

INSPECTION REPORT

Samuel Ward Upper School

Haverhill

LEA area: Suffolk

Unique Reference Number: 124852

Headteacher: Mr P Roberts

Reporting inspector: Mrs G Kayembe
2901

Dates of inspection: 22nd – 26th November 1999

Under OFSTED contract number: 708264

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

© Crown Copyright 1999

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

Under the Education (Schools) Act 1992 and the Education Act 1993, the school must provide a copy of this report and/or its summary free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
Type of control:	County
Age range of pupils:	13 –18 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Chalkstone Way Haverhill Suffolk CB9 0LD
Telephone number:	01440 761511
Fax number:	01440 761899
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr B Shepstone
Date of previous inspection:	March 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members	Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Mrs G K Kayembe	Sixth form	Characteristics of the school Attainment and progress Teaching Leadership and management
Mrs J Goodchild		Attitudes, behaviour and personal development Attendance Support, guidance and pupils' welfare Links with parents and the community Accommodation
Mrs F Bradley	Mathematics	Assessment
Ms J Boulton	Physical education	
Mr R Bulman	Modern foreign languages	Efficiency
Mr H Davies	Geography Religious education	Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development
Dr J Harvey	Music	
Mrs L Kaufmann	Design and technology Information technology Equal opportunities	
Mr A Lemon	Art Special educational needs	
Dr C Millband	Science	Staffing and learning resources
Mrs E Raitt	English Drama	Curriculum
Mr D Walters	History	

The inspection contractor was:

Bench Marque Limited
National Westminster Bank Chambers
Victoria Street
Burnham-On-Sea
Somerset TA8 1AN
Tele: 01278 795022

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

The Registrar
The Office for Standards in Education

Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London WC2B 6SE

REPORT CONTENTS

Paragraph

MAIN FINDINGS

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

KEY ISSUES FOR ACTION

INTRODUCTION

Characteristics of the school 1 - 8
Key indicators

PART A: ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Educational standards achieved by pupils at the school

Attainment and progress 9 - 27
Attitudes, behaviour and personal development 28 - 32
Attendance 33

Quality of education provided

Teaching 34 - 43
The curriculum and assessment 44 - 59
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development 60 - 64
Support, guidance and pupils' welfare 65 - 71
Partnership with parents and the community 72 - 75

The management and efficiency of the school

Leadership and management 76 - 85
Staffing, accommodation and learning resources 86 - 95
The efficiency of the school 96 - 101

PART B: CURRICULUM AREAS AND SUBJECTS

English, mathematics and science 102 - 142

Other subjects or courses 143 - 217

PART C: INSPECTION DATA

Summary of inspection evidence 218 - 221

Data and indicators

MAIN FINDINGS

What the school does well

- The school is very well led and managed. There is a very clear direction for future development, shared by staff and governors.
- There is a dynamic and successful programme for school improvement which has helped to raise the standards of pupils' work at Key Stage 3 and 4. Boys' results at GCSE in particular have undergone remarkable improvement and were well above the national average for boys in 1999.
- The quality of teaching is good overall and helps pupils to make good progress.
- The school fosters a very positive ethos within which pupils thrive as learners and grow in confidence and self-esteem.
- Pupils' spiritual, social, moral and cultural development is very well promoted and contributes very effectively to their personal development.
- There are very good procedures for assessing pupils' work.
- Arrangements for staff development are very good.
- There is a very successful partnership with parents and links with the community are excellent.
- Provision for extra-curricular activities is very good.
- Attention to support and guidance for pupils and to their welfare is strong with very good emphasis on pupils' academic as well as personal development.
- The school provides good value for money.

Where the school has weaknesses

- I. The standards achieved in A-level examinations are low. Although sixth form pupils achieve reasonable results given their prior attainment, there is room for improvement;
- II. Whilst teaching in science is satisfactory overall, there are weaknesses in some aspects, such as short-term planning, which hold back pupils' progress and attainment.

This is a good school with many strengths and few weaknesses. The governors' action plan

will set out how the weaknesses identified during the inspection are to be tackled. The plan will be sent to all parents and guardians of pupils at the school.

· How the school has improved since the last inspection

· The school has made better than expected progress in tackling the key issues from the last inspection and in improving itself. There have been good improvements in pupils' attainment, especially in English at Key Stage 3 and in the overall GCSE results. The school is amongst the top fifty schools nationally which show the greatest improvement in GCSE results between 1996 and 1999. The quality of teaching, which was a key issue for action, has also improved significantly since the previous inspection. Management systems have been sharpened so that there is now very good consistency in the implementation of plans and policies and much greater accountability of managers at all levels. The range and quality of work in technology has improved substantially and is now in line with national expectations. Time and resources available for religious education are now satisfactory and the school meets the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus at Key Stage 4, however, adequate provision has still not been made for religious education in the sixth form. The school still does not meet legal requirements for a daily act of collective worship.

Given the very good quality of leadership and management and the active involvement of governors, the well established drive for school improvement, the school is in a good position to continue to improve further.

Standards in subjects

The following table shows standards achieved by 14, 16 and 18 year-olds in national tests, GCSE and A/AS-level examinations in 1999:

Performance in:	Compared with all schools	Compared with similar schools*	Key	K
Key Stage 3	C	E	well above average above average average	A B C
GCSE Examinations	A	A	below average	D
A/AS-levels	E	N/A	well below average	E

*Similar schools are defined on the basis of the percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals.

The table above shows that the results in the end of Key Stage 3 tests for 1999 were in line with the average results of schools nationally. English results were above average and better than in mathematics or science. These results were well below the averages found in similar schools. However, the free school meals category the school has been placed in, and which gives it the well below average grading E, does not fully reflect the pupils' backgrounds. Given that pupils' attainment on entry is below average, the school has done well to ensure that they reach national standards in mathematics and science and to exceed these in English.

GCSE results for 1999 were well above national averages and the averages found in similar schools. GCSE results are best in art, music, drama, English and English literature. GCSE results are well below average in French but improving steadily. In science, boys achieved similar results in GCSE examinations as boys nationally, but girls' results were significantly below the national average for girls, bringing the overall science results to a little below average.

Inspection evidence for present standards reflects the results of the 1999 National Curriculum tests and GCSE examinations in most subjects, but attainment in French at Key Stage 4 is much better due to continued work on improving standards. Attainment in science is also better and similar to the national averages.

The average points score at A-level was below average in 1998 and fell to well below average in 1999. Attainment as seen in lessons and from scrutiny of pupils' work is better than the A-level results, partly because pupils currently studying A-levels have come from Key Stage 4 with improved GCSE results.

Quality of teaching

	Overall quality	Most effective in:	Less effective in:
Year 9	Good	geography, English, music	science
Years 10-11	Good	art, English, geography, modern foreign languages, music	science
Sixth form	Good	business studies, drama, geography, music	
English	Good		
Mathematics	Satisfactory		

Inspectors make judgements about teaching in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory;

unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. 'Satisfactory' means that strengths outweigh any weaknesses.

The quality of teaching during the inspection was at least satisfactory in 97 per cent of lessons. In 64 per cent it is good or better, and in 21 per cent it is very good or better.

