained.

SCIENCE

107. In the 1999 National Curriculum tests, the proportions of students at the age of 14 achieving levels 5 and above, and levels 6 and above, were both well above the national average. The average points score was also well above the national average for all schools. It was below the average for schools with a similar number of students eligible for free school meals but this takes no account of the school's high proportion of students who have special educational need. Results have remained well above average for the past three years. Students consistently achieve better results than they do in English and mathematics.

108. In the 1999 GCSE double award science examinations, the proportion of students gaining grades A* to C was well above the national average. The proportion gaining the highest grades of A* and A was well above average. Almost one fifth of the year group was entered for the single science examination and/or the Certificate of Achievement. Results in single science were below the national average, but all students achieved a grade in the range A* to G. Across the whole year group, the proportion of students obtaining a grade in the range A* to C, and the average points score, were both above the national average. Results overall have remained consistently above the national average in recent years.
109. In the 1999 A level examinations, results in biology were well above the national average, and have been so for each of the last four years. In chemistry and physics, results were close to the national averages. In both biology and chemistry a high proportion of candidates passed at grade A.
110. When compared with their levels of prior attainment, students at both Key Stages 3 and 4, and in the sixth form, achieve well in science. The progress of students with special educational needs is generally better than that of the highest attaining students because of the careful attention that is paid to improving literacy skills and the extra support staff that are available to help them.
111. In work seen during the inspection, students' standards of attainment at Key Stages 3 and 4 are well above those expected for students of the same age nationally. These standards are reflected in the high level of attainment in recent national tests at Key Stage 3 and are higher than those suggested by last year's GCSE results as the departments efforts to improve literacy begin to pay further dividends. The emphasis placed on good quality written work at Key Stage 3 builds the foundations for work further up the school. It allows students to record their work in such a way as to both make sure that they understand the topic and to provide an accurate record for revision. For example, students possess a very good understanding of reproduction in plants that they learnt in Year 7. Higher attaining students write clear paragraphs that demonstrate that they know the differences between wind and insect pollinated flowers. Lower attaining students, while able to contribute to a discussion about pollination, do not write so fluently, but nevertheless show that they understand the principles of colour and fragrance to attract insects. Students are fascinated by the facts they discover about space, and in particular the solar system. A group of girls showed an appreciation of the immensity of the distances involved in space compared with those we measure on earth. One of the boys commented astutely on the consequences of light from the sun taking eight minutes to reach us. 'We must see it where it was eight minutes ago'.
112. By the end of Key Stage 4, students have developed their understanding of a wide range of topics to a very good level. Higher attaining students, for example, show a high level of understanding of the scientific explanation of electrolysis and many students use the term "ion" with confidence, and in the correct context. They use this understanding to then explain the process of electroplating. Lower attaining students understand the structure of the human skin and use this understanding to discuss the extent of the protection that sun cream can provide.
113. In the work seen in the A level classes, standards in all three sciences are above those expected nationally. Students use their knowledge well to predict outcomes such as the impact of placing rhubarb cells alternately in weak and concentrated sugar solutions. Students are adept at relating their work to industrial applications, such as the direction

of equilibrium in chemical reactions to the manufacture of ammonia. The higher attaining students who study physics do not reach the same high standards as their peers in biology and chemistry because the pace of lessons is slower as the teachers concentrate on ensuring that lower attainers understand the basic principles.

114. The quality of teaching and learning is good in all years. Teachers have a good understanding of their subject and use this to good effect in their planning of lessons. For example, they often plan lessons that relate directly to students' experiences, such as the Year 10 lesson where students were fascinated in a demonstration where the by-products of burning a cigarette were collected. The teacher then encouraged discussion about the implications for people who smoke. This lesson also permitted students to play a full part in the work and subsequent discussions. Students respond to such teaching by working hard. Teachers ensure that additional support is available for students with special educational needs, so that they also can make good progress. This is particularly successful in Key Stage 3, when a support assistant is often present in lessons. The support teachers are very well briefed and are able to discuss the scientific content of the lessons with the students. In the best lessons, teachers show a real enthusiasm for the study of science, and develop a sense of enjoyment and learning together, whether in Year 7 or Year 13. Particularly successful teaching was seen in a Year 8 lesson concerned with investigating differences in soil structure, where students organise their practical work and learn to record results carefully before moving on to the next test. A purposeful working atmosphere developed, with the teacher in a supporting rather than a dominant role. All teachers have a high expectation of students' behaviour, but in a minority of lessons, some casual conversations went unnoticed in the last ten minutes. The management of students is particularly good and stems directly from the high expectations that the teachers have of their students. Students know what is expected of them and respond very well. The marking of exercise books and folders is highly variable, both in frequency and in the quality of constructive comments to help students to improve. Marking in Key Stage 3 is unsatisfactory, with books going unmarked for too long.
115. The revision classes for students in Years 11 and 13 are particularly effective in raising standards. They often include timed tests and students are keen to take advantage of the opportunities offered to consolidate their knowledge and understanding and to improve their grades. There is an air of urgency and a determination to do well in these lessons.
116. The science department is well led and managed, with a solid nucleus of experienced and effective teachers many of whom hold positions of responsibility. There is a clear commitment to the on-going improvement of standards. Schemes of work are well planned, but the department has yet to ensure that the increased opportunities to use information technology are integrated into the curriculum of all students. Good links have been established with primary schools that ensure that all science teachers are aware of the prior attainment of their students when they arrive at the school and can plan their work accordingly. Assessments of the progress of individual students are carefully recorded, providing the basis for the early identification of students who are under-performing. Policies have been carefully developed for areas such as marking and homework; however, there is insufficient monitoring of the work of the department by those teachers holding posts of responsibility, so the implementation of policies is inconsistent.
117. Since the previous inspection, standards have remained above average despite a doubling of the proportion of students with special educational needs. The range of

investigations for students to undertake has been extended. A higher proportion of lessons now contain good teaching, although marking is still inconsistent. Overall the department has made good progress.

ART

118. In 1999 the proportion of students achieving A* to C grades in art at GCSE was well below the national average and students were less successful in art than in their other subjects. The results show a significant decline since 1997. The results at A level have been broadly in line with the national average for the last three years.
119. In work seen during the inspection standards of attainment at Key Stages 3 and 4 and in the sixth form are in line with the standards expected nationally. By the end of Key Stage 3, concepts of colour and painting skills are well established. Most students observe with good attention to detail and bring good understanding of form, perspective and scale to their work. Students' progress in drawing is more variable. In Year 9, there are examples of good drawing from higher attainers, but the work is under developed in middle and lower attainers. During Key Stage 3, students have good opportunities to develop their drawing skills in a variety of media, for example, during the inspection a Year 7 class were introduced to working with pen and ink, but the skills could be developed with more consistency through the key stage. Students have a satisfactory knowledge of the work and styles of a variety of artists and incorporate those styles into their own work.
120. The school claims that disruption to teaching caused by long term teacher absence, and groups that were too large for the art accommodation and for effective teaching were significant factors in the below average GCSE results of the last three years. These issues have been addressed and the standards of work of the present Year 11 students, seen during the inspection, are broadly in line with standards expected nationally. A number of students are behind, however, in preparing their work for assessment. At both Key Stages 3 and 4, work with information technology is below the level expected nationally. In the sixth form, students are working on A level and on GNVQ Advanced courses. In both cases, standards are in line with course expectations in all aspects of the work, but some students have only a limited range of style of their work. Students achieve appropriate standards at Key Stages 3 and 4 and achieve well in the sixth form.
121. The quality of teaching and learning is now good throughout the school. The meticulous planning of the good lessons sets a firm and constructive framework for students. They know exactly what is expected of them, and the expectations are high. All teachers have good subject knowledge and understanding, which enables them to provide good and effective technical support. In most lessons the pace is satisfactory and students work consistently hard as they develop their art skills and explore the creative possibilities of task in hand. The content and strategies for the lesson are clear, but expectations are not always sufficiently explicit. In all lessons, relationships and control are good. Students are well behaved and always ready to learn, they keep well to their tasks. Homework is used well to support learning. It is clear from the work seen that the disruption caused by staffing difficulties in the recent past have had a significant impact on the quality of teaching that students have received. Although they are now being taught well, students' achievements are only satisfactory rather than the good level which would usually be expected as a result of good teaching. This is because of slower progress in the past. The school has successfully addressed these problems

and restored the situation to its previous good level.

122. The requirements of the National Curriculum at Key Stage 3 are met, but opportunities to work with information technology are too limited. The department is well led and has a clear direction, but there is insufficient monitoring of teaching.
123. Since the last inspection the department has been through a period of disruption when standards declined and progress has been unsatisfactory. The issues that caused the decline, however, have now been resolved and standards are again similar to previous inspection. The quality of teaching is now better than that found at the time of the previous inspection.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

124. In 1999, the proportion of students achieving GCSE grades A* to C was in line with the national average. Results show a marked improvement in the overall design and technology A* to C grades since 1997. The 1999 results show that the proportion of girls achieving grades A* to C is significantly higher than the boys. Students tend to achieve similar results in design and technology to those in the other subjects that they study. Results at A level were below the national average in 1999.
125. In work seen during the inspection, attainment at the age of 14 is above the standard expected of students nationally for the end of Key Stage 3 and this represents a good level of achievement. Students show a good ability to analyse and draw conclusions using existing products. They gain a wide range of basic skills in designing and making products of good quality in food, graphics, resistant materials, systems and control. Students with special educational needs make good progress and are well supported to achieve good standards despite the fact that individual education plans lack clear targets for improvement. All students make good use of information technology in their work. For example, students designed and made a printed circuit board using a specialist computer program to help them both design and test their circuits. Lower attaining students are guided by the structure that teachers provide in the lessons. In food technology, students are well supported in planning their work using structured worksheets. They generate and use numerical data in the form of charts, graphs and food calculations to produce products of good quality. In graphics, students work at a particularly high level throughout Key Stage 3. They are taught a suitable range of two- and three-dimensional drawing skills and are able to apply these well-developed skills to their own design ideas. All students extend their skills and techniques considerably. This was seen in a Year 8 lesson where students were preparing information leaflets and promotional materials for a community facility of their own choice. Higher attaining students were able to apply well developed graphic skills combined with the use of information technology in the form of scanned images and maps to produce very professional work with depth and detail in the content of their writing. Lower attaining students are able to apply all the basic skills to improve the overall presentation and quality of their work.
126. In the work seen during the inspection, attainment at the age of 16 is above the level expected nationally. This is higher than the standards suggested by the GCSE results in 1999 and reflects the continuation in the trend of improving standards over recent years. Students are now achieving well. All students use a wide range of investigation and research skills, and evaluate strengths and weaknesses effectively as they progress with their design ideas. They develop work of very good quality, including a

range of making skills that also take account of large-scale manufacturing processes. For example, in Year 11 students design storage units that demonstrate that they are able to design and make a wide variety of storage products. Higher attaining students are able to produce good quality products that include advanced making skills such as dovetail joints and the designs were supported with accurate, well-developed plans. Folder work includes the testing of processes, materials and finishes as they develop their final designs. All the work reflects a high degree of research to gain such a broad range of ideas and to include the variety of construction techniques, some using computer aided design. Higher attaining students are also able to apply accuracy and depth to the development of their designs in all material areas. Lower attaining students are able to design products well suited to the courses and are supported by their teachers to complete work of good quality. The work seen of students currently on the A level course is at the standard expected nationally and they are achieving satisfactory standards. In general, practical skills are good but students lack depth of knowledge and understanding.