Other aspects of the school

Aspect	Comment
Behaviour	Good. The majority of pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. Some difficult pupils are generally well managed.
Attendance	Satisfactory and in line with national averages. Pupils arrive punctually to lessons.
Ethos*	Very good. A very effective learning environment has been established. This is an aspect the school has worked hard to promote and has done so very successfully. The very good ethos has a very positive impact on pupils' learning.
Leadership and management	Very good. The headteacher's consultative style of management has been very successful in establishing good teamwork and commitment to a common purpose. There is a good working partnership with governors, who are supportive and actively involved in the life of the school. Good monitoring of the school's work enables staff to have a clear view of its strengths and weaknesses.
Curriculum	The curriculum is broad and balanced. GNVQ courses are being established and provide a valuable alternative to A-levels for some pupils. There is scope for further development of vocational provision. Planning for steady development of pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding within subjects is sound at all key stages. The recent initiative on the use of literacy across the curriculum has been very effective in lifting standards in reading and writing.
Pupils with special educational needs	Good provision is made throughout the school, especially where specialist help is available and when pupils are withdrawn for focused work. Individual educational plans are sharp and well focused. As a result of the good provision, pupils with special educational needs make good progress.
Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good overall. Good for spiritual and moral and very good for social and cultural.
Staffing, resources and accommodation	Sound match of number and qualifications of teachers to curricular needs. Satisfactory provision for support staff. Very good provision for staff development. Good accommodation and sound provision of learning resources. A very well organised library is a stimulating resource popular with staff and pupils.
Value for money	Good.

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

.

The parents' views of the school

What most parents like about the school

They find it easy to approach the school.
 Their children like school.
 They are well informed about what is being taught and how well their children are getting on.
 The school enables their children to reach a good standard of work.
 The school's values and attitudes have a positive effect on their children.

What some parents are not happy about

A small minority were not happy about homework, with some expressing the view there was too much.

Inspection evidence largely supports parents' positive views of the school, but there is little evidence to justify their concerns about homework. In many subjects, homework provision is good, although in one or two the quality needs to improve. The school has done more work than many on developing and monitoring its homework policy. Representative staff, governors and parents have worked on a homework review as a result of which pupils were provided with logs that specify exactly how much work they should be doing at home for each subject. The guidelines given are appropriate and provide parents with a useful means of checking where pupils might be doing too much or too little.

KEY ISSUES FOR ACTION

In order to continue to improve standards of work, the headteacher, senior management team and governors should address the following issues:

Improve the standards of attainment in the sixth form by:

- extending the vocational provision in order to provide all pupils with courses they are well suited to;
- developing the use of target setting so that it improves and drives pupils' progress effectively;
- improving pupils' active involvement in lessons;
- improving the liaison with the other school within the sixth form consortium in art, history and physical education.
(paras: 10, 14, 28, 45, 55, 105)

In science, improving the quality of teaching in order to raise attainment, particularly the attainment of girls by;

- building on the best practice in the department in establishing high expectations of the quality of pupils' work and behaviour in all lessons;
- ensuring that all lessons are thoroughly planned particularly in relation to how key ideas and principles will be taught in order for pupils to gain a secure understanding of the link between practical outcomes and scientific theories;
- ensuring that opportunities to include scientific calculations and formulae are not missed;
- providing pupils with sufficient opportunities to work on investigations on their own and not curtailing their progress by too much guidance;
- improving the quality of marking and homework;
- improving the accuracy of assessments in Year 9.
(paras: 11, 18, 36, 40-42, 57, 131-132, 134-137, 139, 140-142)

Ensure legal requirements are fully met with regard to the provision for a daily act of collective worship and religious education in the sixth form.

(paras: 45, 85, 211, 217)

In addition to the key issues, the following less important weakness should be considered for inclusion in the action plan.

- Improve achievement in Attainment Target 1 of the mathematics National Curriculum (the using and applying mathematics component) in Year 9. (paras: 17, 23, 120, 123)
- Build on the existing good practice within the school to develop a coherent whole school approach towards provision for able pupils, including methods of monitoring the effectiveness of provision. (para: 49)
- Improve the systems for tracking progress and using assessment information to inform planning in information technology. (paras: 56, 183, 186)
- Continue with strategies to further raise the attainment of girls so that it is as good as that of the boys. (paras: 11, 47, 181)
- Ensure that safety risk assessments are carried out fully in physical education. (paras: 71, 210)
- Ensure that pupils opting to study business education at Key Stage 4 are properly disapplied from the National Curriculum requirement to study design and technology. (paras: 44, 85)
- Make sure that the annual governors' reports to parents contain all the required information. (paras: 85)
- Ensure that statutory requirements are met for the reporting of information technology.

(paras: 73, 85, 186)

INTRODUCTION

Characteristics of the school

1. The school is of below average size with 531 pupils between the ages of 13 and 18 on roll. There are significantly more boys than girls in Years 9 and 12. The number of pupils at the school is beginning to grow again after a period of decline. The number of pupils on roll is smaller than it was at the time of the previous inspection. The majority of pupils come from Haverhill, many living in the ward in which the school is situated. However, a significant minority are also drawn from the surrounding villages.
2. The school is part of a local sixth-form consortium which includes the other upper school in the town. The majority of sixth-form pupils at the school attend at least some of their lessons at the other school.
3. The vast majority of pupils are white. The few from minority ethnic backgrounds constitute less than two per cent of the roll. Three come from homes where English is not the first language. About seven per cent of pupils are eligible for free school meals. This is below average but does not fully reflect the mixed standards of living within the local area or the extent of rural poverty and deprivation within the community. Pupils come from a wide variety of backgrounds, but overall their social and economic circumstances are average.
4. Attainment on entry to the school is below average. Regular reading test scores going back several years indicate that the intake is skewed downwards with fewer higher attainers and more lower attainers. The average reading test scores are below county averages. Verbal reasoning and numerical test results are also below average. There has been no significant change in the school's intake in the period between this and the previous inspection.
5. There are 121 pupils, about 23 per cent of the number on roll, on the special needs register. This is above the national average. About a third are on Stages 3 to 5 and 3.4 per cent have a statement of special educational need. This is also higher than found nationally. The main needs are specific learning difficulties, emotional and behavioural needs and general learning difficulties.
6. The school's aims and values, as expressed in the school development plan, are as follows:

6. **AIMS, VALUES AND VISION**

Our aim is 'To ensure High Quality Education opportunities for all in partnership with parents and the wider community'. This means that we are committed to:

- Developing People
- Raising Achievement
- Serving the Community
- Improving the Environment
- Value for Money
- Partnership
- Spiritual and Moral Growth
- Social and Cultural Opportunity

In relation to these aims and commitments are a set of values which encourage pupils to:

- respect self recognising their own developing values
- respect others, recognising their rights
- demonstrate care and concern for others
- respect the living environment
- participate in the life of the school community
- react positively to questions about life
- value progress and achievement
- value truth and recognise the importance of keeping an open mind
- have a sense of duty or personal responsibility.

1. The school's strategic development plan identifies long and short-term targets – it is a five-year plan with key objectives focused on raising achievement. Priorities are annually selected. This year's priorities include:

- monitoring and formal review of the literacy strategy
- post-16 curriculum review
- development of Key Skills and study skills
- PSE review (citizenship)
- implementation of the Green Paper proposals, including appraisal
- use of data to raise standards
- further development of out of school study.

2. The school set the following targets for achievement in examination results at GCSE for 1999:

- 50 per cent of pupils to achieve five or more GCSEs at grades A*-C;
- 98 per cent to gain at least 1 GCSE at grades A*-C;
- 48 per cent of boys to gain five or more GCSEs at grades A*-C;
- 50 per cent of girls to gain five or more GCSEs at grades A*-C;
- 56 per cent of pupils to gain a grade A*-C in English;
- 43 per cent of pupils to gain a grade A*-C in mathematics;
- 45 per cent of pupils to gain a grade A*-C in science.

Key Indicators

Attainment at Key Stage 3

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for latest reporting year

Year	Boys	Girls	Total
1999	74	67	141

8. National Curriculum Test Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Number of pupils at NC Level 5 or Above	Boys	44	43	37
	Girls	57	47	40
	Total	101	90	77
Percentage at NC Level 5 or above	School	72 (62)	62 (59)	53 (54)
	National	64 (65)	63 (60)	55 (56)
Percentage at NC Level 6 or above	School	27 (28)	34 (34)	19 (25)
	National	28 (35)	38 (36)	23 (27)

8. Teacher Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Number of pupils at NC Level 5 or Above	Boys	37	55	49
	Girls	55	47	52
	Total	92	96	101
Percentage at NC Level 5 or above	School	65 (70)	67 (64)	71 (78)
	National	64 (62)	64 (64)	59 (62)
Percentage at NC Level 6 or above	School	30 (36)	40 (26)	25 (39)
	National	31 (31)	37 (37)	28 (31)

Attainment at Key Stage 4

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

Year	Boys	Girls	Total
1999	63	59	122

GCSE Results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A* to G	1 or more grades A* to G
Number of pupils achieving standard specified	Boys	37	63	64
	Girls	35	58	58
	Total	72	121	122
Percentage achieving standard specified	School	59.0 (45.9)	99.2 (96)	100 (97)
	National	46.3 (44.4)	90.7 (89.6)	95.7 (95.1)

Attainment in the Sixth Form

Number of students aged 16-18 who were entered for GCE A/AS examinations in the latest reporting year:

Year	Male	Female	Total
1999	23	18	41

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	9.5 (11.6)	12.1 (14.5)	10.7 (12.8)	2.7 (3.0)	0.0 (4.0)	2 (3.5)
National	17.7	18.1	17.9 (17.6)	2.7	2.8	2.8 (2.8)

Figures in parenthesis refer to the previous reporting year

Number in final year of vocational qualifications at intermediate level and percentage of such students who achieved these qualifications:

	Number	% Success rate
School	21	62
National		72.9 (79.1)

Attendance

Percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year

		%
Authorised Absence	School	7.4
	National comparative data	7.9
Unauthorised Absence	School	0.5
	National comparative data	1.1

Exclusions

Number of exclusions of pupils (of statutory school age) during the previous year:

	Number
Fixed period	23
Permanent	1

Quality of teaching

Percentage of teaching observed which is :

	%
Very good or better	21
Satisfactory or better	97
Less than satisfactory	3

8. PART A: ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS AT THE SCHOOL

8. Attainment and progress

3. Attainment on entry to the school is below average. Results of standardised reading tests taken shortly before leaving middle school consistently show that, although the full ability range is represented, there are fewer high attainers than expected and often more pupils who attain average scores or just above. In most year groups, the results of these tests indicate a higher than expected proportion with low or very low scores. The school administers verbal reasoning and numerical tests when pupils begin school. The results of these tests mirror the results of the reading tests.
4. Since the previous inspection, the school has significantly improved the performance of pupils in national tests and examinations. The most notable improvement has been in the proportion of pupils attaining five or more GCSEs at grades A*-C. This increased from about 30 per cent at the time of the previous inspection to about 59 per cent in 1999. Good improvements are also seen in the proportions of pupils gaining five or more GCSEs at grades A*-G and one or more GCSEs at grades A*-G. In addition, there has been a marked increase in the proportion of pupils reaching at least the expected level in the National Curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 3 in English. More modest improvements are evident in mathematics and in science since the previous inspection, mainly in the increase in the proportion of pupils reaching the higher levels. Pupils' results at A-level were on a distinctly improving trend, with the average points score rising steadily between 1996 and 1998. However, the most recent results of 1999 fell sharply. Overall, sixth form pupils achieve reasonable results given their prior attainment, but there is room for improvement.
5. A significant aspect of the improvements seen since the last inspection, particularly at GCSE level, is the improvement in the attainment of boys. Their GCSE results have been improving at a faster rate than those of girls. By 1999, girls and boys both performed better than their counterparts nationally in relation to the average points score and the proportion gaining five or more GCSEs at grades A*-C. However, there was a bigger and more marked difference between the results of boys than those of girls when compared to the results of boys and girls nationally. The better performance of boys was reflected to varying degrees within most subjects. In the 1999 science GCSE examination, the weaker results obtained by girls pulled the overall results down to a little below average. Wide differences between boys' and girls' results, when compared to the respective performances of boys and girls nationally, were also evident in the 1999 GCSE examinations in English language and art. Although both boys and girls performed significantly better than their counterparts nationally, boys' performance was that much better.
6. The school's results from National Curriculum tests taken in 1999 were above average in English, and in line with national averages in mathematics and science. When compared to similar schools, based on the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals, the results in English were below average and well below in mathematics and science. However, the free school meals category the school has been placed in does not fully reflect the below average attainment of pupils on entry to the school. The school does well to enable pupils to achieve the results they do.
7. Pupils' performance in GCSE examinations in 1999 was well above that of pupils nationally and those in similar schools. A higher proportion achieved five or more GCSEs at grades A*-C than pupils in all schools and those in similar schools. Many more pupils than nationally achieved five or more GCSEs at grades A*-G and almost all at least one GCSE at grades A*-G. The 1999 GCSE results were above average in English, close to national averages in mathematics, but below average in science. In almost all other subjects, the 1999 GCSE results were close to or above the respective national averages, substantially so in some cases, such as art, drama and music. Results in French, although showing a sound trend of improvement, were still significantly below average.
8. A-level results in 1999 in terms of the average points score per pupil were well below the national average. Results in previous years were better, although still below national averages. Improvements are less evident at A-level partly because strategies such as setting targets for individual pupils, which

have been used very successfully lower down the school, are only just beginning to be applied to sixth-form pupils. Also, those who have been taking A-levels examinations have not been the subject of the improvements seen lower down in the school and experienced by pupils currently studying for A-levels. A-level results in individual subjects vary from being broadly in line with national averages to below average. However, the small numbers make valid comparisons with national results or identifying clear trends over time difficult to achieve.