127. The quality of teaching and learning at both Key Stages 3 and 4 and in the sixth form is good. Teachers use interesting methods, enabling students to understand difficult concepts. This was seen in a Year 8 resistant materials lesson, where the teacher used examples of mobiles, with and without motion combined with interesting examples of work of the famous inventor of mobiles Alexander Calder. As a result of the basic knowledge of mobiles being taught alongside the interesting historical information, the students showed a high interest and learning was good. This was particularly effective, giving students the opportunity to evaluate product development strategies and also to identify the need for good quality control. Teachers usually plan their lessons well and have high expectation of their students. However, middle attaining students tend only to make satisfactory progress in the mixed ability classes whereas the higher attainers and those with special educational needs make good progress because of the extra support that they receive. Some teachers succeed in stretching students of all levels of attainment, but this is not consistent across the department. All teachers place a good emphasis on developing technical vocabulary when students record their findings; this is having a positive effect on the development of the students' literacy skills. Students form good relationships with their teachers and work hard for them. Students behave well because they know what standards are, and are not, acceptable. the pace of lessons is appropriate. The revision program for Year 11 students, consisting of a variety of tasks to sustain the interest of the students and to consolidate their understanding, is particularly effective in improving GCSE results.
128. The department is well managed and benefits from a strong team approach. There is a appropriate system in place to monitor and record the attainment of students, and this is beginning to have a positive effect on standards. However, the information gathered from this is still underused.
129. Good progress has been made since the previous inspection. The extra funding brought about by the school's technology college status has been targeted well at raising standards. As a result, attainment has improved at Key Stages 3 and 4 and GCSE results have risen. There were no clear judgements on teaching in the previous report.

GEOGRAPHY

130. In the 1999 GCSE examination, the proportions of students gaining grades A* to C was well above the national average with girls attaining higher than boys. Results in geography in 1999 were broadly in line with the school's average for all subjects. The results show a marked improvement on those achieved in recent years. In the 1999 A level examination the student's achievements were above the national average but lower than the excellent results achieved in 1998.
131. In work seen during the inspection shows that students' attainment at Key Stage 3 is in line with the level expected nationally, whilst at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form standards are above that expected of students of the same age nationally. Most students achieve appropriate standards, given their prior attainment, at Key Stage 3, but a minority in the early years are not achieving high enough. Students achieve well at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. Students with special educational needs achieve well, despite the vague targets on the individual education plans.
132. At the age of 14, most students are competent in a range of map and graphical skills, though accuracy and good presentation are weaker for a minority than is normally seen. Most students show good knowledge of places, particularly the local environment, when they undertake research and evaluate issues such as the provision for tourism in the area. Lower attaining students successfully recall knowledge of continents and countries from memory, whilst gifted and talented students understand the reasons for the climate characteristics in Southeast Asia. Most students have an appropriate knowledge of the physical landscape and understand the processes resulting in earthquakes and how people adapt their lives to conditions, but a minority writes vaguely about conditions without giving sufficient explanation.
133. At the age of 16, students consolidate their map skills; they use Ordnance Survey maps confidently to describe the landscape and represent information in a variety of ways. Most students are competent in the application of number in drawing graphs and use data to illustrate information. Most acquire a good understanding of a range of geographical terminology and processes, such as in the study of coasts. In coursework students develop good research skills when undertaking investigations into urban traffic conditions, though for a minority of boys in particular, ideas and written explanations are insufficiently developed. Students with special educational needs understand terms about volcanoes and earthquakes and can name and locate examples.
134. At the age of 18, students' written work is of a very good standard. They are self-reliant in taking notes and essay writing is at a level above that usually seen. Gifted and talented students make good links between written and illustrative work, although the writing of others is sometimes generalised and insufficient use is made of examples. Most have acquired knowledge of economic terms such as 'de-industrialisation' and apply these to studies of real places. Good standards are evident in students' individual assignments. Research on topics such as the re-development of Derby is well presented and illustrated with detailed, written analysis. In some work however, there is a weakness in analysis of data.
135. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory at Key Stage 3 and good at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. At Key Stage 3 teachers make good use of resources that meet the different learning needs of students and sustain their interest. Lower attaining students for example, benefited from clear guidance of what they were expected to write, whilst students with special educational needs made good progress

in a lesson that used well chosen books and materials to ensure that the students were adequately supported. Teachers plan lessons effectively and incorporate a variety of tasks that helps sustain concentration and build on earlier work. The marking of students' work is mostly satisfactory but some teachers do not mark work often enough or in sufficient detail to ensure that students know where they have gone wrong. At Key Stage 4 teachers have a very good knowledge and understanding of the examination requirements and this makes a significant contribution to the good standards achieved. Year 11 students responded well to high teacher expectation of attitudes and commitment in a lesson on water supply. This led to sustained concentration and application and ensured that very good progress was made. Teachers give very good support and guidance to students in lessons and in extra-curricular time. This promotes self-confidence; helps improve understanding of topics and examination techniques and the raising of standards at GCSE. The most effective lessons in the sixth form have clear objectives and tasks that provide challenge for even the highest attainers. The teacher in a Year 12 lesson on the economic development of regions made good use of assessed essays and mark schemes to improve students' understanding of how to improve their writing and consequently their grades at A level. All students made very good progress in this lesson. Occasionally, however, students make insufficient progress. This is particularly true in lessons where long periods are spent simply copying notes.