9. Inspection evidence generally reflects the picture of attainment given by the national tests and public examination results. Attainment at A-level as seen in lessons was significantly better than the examination results to date and was usually judged to be in line with national norms. This is partly due to the small numbers often involved and therefore the difficulty in making valid comparisons against attainment nationally but also partly because the improvements in provision and in the attainment of pupils now studying A-levels are beginning to have a visible impact. However, the school needs to continue to pursue actively further improvement in the standards of work and examination results achieved by A-level pupils. Attainment in GNVQ courses is broadly in line with course expectations.
10. From lesson observations and scrutiny of pupils' work, by Year 9 and the end of Key Stage 4, attainment in English is above average. Pupils listen, read and write well for their ages at both key stages. Written work is lively and well structured. Higher attainers write some very competent, well-ordered comparisons of literature texts though some others are less analytical. Lower attainers achieve a good deal of sustained writing clearly but simply expressed, with some ambitious use of vocabulary. By the end of Key Stage 4, pupils' understanding of characters in their literature studies is good. Their speaking skills are sound overall, but in Year 9 are not sufficiently expressive in reading aloud and speaking. By the time they reach the end of Key Stage 4, pupils are fluent and informative in speaking but do not engage their audience effectively enough unless they are explicitly asked to do so. Standards of work at A-level are broadly average. Pupils in Year 13 often write perceptively about their set texts, frequently using quotations skilfully. In lessons, however, their comments on set texts are not precise enough and they are slow to work out the meaning of unseen texts. Thus, attainment in this aspect is below expectations for this stage of the course.
11. Inspection evidence points to average attainment in mathematics at the end of each key stage. Standards of work in number, shape and space and handling data are sound in all key stages, but attainment in using and applying mathematics is below average in Year 9. Pupils at this key stage use a limited mathematics vocabulary and are hesitant when explaining their work. At Key Stage 4, high attaining pupils are competent across a broad range of demanding mathematical work.
12. In science, attainment in Year 9 and by the end of Key Stage 4 matches national norms, but does vary in lessons at Key Stage 4 depending on the quality of the teaching. It is below average by the time pupils reach the end of the sixth form. Skills in experimental and investigative work are satisfactory, although too much guidance from teachers can restrict the standards reached. The ablest pupils in Year 9 and Key Stage 4 attain very good standards in their investigative work. Pupils' knowledge and understanding of biological facts and ideas are relatively weak, however, although sound in other aspects of science.
13. Inspection evidence points to average attainment in most other subjects by Year 9. In information technology and physical education it is above average, but below average in modern foreign languages. Towards the end of Key Stage 4, pupils attain at least average standards of work in all the remaining subjects and above average standards in music and physical education. Standards in French are better than the indications given by the GCSE results because of further improvements in the provision and the quality of teaching in particular. Towards the end of the sixth form, inspection evidence indicates broadly average attainment in all but music, where it is above.
14. Pupils' use of language across the curriculum is good overall as a result of very effective implementation of a well-developed policy. Reading and writing skills are particularly good and used to best effect in geography, history and religious education. In these subjects pupils research a good deal from textbooks and other sources, such as CD-ROMs. Pupils usually listen well to the teacher and to each other, though a small core of pupils in some classes have difficulty listening to explanations. Speaking is less well developed than reading and writing and is the school's next priority. Pupils reach

an acceptable standard of fluency and in some cases they are well informed, confident and clear. However, many subjects do not give pupils sufficient opportunities to work out ideas in group discussion or to speak formally at any length.

15. Standards of numeracy are satisfactory overall. They are good in geography, technology and information technology in Year 9 and at Key Stage 4, and good in geography in the sixth form. Numeracy skills are well integrated in the science curriculum and, in the best lessons, this contributes well to the development of numeracy.
16. Pupils make good progress overall. From lesson observations and scrutiny of their work, pupils' progress in Year 9 and Key Stage 4 is good and largely reflects the good quality of teaching and the good use made of assessment information to set targets for improvement. It is satisfactory overall in the sixth form, although in lessons it is frequently good, more so in Year 13 than in Year 12. Target-setting is just beginning to be used to help drive pupils' progress in the sixth form, although it is well-established in practice lower down the school. Hence the reason for the difference in the progress made by pupils in the sixth form and those in Year 9 and Key Stage 4, in spite of teaching being at least equally good higher up the school.
17. In the majority of subjects and key stages, pupils make good progress over time and often in lessons, with very good progress in art in Year 9 and Key Stage 4. In mathematics and science pupils make satisfactory progress as they move through Year 9 and Key Stage 4. Sixth-form pupils make satisfactory progress in science. In mathematics in Year 9, pupils do not make enough progress in using and applying mathematics, although in other aspects of mathematics their progress is sound and higher attainers make good progress. However, progress is inhibited in some lessons where pupils spend time on repetitive mathematical exercises which demonstrate existing competence rather than being moved on swiftly enough to higher level work which could extend their learning further. In contrast, stimulating lessons where teachers encourage pupils to talk about the real life contexts in which they experience the mathematics they study encourage good progress. In some science lessons, too much guidance from the teacher inhibits progress in scientific investigational work although high attaining pupils make good progress in this area. In English, pupils in Year 9 and Key Stage 4 make good progress. Progress in personal reading is particularly good in Year 9 and pupils make good progress in extending the quality and range of their writing as they move from Year 9 to Year 11. In the sixth form pupils make satisfactory progress. They make good progress in responding to a range of challenging literature and in writing about it perceptively and confidently. However, their progress is constrained by a limited vocabulary, by not efficiently using the context to help them to understand words, and by limited personal reading and general knowledge in many cases.
18. Pupils' very good progress in art is promoted by the quality of teaching and the focus on artistic skills. Thus, the large majority rapidly acquire awareness of visual language and the skills to apply this to their own artwork. In geography, higher attainers make very good progress, and progress across most aspects of geography is good. In Year 9 in music, many pupils make good progress, but a minority of boys are less focused and only make progress when closely supervised by their teacher. In Key Stage 4, however, progress in lessons is sometimes very good.
19. Pupils with special educational needs are making good progress in most subjects. Results in GCSE are improving for these pupils and in 1999 all passed several GCSE examinations, including English and mathematics, gaining A*-G grades. Year 11 pupils with special educational needs are positively encouraged by their teachers. They make good progress in understanding the plot of a story and interpreting meaning from the language used. Good progress is made in drama by Year 10 pupils who respond very well to the tasks. In mathematics, pupils find working with the price of cars interesting and make satisfactory progress on arithmetic skills. There is some unsatisfactory progress in science because pupils do not listen and fail to understand the results of their experiment. In their work with specialist support staff and teachers, pupils make good progress overall. Pupils receiving extra help to improve their literacy and numeracy are making good progress. The specialist teachers are expert and considerably experienced in addressing these special educational needs. The computer-based scheme that some pupils use is very helpful in teaching them English and mathematical skills and word processing enables one pupil to write in paragraphs and use capital letters correctly. Overall, pupils are making good progress in relation to the targets in their individual educational plans.

20. There are very few pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds. They are making similar progress as others. One boy learning English as an additional language has made very good progress in reading and he now writes clearly on what he has understood.
21. The school is making good progress in reaching the targets it has set for improvement in National Curriculum tests and public examinations.

Attitudes, behaviour and personal development

22. Pupils' attitudes towards their work are good and there is a well-sustained work ethic within the school. The majority of pupils settle quickly to written tasks when requested to do so, are interested in their studies and respond well when given challenging tasks. In the majority of lessons, for example, pupils sustain concentration well often becoming totally absorbed in the tasks they are set. In some lessons, however, particularly in the sixth form, teachers have to work hard to get pupils to take an active role in discussions and take the initiative in their learning. In some lessons, girls are rather passive and reticent about taking part in class discussions. Pupils work well in pairs and small groups and actively encourage and support each other. In science, for example, pupils work well in pairs undertaking investigative project work. Evaluation and constructive criticism of one another's work are a feature of drama lessons, for example Year 11 pupils worked effectively in a group to produce an improvised piece of drama for an assessed GCSE performance. Pupils respond with enthusiasm in modern foreign language lessons when given opportunities to participate in paired or group activities and role-play situations, rising well to the challenges of speaking a foreign language. In art, the majority of pupils at Key Stage 4 are adventurous and innovative in their approaches to artwork. In information technology the majority have the confidence to explore new programs and to experiment with the software in order to improve the quality of their work. However, girls are a little less confident about doing this. Pupils show a sense of pride in their work, are proud of their achievements, and gain personal satisfaction for their efforts. Pupils with special educational needs are well integrated, their self-confidence is well developed, they are motivated to learn and are supported well by other pupils within lessons.
23. The behaviour of pupils throughout the school is good and this has a positive impact on their attainment and progress. The standard of behaviour in lessons is rarely less than good. There are clear expectations of good behaviour which the majority of pupils understand and respect. Most of the teaching staff demonstrate a consistent approach to the management of pupils' behaviour and this contributes significantly to the good standard of behaviour seen throughout the school. There are still a minority of pupils whose behaviour is unsatisfactory, as at the time of the previous inspection, but this is rarely evident. What is seen a little more frequently, and noted particularly in some mathematics and science lessons, is the incidence of low-level disruption, such as chattiness, or talking by pupils when the teacher is trying to speak to the class and an occasional tendency to go off task. Some of the instances of low-level disruption or misbehaviour in Year 9 are a result of the imbalance in the numbers of boys and girls. A minority of Year 11 pupils in a child development lesson were uncooperative and had a negative impact on the work of others. On the whole, the few incidents of unsatisfactory behaviour or low level disruption are usually related to a lack of challenge in the work that pupils are presented with, unsatisfactory class management techniques or teachers' acceptance of lower standards of behaviour. Pupils are aware of the school's anti-bullying philosophy and of the procedures to follow if incidents occur. It is not perceived as a problem by the vast majority, although a very small number having experienced it still find it difficult to come to terms with. Any incidents that do occur are dealt with quickly and effectively. Overall, bullying is not an issue in this school.
24. In the last year there have been 23 exclusions on a short-term basis and one permanent exclusion. The rate of exclusions is static. The incidence of permanent exclusion is relatively low compared to similar schools nationally, but the rate of fixed-term exclusions is a little high. Those who have been excluded have committed offences which warranted such action. The high level of fixed-term exclusions reflects the challenging behaviour that a minority of pupils present to the school.
25. Relationships within the school both between pupils and with adults are invariably good. Pupils are courteous and welcoming towards visitors. They have a very responsible attitude towards the school environment and actively contributed to the decisions taken about the refurbishment of the school communal areas. Equipment used in lessons is respected, for example utensils used in home technology lessons is carefully handled, washed-up and replaced at the end of lessons into its storage area. The personal development of pupils is very good. Pupils are willing to accept responsibility and serve on both year and school councils. Those on the school council show good citizenship skills. For example, they have successfully negotiated an agreement with the management of the school to have the canteen opened for hot snacks at morning break and undertaken to ensure that litter, at these times, does not become a problem. Each year in drama a team of pupils act as technical experts on

the sound and lighting for school productions and then trains up a new team before they leave. Pupils in the sixth form undertake community service on a weekly basis and many help within lessons in the lower school such as drama and listening to pupils read. Pupils show good levels of initiative in the wider community. Every year they organise 'Stars in their Eyes' which raises monies for charities. Musicians from the school play at civic events, school concerts and many other community events. Pupils generally show respect for values and beliefs different from their own.

26. Overall, there has been a good improvement in pupils' attitudes, behaviour and personal development since the previous inspection. Their learning skills in particular are now much better and in most subjects pupils are taking a more active part in lessons. This is directly related to similar improvements in the quality of teaching and has contributed to improvements in pupils' attainment. The good behaviour noted in the previous report has been well sustained.

Attendance

27. The attendance level of pupils is satisfactory and was broadly in line with the national average in the academic year 1998-99. The incidence of unauthorised absence is well below that found nationally. The poor attendance of a minority of pupils, particularly those in Key Stage 4, has a detrimental impact on their attainment and progress. Pupils generally arrive punctually to school. Incidents of lateness for morning registration are usually related to difficulties with transport. Lessons start punctually. Overall, the school has maintained well its standards of attendance and punctuality since the previous inspection.

33. QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED

Teaching

28. The overall quality of teaching is good and has improved significantly since the previous inspection. This in turn has had a positive impact on the quality of pupils' learning and contributed to the improvements seen in their progress and attainment. Overall, teaching was satisfactory or better in 97 per cent of lessons during the inspection. In 64 per cent it was good or better and in 21 per cent it was very good or excellent. There were relatively few lessons, about three per cent, where the quality of teaching was unsatisfactory and none where it was poor.
29. There is little significant difference in the quality of teaching between the key stages, but it is generally better in Key Stage 4 than in Year 9 and best in the sixth form, although teaching in Year 13 is markedly better than in Year 12. There is far more high quality teaching in Year 13 and over four-fifths is at least good, compared to two-thirds in Year 12.
30. In most subjects, the quality of teaching is good. In music and geography, it is very good and in art teaching is frequently of very good quality. This has a positive impact on the quality of pupils' work and the progress they make. In mathematics the quality of teaching is satisfactory overall, but is frequently good or better in mathematics lessons in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form. The quality of teaching in science is sometimes good, but most frequently satisfactory and sometimes unsatisfactory. The quality of teaching in the GNVQ courses is good.
31. Overall, teachers have good subject knowledge and in most subjects use it well to provide lessons where the knowledge pupils need to acquire is coherently structured and made easily accessible to them. It is well used to extend pupils' understanding and in making work relevant to them. In business education, for example, the teacher's subject knowledge plays a valuable part in widening and extending pupils' understanding of business ideas and practices. In art, high level subject expertise is very well used to perfect pupils' own skills and enable them to produce work of high quality, especially in Key Stage 4. In design and technology, some teachers have a wide range of experience from industry and other phases of education and this has a positive impact on pupils' learning.
32. High expectations are a significant factor in the improvements the school has brought about in pupils' standards of attainment. In the majority of subjects, teachers make rigorous demands of pupils and expect pupils to reach high standards of work. Planning is good and reflects teachers' high

expectations. For example, in mathematics lessons where teaching is good, high attaining pupils are stretched and extended well through the tasks and activities they are given. In contrast, in mathematics lessons that are less effective, expectations of pupils are low. In science, expectations are occasionally too ambitious, but often expectations of abler pupils are not high enough. In all subjects, where teaching is good, learning outcomes are clearly identified in planning and frequently shared with pupils. In the best lessons in English, for example, teachers share the aims with pupils and then review these with them at the end of the lesson. However, in science planning of how specific ideas will be taught is sometimes unsatisfactory and results in pupils not acquiring secure enough understanding.