136. The leadership of the department is very good with teachers and students well supported. Morale is high. There is a clear focus on raising attainment. Arrangements for the assessment of attainment throughout the subject are good, particularly at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form where good use is made of data to monitor progress and set targets for improvement. The department is part of the school's trial for self evaluation and this is working very well.

137. Progress since the last inspection has been good. Results at GCSE have improved and the above average standards at A level have been maintained. The quality of teaching continues to be good.

HISTORY

138. The proportion of students achieving grades A* to C in the GCSE examinations in 1999 was well above the national average. The proportion gaining the highest grades of A* and A was well above average. Girls achieved better results than boys did but both achieved results that were significantly above their respective national averages. Students achieved better results in history than they did in the other subjects that they studied. These results continued the trend of the last three years during which standards of achievement in history at GCSE have risen at a higher rate than results nationally. In the 1999 A level examinations the results in history were above the national average, which maintains the situation of recent years.

139. In work seen during the inspection students' standards of attainment at the age of 14 are above the level expected for students of the same age nationally and they are achieving well. Students have a secure knowledge of the main events and people of the periods studied, and use their knowledge to make links between events. For example, in a lesson on the English Civil War, students of a wide range of attainment knew that the religious changes brought about by Henry VIII help to account for the opposing views of supporters of Parliament and the King in the following century. Students of higher attainment also successfully demonstrate their knowledge and

understanding in both short and extended written answers. In work on the changes that took place in people's work in England in the 18th and early 19th centuries, for instance, they analyse the causes and effects of the changes and support their opinions with appropriate reference to evidence from historical sources. Students of lower attainment find it more difficult to select evidence that is sufficiently relevant and detailed to sustain a reasoned argument in a piece of extended writing. Their writing, consequently, describes and narrates rather than analyses and explains reasons for actions and events.

140. The proportion of students who choose to continue with the study of history to the age of 16 is well above the national figure. In the work seen during the inspection the students' standards of attainment at the age of 16 are well above those expected for students of the same age nationally and they are achieving very well indeed. Students show very good knowledge of the topics they study, both in their oral responses and in short written answers to questions based on sources of historical information. For example students of all levels of attainment understand the major developments in medicine from ancient Egypt to modern times. Higher attainers use their knowledge to evaluate, in longer pieces of writing, the significance of contributions made to advances in medicine by such diverse people as William Harvey and Florence Nightingale. However, students of lower attainment produce answers that describe such contributions rather than evaluate them, finding it more difficult to select and use sufficient detail from historical sources to sustain a point of view in an extended answer. Similarly, higher attainers explain the reasons for the passing of the Poor Law Amendment Act in 1834, whilst students who are less successful write more descriptive answers about what life was like for inmates of the new workhouses established under the Act.
141. At the age of 18 students achieve well and standards are better than those expected nationally. Students deal successfully with complex, and often contentious, issues both orally and in their writing. They build upon their extensive and thorough work folders so that their discussions in class are informed and lively, as in a debate about the relative strengths and weaknesses of Gladstone and Disraeli as party leaders and Prime ministers. Such well developed skills of enquiry and analysis are also evident in essays so that questions, such as that posed on whether or not the Weimar Republic in post 1918 Germany was doomed from the start, are well researched, carefully planned and clearly argued.
142. The quality of teaching and learning is good at Key Stage 3. Students benefit from knowledgeable and enthusiastic teachers who plan lessons that are carefully structured to meet the needs of students of all levels of attainment. Teachers make the aims of lessons clear so that students know what is to be done and what is expected of them. A good range of activities captures the interest and involvement of students of all levels of attainment and students with special educational needs progress at a rate which matches that of other students in the groups. The impact of such effective teaching on students' learning was evident, for instance, in a lesson when students were identifying potential causes of disease from a picture of a street scene in a medieval town. The interest of all students was engaged throughout the lesson and the sense of enjoyment very evident. Such lessons, however, also show the care with which students' literacy skills are developed. Appropriate strategies for individual and class reading were supported by good preparation of students, by teachers, for differentiated writing tasks providing good challenge to students of all levels of attainment. The use of such strategies, including structured writing frames to guide the construction of students' written answers, and the display of lists of key terms in all classrooms is a feature of the

drive to raise standards of literacy. Teachers mark students' work regularly but the frequency of longer, more analytical, comments on students' work, aimed at informing them how to improve, is limited.

143. The quality of teaching and learning in Key Stage 4 is very good. This was evident, for example, in lessons on attitudes to the reforms to the Poor Law in the 1830s. Teachers had high expectations of the work rate of students, the resources used were well matched to the different literary strengths of the students, and the tasks set were both well explained at the outset and well summarised at the end of lessons. Similarly, the students were helped to improve their observational and interpretative skills by the informed guidance of the teacher in GCSE revision lessons where they were required to add their own knowledge to evidence extracted from sources provided on the examination paper. The success students achieve at GCSE is related to the properly demanding pace of lessons which was maintained in an impressive manner in the final lessons of the course prior to the examinations. The standard of marking of students' work is good, with frequent use of full comments that analyse the strengths and weaknesses of the work and offer good advice on how to improve. Progress made by students in Years 12 and 13 is good. The features of good teaching continue, as in the revision lessons for A level. Students were required to show both their knowledge of topics and issues and their analysis of what is required to answer specific examples of examination questions successfully. That students develop their analytical and discursive skills effectively over their time on the course is illustrated in the amount and relevance of supportive detail contained in their essays. For instance, a student who, early in the course, tended to a narrative style that did not develop important points in explaining the failure of successive British governments to solve problems in 19th century Ireland, produced an essay in Year 13 which used detailed information well to examine how far the Liberal Government of 1906-14 departed from the Liberalism of Gladstone.
144. The leadership and management of history are very good. There is a clear view of what constitutes good provision for education in history and how this contributes to the school's aims for high standards. Teachers of the subject share that view and work very well as a team. There is a common commitment, for instance, to procedures that monitor the development made by students. The analysis of students' prior attainment and on-going evaluation of the impact on students' progress of teaching and learning strategies plays a significant part in the high standards achieved by students in the subject. The provision of extra classes, outside normal lesson times, for students preparing for GCSE and A level examinations is a further indication of the importance attached to helping students to achieve the best of which they are capable. The department is playing a major role in the development of the school's systems for self evaluation. These are proving most effective, with detailed lesson observations that clearly identify relative strengths and weaknesses in teaching so that all teachers may benefit from the activity.
145. The department has made good progress since the previous inspection. Standards of students' attainment have improved in Key Stage 3 and been maintained at the previous high levels in both GCSE and A level examinations. The quality of teaching has improved significantly.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

146. Results for the short GCSE information technology course were well above the national average in 1999. They have showed steady improvement since the last inspection and over the last three years from above average to well above average. Sixth form students gained a 100% pass rate in the 1999 intermediate GNVQ examination. About one third gained distinction and half gained merit grades. The results are above the national averages.
147. In the work seen during the inspection, attainment in Year 7 lessons is near national expectations but progress is good so that by the end of Key Stage 3 students are attaining above the level expected nationally. The knowledge gained in Year 7 lessons enables students to make use of the cross curricular input during Years 8 and 9 and levels of achievement are good. Standards of desk top publishing techniques are high and students have a good grasp of the basic techniques for using spreadsheets. Students all have a good grounding in simple programming skills through writing instructions to control the movements of a 'turtle' on screen. Some students improve their keyboard skills by attending an optional class during lunch breaks.
148. In the work seen during the inspection, attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 is generally above the level expected nationally and students are achieving well. In specific information technology lessons, students are attaining well above average standards but standards in other areas of the curriculum are not as high. Where teaching has come mainly through other subjects of the curriculum, progress is not as good but attainment is still above the level expected nationally. Students use, and have a good understanding of, spreadsheets to calculate profit and loss for a small business and to model and investigate the cost of various designs for a bridge. Text based work is often very well developed, such as the history projects which are comprehensively word processed and include additional pictorial information making good use of graphics. Students have a very good grasp of how information technology can have an impact on different aspects of culture. In music, for example, students use information technology for composing and printing scores and identify how trends in music have changed since the advent of electronic sounds. All sixth form students study information technology. The sixth form students show considerable motivation as they study information technology and attain well during lessons. Those who take examined courses achieve well across all aspects of their work. A high proportion of students recognise the potential advantages of information technology to society.
149. The quality of teaching and learning is good throughout the school. Students with special needs are encouraged to become independent and visibly increase in confidence. The worksheets use are carefully constructed to become progressively more difficult and are suitable for all abilities. Those who do not have an extra member of staff to support them are sometimes helped by their peers. However, they are sometimes left to struggle quietly and so make slower progress. Gifted students are recognised at an early stage and encouraged to make good progress by additional tasks. The great majority of students enjoy learning about information technology and appreciate its importance. Many students reinforce their knowledge by using computers at home. Behaviour during lessons and at other times is very good and few students have any difficulty with concentration even though the lessons are long. The teachers have a good knowledge of their subject and use this well to develop many projects that have a significant impact on the students' personal development of social and moral issues and business techniques. Useful quick tests are often included that consolidate work from previous lessons and allow teachers to assess progress quickly and

efficiently. The use of colour printing is encouraged and this provides additional motivation for students.

150. The use of information and communication technology by many departments is providing a significant input to the curriculum. For example, word processing, use of spreadsheets, computer aided management and design are used in technology. Science uses data logging for measurement of temperature. In mathematics graphic calculators are used to identify the characteristics of graphs. Other departments are regular users of CD ROMs. Some opportunities are limited by the skill and confidence of individual teachers. Students use word processing techniques to improve the presentation of project work in most subject areas.
151. The department is led well by a co-ordinator who has a clear vision of the information technology needs of all students and the developments required to keep up to date. The monitoring and recording of timetabled courses is effective and the analysis of data on progress provides a guide to future planning. However, greater monitoring of progress in other areas of the curriculum is required to ensure that the data on an individual student's progress is accurate. Learning resources are good owing to the advantages of technology college status. These resources are used heavily at all times of the day. The school has good links with local primary school teachers, who receive information technology training at the school. The school fails to meet the statutory requirement to provide all parents with a written report on their child's progress each year.
152. Good progress has been made since the previous inspection. Standards of attainment have risen and there has been a significant improvement in standards at GCSE. There were no clear judgements in the previous report against which to evaluate the improvement in teaching.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