33. Teaching methods used are varied and well matched to pupils' needs overall. Where teaching is at its best, the methods and activities are interesting and capture pupils' imagination and engage their interest very securely. In the best lessons in information technology, for example, activities are well-conceived in order to promote pupils' independence as learners. Case studies are often used in some subjects such as geography and business studies and these provide good opportunities for pupils to be actively involved in tasks which make them think and enable them to discuss ideas with one another. Group or pair work is skilfully managed in most subjects. Questioning is usually expertly managed and probes pupils' understanding well. Occasionally, it could be more penetrating, for example in some English lessons. In most lessons, there is a good balance and range of activities. In modern foreign languages, for example, teachers provide a balanced series of activities although occasionally exercises are too long to sustain pupils' interest. In the best lessons, such as those seen in music, the activities are so well planned, structured and executed that pupils are able to work with a high degree of independence and self-sufficiency. Under these circumstances, their confidence as learners is high and they make great strides in their learning.
34. Management of pupils is good. Most teachers engage and captivate pupils' interests and thus establish a good working atmosphere in their classes. In some lessons, mainly in mathematics and science, teachers tolerate minor low-level disruptions from pupils, such as letting pupils chatter during whole-class discussions, or allowing pupils to go off task. In the majority of lessons though, teachers work hard to motivate pupils and establish good working relationships with them. In the rare instances of poor behaviour, it is usually managed well. For example, aggressive and rude behaviour from a small minority of pupils in a child development lesson was effectively defused.
35. Where teaching is good or better, the pace of teaching and use of time are also good or very good. In modern foreign languages there is a brisk pace and quick movement through a range of activities. Good use is made of setting time-targets for completion of tasks in some design and technology lessons. In English and science, the pace of teaching in some lessons is not rigorous enough. Good use is made of resources, with many subjects making effective use of information technology as part of the teaching. In art, the most appropriate resources are decided imaginatively, such as the use of single bristle brushes to make fine marks.
36. Ongoing assessment of pupils' work, including marking, is generally good, but there are some inconsistencies in one or two subjects such as science. In science there are informative and helpful comments made on pupils' coursework and notebooks are checked and monitored to assess how well pupils have understood. Overall, in mathematics, marking is very good but not enough use is made of formative assessment to guide short-term planning. Homework tasks are well planned and relevant. The school has put a lot of effort into consulting with parents about the level and quality of homework required at each stage through the school. As a result, it is good in most areas of the curriculum and very good in some, such as art. However, there is still work to be done in order to provide regular, relevant and imaginative homework in some subjects, such as science and modern foreign languages.
37. Pupils with special educational needs are taught well in the majority of regular lessons through good use of learning support assistants and suitable resource materials. Subject teachers are aware of the needs of these pupils as they are provided with the register of special educational needs and the individual education plans of those pupils who require them. However, these are not being used regularly by all teachers although in mathematics pupils' targets are being addressed effectively. There is similar good practice found in the design and technology and information technology departments. In history, however, insufficient attention is given to tailoring work towards the needs of

pupils with learning difficulties. The support given to a number of pupils by lesson support assistants and occasionally additional teachers is good. Teaching is often very good in the specialist work provided for some pupils outside their regular lessons. This teaching is thoroughly planned to match precisely the learning needs of these pupils. The resources used promote effective learning, for example word games which enthuse pupils. There is a good variety of short activities in each lesson so pupils' interest and concentration are being regularly renewed. The tasks systematically develop a range of knowledge and skills such as learning ways of recognising new words.

The curriculum and assessment

38. The breadth and balance of the curriculum is satisfactory at Key Stages 3 and 4 and good in the sixth form. Since the previous inspection the school has adjusted the time allocated to each subject so that there is now enough time for information technology, and for the requirements of the Suffolk Agreed Syllabus in religious education. In Year 9, in addition to the minimum requirements of the National Curriculum, all pupils study German, as well as French, and drama. In Key Stage 4, pupils have a good range of options, in addition to the core curriculum, including GNVQ courses in business studies and art and design. Two modern languages are offered at Key Stage 4 but few pupils choose to study both. English has too little time in Year 11 for studying both English and English literature effectively and science has just under the recommended time for the double award at GCSE. Six pupils with special educational needs are currently disapplied from following the National Curriculum at Key Stage 4. They do work-related courses outside school for three days a week and a reduced course in school. This amended provision has greatly improved their motivation and attendance and is proving to be very successful. Design and technology is not provided for all pupils at Key Stage 4. Currently a group follows a course in business education instead and, although this is allowed, the school has not taken steps to legally disapply these pupils from the National Curriculum. All pupils in Key Stage 4 follow the short course in religious education.
39. Sixth-form pupils have a good range of A-level options which are available through the consortium. At present most pupils follow A-level courses, some follow one of three available GNVQ courses at intermediate level and a few choose the advanced GNVQ in business education. The school is aware of the need to provide further choice in vocational courses at advanced and even foundation level in the sixth form as some pupils are choosing A-level courses which do not entirely suit their needs. Apart from English, drama and mathematics most courses have some periods each week taught at the other school within the consortium. The timetable allows for most of the movement between sites to take place at natural break times during the day so that in effect pupils lose little lesson time in travelling. The current arrangement for all pupils in the sixth form to have a recreational afternoon each Wednesday with use of the local sports centre is good provision. Pupils do not study religious education in the sixth form and this is a breach of legal requirements.
40. The programme for personal, social and health education is good throughout the school. Education about sex and drugs is appropriately provided. Year 9 and the sixth-form pupils have a weekly lesson. In Years 10 and 11, some days in the year are set aside for devoting to such topics as citizenship, management, revision skills, health issues and road safety awareness which are often taught by experts from outside the school. In the week of the inspection the police were alerting sixth-form pupils to methods of safe driving.
41. The school makes good provision for equality of access and opportunity at all key stages. In information technology and design and technology, the school has put in place useful measures to ensure that girls achieve as well as boys. Pupils have equal access to all curricular activities and timetabling arrangements enable reasonably good access to the curriculum. However, during Key Stages 3 and 4 pupils make less progress in science when the class has its lessons split between two teachers. In double lessons in science that are separated by the lunch break the pace slows down after lunch.
42. The school's arrangements to meet the curricular requirements of pupils with special educational needs are good throughout the school. Pupils with more pronounced learning needs are supported in many of their lessons by special educational needs teachers and lesson support assistants. The amount of time pupils are withdrawn is kept to a minimum and it is effectively arranged not to encroach on the whole curriculum. The format of the individual education plans has been improved and simplified to help teachers utilise them more effectively. Teachers have the opportunity to rewrite pupils' targets to suit their subjects but this is not always done. The school is aware and is taking steps to support teachers' management of individual education plans.
43. Provision for the highest attaining pupils is variable. Opportunities for extending them are not mapped across the curriculum, although some subjects, such as English, mathematics, science, geography and history, offer extra sessions at lunchtimes. In addition, there are opportunities for pupils to extend their

learning through the use of information technology, extra-curricular activities and the days set aside from the normal timetable. However, the school has not yet monitored what the highest attaining pupils gain from these opportunities. There are too few chances for higher attainers to extend their learning in religious education.