153. Overall, students are achieving satisfactory standards, given their prior levels of attainment, throughout the school. In 1999 the proportions of students achieving grades A* to C at GCSE was close to the national averages in French and German; the percentage of students achieving the very highest grades in French was well above average. Girls do better than boys by a larger margin than would normally be expected. Students do not perform as well in German as they do in the other subjects that they study. Students gain results in French that are similar to the other subjects that they study. Over the past three years, French results have been maintained at approximately the same level but results in German have declined dramatically. The students following the Certificate of Achievement course in Spanish have gained good results with several achieving a distinction. Results at A level for German and French were close to the national averages but the number of students entered is low.
154. In the work seen during the inspection students are attaining at the standard expected nationally by the age of 14. Many students understand a variety of tenses but are less accurate when speaking and writing. They can hold conversations on a range of topics such as their family or shopping with reasonable pronunciation and fluency. During the key stage students improve their reading and speaking skills but make slightly less progress in listening and writing. Students find it difficult to listen to tapes as the acoustics are very poor in many of the rooms. Students with special educational needs make satisfactory progress and talented students are encouraged to take the GCSE

early.

155. In the work seen during the inspection students are attaining the standard expected nationally for French and German by the age of 16. Students work on a range of topics but do not frequently write at length in a variety of styles. Students can answer questions on short texts and extracts from tapes. The writing and speaking of the highest attaining students is accurate and includes some complex language and vocabulary. Lower achieving students make errors when writing, especially in spelling and gender.
156. By age of 18 students achieve standards which are in line with the standards expected at A level. The work of the current Year 13 in German is of a particularly good quality. Most students understand complex language and ideas on subjects such as environmental pollution and the cinema and write well-informed essays on literature. Their writing is generally grammatically accurate but lacks the use of complex expressions and there is little variety in register or style. Their spoken language is of a variable quality: often it lacks accuracy and fluency but on occasions it is idiomatic and students speak confidently and at length. Most students produce good work when they have prepared it in advance but find it difficult to speak or write spontaneously.
157. The quality of teaching is satisfactory and brings about satisfactory learning. Teachers have an appropriate command of the language and present a satisfactory model for students to follow but opportunities to improve listening skills are missed as teachers over use English particularly when giving instructions to tasks. Most lessons are well planned with a variety of resources and activities. A particularly good example of this was seen with a Year 10 class where students made good progress when they revised the language of directions then moved on to oral work integrating vocabulary from other topic areas. In almost all lessons, students are clear about what they have to do to complete a task. Marking, however, is often perfunctory and there are inconsistencies across the department. Students are not given enough guidance on what they could do to improve their work from comments on work and errors sometimes go unnoticed. Students are more often given helpful verbal advice during lessons. With some exceptions there is insufficient variation in teaching styles and this is often linked to a lack of suitable resources such as reading materials and cassette recorders with headphones or software. The shortage of resources to supplement the textbook, particularly for reading, means that students are not often given opportunities to work independently of the teacher. The pace of lessons is sometimes too slow; students are not given time limits in which to complete tasks and consequently did not achieve enough. Higher attaining students are challenged well; for example, they are expected to perform speaking tasks from memory and to work on complex texts covering a variety of topic areas. Speaking skills are developed well during lessons and the foreign language assistants contribute significantly to this process. There are, however, few examples of students being given extended pieces of writing using a range of styles. Students rarely redraft their work to improve accuracy, presentation and style except at A Level. Students are encouraged to record grammar and vocabulary systematically and exercise books are usually well organised, which assists with revision. Students are encouraged to behave well and respectfully towards each other and to the teacher. Relationships are good.
158. The accommodation is inadequate in many respects. The acoustics of several rooms are so poor that listening to tapes in order to extract information is rendered enormously difficult, a problem which is exacerbated by poor quality tapes. Teachers waste much time replaying tapes or even reading out transcripts and students often achieve lower

grades in the listening examination than they do in reading and speaking. There are no class sets of dictionaries and very few reading materials beyond the textbook, so students find it difficult to work independently of the teacher.

159. Since the last inspection progress has been unsatisfactory. The proportion of students achieving A* to C grades at GCSE has remained similar in French but have decreased dramatically in German, although many more are now entered for the examination. Only a very few students do not study a language and there is now an appropriate range of courses to suit the needs of all the students throughout the school. The quality of teaching has declined and teachers no longer sustain the use of French, German or Spanish during the lesson.

MUSIC

160. In 1999 the proportion of students achieving A* to C grades in music at GCSE was well above the national average. Results have remained similar over the past three years, but numbers opting to take examination courses in music have been small. They have increased for the present examination groups. At A level, the number of students studying music is too small to make statistical comparisons meaningful.

161. Work seen during the inspection, and recent recordings of students' compositions and performances, show standards that are in line with national expectations at the end of Key Stage 3, above expectations at the end of Key Stage 4 and in line with course expectations for the sixth form. At Key Stage 3, students work mostly on electronic keyboards and they develop satisfactory keyboard skills for workshop use. Skills of pitch and rhythm are generally in line with expectations, but a number of examples demonstrate weaker skills in pulse and meter. Students listen carefully to music and use an appropriate vocabulary in discussion. For much of the time during Key Stage 3, students work in groups or pairs arranging and composing music. They develop good compositional skills and have a good knowledge of musical form and constructional device. Students' understanding and use of chords and harmony are particular strengths. This was clearly demonstrated in the recorded work of Year 9 students in a project of 'Blues' style improvisations. Overall, however, students have insufficient opportunities to work with a variety of tuned and untuned instruments, to develop sensitive control of subtle changes within musical elements and to investigate a diversity of sound sources. At Key Stage 4, students have good performance skills. Many of the students who opt to take the subject at examination level play instruments. They use their instrumental experience and technique to support a good standard of composition and arrangement. The sixth form student is working with appropriate rigour on the musical styles of the renaissance.

162. The progress that students make and their achievements in relation to previous work is satisfactory at Key Stage 3 and in the sixth form, and is good at Key Stage 4. Students with special educational needs also make satisfactory progress. At Key Stage 4, able students are stretched by the high expectations demanded of them and the group has a clear, corporate spirit that is pleased and confident in its high achievement.

163. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory at Key Stage 3 and good at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. All teachers have good subject knowledge and understanding, which enables them to provide effective technical support. The teachers' self confidence in their personal musical standards promotes well the students' confidence in their own work. In good lessons, expectations are high and the pace of the lessons is well controlled. The lessons are rigorous and demanding of

students, who react with obvious interest and excitement. Students, of all levels of attainment, work hard and gain satisfaction from their achievements as they develop skills and understanding in music. At Key Stage 3, lessons are not planned with the same clarity of purpose as the lessons for older students. The content and strategies for the lesson are clear, but learning aims are not well identified from assessments in previous work and there are no different aims for the groups in the class. The match of task to students' levels of attainment is not so well judged. In all lessons, relationships and control is good. Students are well behaved and always ready to learn, they particularly enjoy practical work. Students support each other very well in music lessons and co-operation in group work is good. In most lessons, at all key stages students make their own musical decisions and take responsibility for their work. Homework is generally used well to support learning. The tasks given for homework are appropriate and marking is positive.

164. Accommodation for music is poor on both of the school's sites. The subject is taught in classrooms that have insufficient space for group work and the use of acoustic instruments. The room on the upper site is too small for the size of class using the room. Opportunities for students to extend their musical experience through extra-curricular activities are good; there is a good variety and number of activities that are well supported, and some of them are of good quality. There are two wind bands, a brass group, a rock band and a choir. In all 72 students learn instruments. The subject meets the requirements of the National Curriculum for Key Stage 3 and makes a strong contribution to students' experience of information technology, but opportunities for students, at Key Stage 3, to work with acoustic sound are limited by the accommodation.

165. Progress since the previous inspection has been satisfactory. The quality of teaching and standards of attainment have remained broadly similar. The areas identified for improvement remain, however, largely unresolved. Accommodation for music is still poor and the breadth of the curriculum at Key Stage 3 is insufficiently broad because there is still a limited range of sound sources.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

166. At the time of the inspection National Curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 3 were in progress using the gymnasium. Lessons at Key Stage 3 were only observed in Years 7 and 8 and no judgement on attainment at the end of the key stage can be made. The school offered no GCSE or A level course last year.

167. Students in Years 7 and 8 were experiencing their first lessons of athletics. Students are introduced to a variety of athletics activities and they attain standards that are at broadly average for their age in a variety of running, throwing and jumping events. Using adapted equipment, boys and girls in Years 7 and 8 show good technique in the discus. Boys in year 8 have a good knowledge of the technique of javelin throwing. Better performers in both activities show good style and efficiency of performance. In running events, students understand the need for pacing although some boys in Year 8 had some difficulty in completing a middle distance event. Students understand the rules of the various events, they readily take responsibility for accurately measuring their efforts. Students know how to warm up but seldom take responsibility for this part of the lesson.

168. At Key Stage 4 students achieve standards which are average for their age.

Achievement in athletics and cricket is average and good in tennis at GCSE. This year the school will enter its first group of students for GCSE. Students at both key stages know the importance and the beneficial effect of exercise in maintaining a healthy life style. They understand the need for a thorough warm up. At Key Stage 4 students show good knowledge of fitness and are able to plan and lead a comprehensive warm up routine. With guidance, Year 11 students have produced good fitness projects which are well presented using information technology. They are able to test their programme and safely use a variety of fitness machines. GCSE students achieve a good standard in tennis. They play good quality fore and backhand strokes with good anticipation and movement to the path of the ball.

169. Students' attitudes to learning are good, as they were at the time of the last inspection. The standard of kit is high and levels of participation good. Students enjoy their lessons and most are enthusiastic and display a very positive attitude to learning. They are very well behaved and this makes a significant contribution to a safe learning environment. Students listen attentively concentrate and co-operate in various sized groups. They readily share equipment and are careful when carrying a variety of athletic equipment. Relationships between teachers and students are very good.
170. The quality of teaching is good at Key Stage 3 and satisfactory at Key Stage 4. Teachers know their students well and the good relationships they establish make a significant contribution to the good discipline and co-operative atmosphere in lessons. All lessons are well planned and activities are structured so that safety is assured. In Years 7 and 8 students make good progress and improve their skills knowledge and understanding in various athletics events and health related exercise. Excellent use is made of differentiated equipment which students can easily handle enabling them to develop their technique. Where opportunities are created for students to observe and evaluate performance they make appropriate coaching points. This was not a feature of every lesson. Students at Key Stage 4 are achieving satisfactory standards given their levels of prior attainment. Where they are given some responsibility for their learning they make good progress in planning and evaluating and show some leadership skills. Students with special needs make good progress because their teachers know their needs, arrange suitable practices and use differentiated equipment. Where in class support is provided this proves effective. Teachers have good subject knowledge and well designed practices ensure that students are kept interested and time is well used. However in some lessons insufficient opportunity is given for students to observe and evaluate performance.
171. The department is well managed by an experienced head of department supported by enthusiastic colleagues. There is a good programme of extra curricular activities. Teams are entered in a variety of competitions with some success. Students have been selected to represent the area and county. At the time of the inspection the school was informed that it had been successful in gaining the Sports Mark awarded by Sport England this reflects well on the department.
172. Good progress has been made since the last inspection. Teaching has improved at Key Stage 3. A GCSE course is now firmly established and physical education is also available to the sixth form.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

173. GCSE results have been well above the national average over the past three years,

with a significant rise in the percentage of students gaining the higher A* to C grades in 1999. There are too few students studying A level to make statistical comparisons meaningful.