44. Planning for pupils to make continuous progress is satisfactory at all key stages. Schemes of work are at least sound in all subjects and well developed in English, art, design and technology, geography, information technology and music. Subjects effectively identify opportunities to teach skills such as literacy and numeracy and information technology in the schemes of work, as well as for citizenship training and spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. However, these do not always occur as planned. Some of these aspects are taught in personal and social education.
45. The liaison with the middle schools is effective in many subjects with regular termly meetings in each subject. Such links are particularly strong in mathematics, where teachers have taught some lessons in the middle schools and undertaken joint training with middle school teachers. English teachers in both phases have spent a good deal of time standardising their assessment of pupils' work at Key Stage 3 and the middle schools have increased the amount of speaking and listening to help address shortcomings in pupils' speaking that were identified at the previous inspection. Information technology and science have successful links and physical education teachers from the upper school coach pupils in the middle schools. Modern foreign languages and history have less effective liaison. Curricular liaison within the sixth-form consortium is good in most subjects. However, in art, history and physical education there is too little liaison with the other school in the consortium.
46. Extra-curricular provision is very good for a school of this size. English and drama make an outstanding contribution to pupils' own experiences of performing and to their appreciation of professional theatre through theatre visits and workshops, for example. Two major school productions of demanding plays, such as 'The Visit' and 'Much Ado About Nothing', take place each year involving pupils from all years. In addition the A-level drama pupils stage their own performances for the public and GCSE drama pupils enact theirs to Years 9 and 10 in assemblies. Reading events, writing competitions, a school newspaper run by the pupils, and debating further stimulate pupils' interest in English and drama. Physical education makes very good provision with a lot of inter-school matches. A third of the school from all years actively support physical education clubs and teams in, for instance, football for boys and girls, badminton, dance, and table tennis. Music makes good provision including a swing band and pupils organising their own ensembles. Modern foreign language exchanges to France and Germany are thriving; these include work placements for sixth-form pupils at Ehringhausen in Germany, and there is a biennial exchange with the Ukraine. Musical performances take place on these exchanges. Many subjects lay on extra sessions during lunchtimes and the study after-school programme effectively allows a subject to be responsible for teaching and supporting pupils at times dedicated to their subject during each year. Information technology facilities are open to pupils before school, at lunchtimes and after school and are well used. Art holds a lunchtime club and on Sundays runs an open club for pupils and the community.
47. Careers education is good. Through the thorough programme in each year pupils are enabled to explore a wide range of possibilities. Pupils have days set aside for careers education in Years 10 and 11 allowing the school to invite stimulating outside speakers. A recent session on revision skills was particularly useful to the pupils. Work experience is part of the programme in Year 11.
48. Overall, the school has made good progress in improving its curricular provision since the previous inspection. It now needs to ensure there is adequate provision for pupils to study religious education in the sixth form and to increase its vocational provision post-16.
49. The school's procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress are very good and are used consistently throughout the school. This is a significant improvement since the last inspection. All weaknesses identified at the last inspection have been successfully addressed. Assessment information is collected, collated and published each half term. This information is used well by the school to monitor the effectiveness of teaching and learning, and to identify and provide additional support for pupils who are not making sufficient progress. It is not used so well, however, to guide improvements in provision for higher attaining pupils. Target setting is a very well established and

routine part of the assessment procedures in Year 9 and Key Stage 4 and involves pupils as well as teachers. Setting targets for pupils in the sixth form is evolving and beginning to be put in place but is not yet well established or entirely understood by subject teachers. Assessment is recognised by the school as central to the process of school improvement, and information from assessments is made available to all staff, pupils and parents.

50. A good range of information is made available to teachers when pupils join the school in Year 9. There is good liaison with middle schools, which includes standardisation and moderation of teacher assessments in subjects such as English and mathematics. Teacher assessments from Year 8 make an important contribution to sustaining continuity in pupils' learning. However, there is no system for checking pupils' level of competence in information technology when they start school and a comprehensive system for collating and recording pupils' attainment in the use of information technology across the curriculum is not yet in place. Nearly all subject departments make at least sound use of their own assessments and the broader information available to inform their planning of pupils' work. Many departments make good or better use of assessment information. The mathematics, science and modern languages departments use this information to place pupils in teaching groups. There is good use of this information in geography and in English, where assessment information is used to improve Programmes of Study and raise standards of attainment.
51. Many subject departments have sound portfolios of pupils' assessed work to use as examples of different levels of attainment; in music pupils' performances are recorded and used to compare standards year on year. However, in modern languages and science, teachers' assessments are over-generous at the end of Key Stage 3. They are also not accurate enough in modern foreign languages at Key Stage 4 to gauge the level at which pupils should be entered for the GCSE examination, that is to say whether a pupil should be entered for the foundation paper or the higher paper. Good use is made of sample materials in design and technology and mathematics. Samples of work are displayed in classrooms so that pupils recognise the quality of work needed to achieve good standards.
52. The procedures for identifying and assessing pupils' special educational needs are good. Information held by the contributory middle schools on pupils with special educational needs is collected prior to their transfer at the start of Year 9. The co-ordinator for special educational needs is also head of Year 9 and is in close contact with the contributory schools. In Year 9 all pupils are tested and the results will confirm the information from middle schools and show if other pupils have a learning difficulty. There are further tests for some pupils to diagnose specific learning difficulties such as reading, spelling or number. Further measures are taken from time to time to judge the progress pupils are making. Pupils' individual education plans are reviewed twice each year. Learning support teachers and lesson support assistants keep regular and detailed notes on how pupils are meeting their targets which provides a good basis for setting new targets. Statemented pupils have their special educational needs reviewed formally each year.
53. The results from tests in Year 9 are well used to decide the most appropriate level of provision for pupils with special educational needs and the targets to be written in their individual education plans.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

54. The school continues to place a high priority on pupils' personal development and provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good. There is a carefully considered whole-school policy and departments are required to identify areas and issues within their subjects, which assist the growth of this aspect of education. There has been good improvement in the provision for personal development since the previous inspection.
55. Provision for pupils' spiritual development is good. Since the last inspection, considerable attention has been given to the recognition that spiritual development is fundamental to all areas of the curriculum, including within the sixth form. There are still, however, a very small number of subject leaders who have not clearly understood their role in developing pupils' curiosity, insight, reflective capacity and sense of awe and wonder within the teaching programmes of their subjects. There are many opportunities in English for pupils to develop self-knowledge through the study of poetry and

literature and they are given frequent tasks to produce reflective and personal writing. Time is given in art to consider responses to important works and the non-material aspects of art. In music, pupils discuss particular works, which provide spiritual uplift. The religious education department makes a significant contribution in Year 9 and Key Stage 4 as pupils are given the opportunity to develop an awareness of something greater than the 'here and now' and engage in a search for purpose and meaning in life. Opportunities exist in modern languages for pupils to reflect on their individual viewpoint on the world and compare their perspectives with those of other people. Assembly topics cover a wide range of spiritual topics, which help pupils to explore, to question and to develop as individuals. Provision is now good but work is still required to ensure that all departments fully understand the nature of spirituality.