174. In the work seen during the inspection, attainment at the age of 14 is above the level expected in the Agreed Syllabus. Students have a good basic knowledge of Judaism and Buddhism. They know the Five Pillars of Islam and can explain the details of the Hajj Pilgrimage. Students have a good general knowledge of Sikhism and understand the significance of some ceremonies such as the amrit ceremony. They know many of the specific words and terms associated with Sikhism.
175. In the work seen during the inspection, attainment at the age of 16 is well above average. A high proportion of students studied religious education to GCSE last year and this year almost all students are entered for the examination. Students appreciate the importance and meaning of festivals such as Eid. They understand well social and moral issues such as those presented by relationships, poverty, prejudice abortion and the environment. They possess an excellent understanding of the place of religion in modern society. They acquire close knowledge of the main tenets of the Christian faith and can quote appropriately from scripture.
176. The present Year 13 students following the modular A level course are achieving well above the national average. In Years 12 and 13 students study complex philosophical and theological thinking and use good critical faculty in addressing topics such as "The Wisdom of Solomon", in theory and in application. They present a full range of arguments for the Sanctity of Life versus the Quality of Life. They read in the appropriate width and depth for their studies and select and use the arguments of a wide range of writers to evaluate the concepts. They use language with precision and for maximum clarity and meaning.
177. Throughout the school, students are taught the skills of analysis and evaluation formally in most lessons. In GCSE and A Level studies students are taught to read critically and to understand the writers' viewpoints.
178. Teaching is very good across all key stages. Students achieve very well in this subject making very good progress in their lessons. The well above average results at GCSE have been achieved in only one lesson per week, which is half of the national average time for a GCSE course. There is a very good academic approach in lessons and students are taught how to look at the issues in depth. In Years 10 and 11 students cover a wide range of work in a short period of time, which means that the topics are covered at a brisk pace. There is a very good volume of work covered in each lesson. The study is done in good depth with close attention to the philosophical aspects of the subject. There is a studious atmosphere in all lessons and students are challenged to think in this subject and to understand the philosophies of the major world religions. All lessons are well structured and interesting. Students show interest in their work, concentrate very well and behave impeccably in most lessons. Teachers have excellent relationships with their students and interest and involvement are achieved with apparent ease. Students are expected to learn and apply knowledge and do so impressively. Assessment and marking are good, and students are given clear guidance on what they have to do to improve. Religious education makes a very good contribution to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. It also makes a good contribution to students' literacy by paying attention to vocabulary, spelling and the skills of analysis and evaluation.

179. The new head of department provides very good leadership, characterised by excellent knowledge and understanding of the subject and a lively and dynamic approach. The monitoring of the work of the department is most thorough and actions are taken to improve even the areas of highest performance. The school, however, does not meet the statutory requirement to provide religious education for all students in the sixth form.
180. Progress since the last inspection has been good. All the good features in the last inspection report have been maintained and standards have risen. The quality of teaching has improved significantly.

VOCATIONAL COURSES

181. Two students studied and were successful at GNVQ advanced level manufacturing in 1999. One student gained a merit and the other a pass. All students studying GNVQ intermediate level information technology passed, of whom two gained distinctions and three gained merits. Four students studied GNVQ intermediate manufacturing, of whom three gained passes.
182. There are currently ten students studying manufacturing to GNVQ advanced level and seven students studying to intermediate level. These students are achieving satisfactory standards that are in line with course requirements. The quality and standard of project work was very good, although the students have limited techniques for developing and testing their ideas. The standards achieved by the two students studying art to GNVQ intermediate level are also in line with course expectations. The 14 students studying information technology to GNVQ intermediate level are achieving well and attaining standards that are above the level expected nationally. Students demonstrate good interaction skills and give constructive feedback to their peers.
183. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers have good knowledge of both their subject and their students. They plan lessons carefully, making not only the aim of the lesson clear but also relating it to the performance criteria. This ensures that all students are aware of what they are meant to be doing and the standard they have to be working towards. It is this approach that has resulted in considerable higher level achievement, particularly in information technology. Teachers provide stimulating learning activities for students of all levels of attainment ensuring that students with special educational needs are able to make progress which matches that of other students in the group. Teachers have high expectations of behaviour and effort and students are challenged appropriately. Students share the teacher's enthusiasm, become fully involved in all the activities provided, enjoy the lesson and learn quickly and efficiently. For example, in one GNVQ lesson the students were able to undertake very sensitive role-plays and provide constructive feedback for each other. They were not embarrassed, supported each other well and demonstrated excellent interaction skills. The students had been taught to take control of their own learning and were able to relate the role-play exercise not only to the vocational unit they were studying but also to the key skills communications unit. The most successful lessons had a high vocational context and benefited from being assessed mainly through practical projects.
184. The department has made very good progress since the previous inspection. Several new courses have been successfully introduced and vocational education is now a key feature of the school.