56. Teachers by their own example and expectation that pupils will behave considerately, act as good role models for pupils. The school aims to develop values such as honesty and fairness and pupils are clearly made aware of the differences between right and wrong. They are expected to show respect for each other and for accepted codes of behaviour. The personal and social education and assembly programmes cover a number of topics, which effectively raise awareness of issues such as rights and responsibilities, freedom, prejudice, justice and conventions accompanying friendship. There are good opportunities in history, religious education, geography, science and English to consider complex relationships and humanitarian issues, for example racism, prejudice, slavery, environmental pollution and genetic engineering. Pupils benefit from working in orderly classroom environments with accepted and predictable responses, rewards and sanctions. Provision for moral development is good.
57. The ethos and daily activities of the school provide a secure environment where relationships are founded on mutual respect and co-operation. Provision for the development of social skills is very good. The school continues to provide very good opportunities for pupils to show initiative and accept responsibility. These include representation on year and school councils, community work as well as many activities in forms, clubs, sport and in charitable fund-raising. Pupils are given the opportunity to work collaboratively in most subjects, developing teamwork skills and learning to value the contribution of their peers. Issues such as relationships, friendships and the development of inter-active skills are well covered in the personal, social and health education lesson and assemblies. In English, geography, history and religious education social issues such as punishment, population and settlement, attitudes towards the poor and weak in society and social aspects of life in contemporary Britain are discussed regularly. Social interaction is very well promoted through a wide range of extra-curricular activities, including exchanges, visits to theatres, museums, galleries and a range of field study trips. Work experience provides good experience of the world of work and pupils' awareness of the needs of the less fortunate in society is developed through many charitable fund-raising events.
58. Cultural provision continues to be effective and compared to the report of the previous inspection it is now very good. A great deal is done in the curriculum and via extra-curricular activities to help pupils appreciate how cultural interests and achievements enrich life. A wide range of world music and art is studied and pupils have good opportunity to examine the cultural aspects of the world faiths studied in religious education. In English, pupils study a very wide range of literature and poetry from different times and places. The range of theatre trips is outstanding and pupils are encouraged to be involved in challenging drama productions. The pupils have opportunities to work with artists and poets in residence. There are regular concerts, visits to concerts and poetry competitions are organised. There are many visits of a cultural nature in Britain and abroad, including exchanges to France, Germany and the Ukraine. Multi-cultural literature is evident in texts and poetry and proper emphasis is given in some subjects, in assemblies and in the general life of the school to discussion on the multi-cultural and multi-faith nature of British society.

Support, guidance and pupils' welfare

59. The overall support, guidance and pupils' welfare provided by the school are very good and have improved much since the previous inspection. This is particularly so with regard to the support and guidance provided for pupils' academic development. The school provides a caring, supportive environment where there are good relationships between pupils and adults and between pupils themselves. There is a good induction programme for pupils entering the school and they are well supported during their early life in school. Year 11 pupils are sensitively prepared for the next phase of

education, or for entering the world of work through career advice provided by the school, the Careers Service and a wide range of outside speakers.

60. Procedures for monitoring the personal development and academic progress of pupils are very good. Form tutors stay with their tutor group throughout their time at the school and know their pupils well. The role of the form tutor includes monitoring the academic and personal development of their pupils and helping them with setting targets to improve their overall level of attainment. This is largely done well, but there are some instances where the role of the tutor and the use of morning tutorial time are less effective. Overall, target setting is very well established in Year 9 and Key Stage 4 and is currently being extended to the sixth form. Year 11 pupils are given the opportunity to attend after-school lessons on Monday given by each subject and the school provides transport home. This has been a major initiative in the drive for improved standards. The computer room and library are open before and after school to enable pupils to complete their homework and undertake research for projects. There is a range of after-school study clubs for pupils requiring assistance with their studies. All these arrangements for supporting pupils' academic progress make a significant contribution to the standards of attainment achieved.
61. The procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour are very good. The school has high expectations of behaviour based on self-discipline and respect for others. Pupils are aware of the consequences of misbehaviour and clear about the sanctions it attracts. Members of staff are fair and consistent in the application of sanctions. The topic of bullying is effectively addressed through many subject areas such as drama and also by the personal, social and health education programme. Pupils are clear about what action to take if incidents occur. The procedures for dealing with bullying ensure that any reported incidents are dealt with swiftly and effectively. The governing body is appropriately involved in the exclusion of pupils and procedures are clear. This sanction is fairly administered and reserved for those pupils who fail to respond to other sanctions the school employs for serious breaches of the school's code of conduct.
62. The monitoring and promoting of attendance are very good. Pupils whose attendance level is poor, or have any unauthorised absence, are identified and actively followed up. There is an effective partnership between the school and the education welfare service who actively support the school in this aspect of its work. The procedures for recording late arriving pupils, and for those leaving the school premises during the school day, are satisfactory.
63. Child protection procedures are very good. The designated person responsible for child protection has received appropriate training in all aspects of child protection. Arrangements are in place for all members of staff to receive awareness-raising training on an annual basis and it is part of the induction programme for new members of staff. The procedures for staff to follow if incidents occur are well documented in the staff handbook.
64. There are sufficient members of staff with first aid qualifications and the medical care pupils receive is good. The school canteen provides a good range of hot and cold meals at lunchtime and pupils are able to eat their food in convivial surroundings.
65. Arrangements for health and safety within the school are satisfactory. Regular fire drills are held and recorded and termly safety audits carried out. There is a governor with responsibility for health and safety. However, risk assessments have not been carried out in physical education.

Partnership with parents and the community

66. The partnership between the school and its parents is very good and this is a significant improvement from the findings of the previous inspection. The improvement reflects the energy and effort the school has put into this area of its work. At the parents' meeting before the inspection parents expressed very positive views about the school and these are reflected in their responses to the questionnaire. The majority find the school to be approachable and welcoming. Parents feel they are well consulted about a range of issues. Recently they were involved in a Homework Review Working Party that helped to develop a new pupils' planner and establish target setting by pupils, and the Study After School initiative, which was supported in its first year by funds won through the Princes' Trust. They serve the

school well as members of the governing body. Many parents help with school productions and with transporting pupils home after sporting or other after-school activities. The active parent teacher association raises funds that enhance the resources of the school and has been particularly active in raising funds for the school's bid for technology college status. The governing body, staff and pupils value their contribution which enriches the daily life of the school.

67. The school provides very good information for its parents. They receive curriculum information on a termly basis and are informed about events that have occurred or the success of pupils through the weekly bulletin which they much appreciate. Parents are expected to take an active role in monitoring the completion of both homework and coursework. If problems occur parents are contacted and work in partnership with the school to resolve them. Consultation evenings give parents the opportunity of discussing their child's academic and personal development with form tutors and subject teachers. Information evenings, which are also attended by representatives of the career service, provide valuable guidance for pupils and parents when choosing both GCSE and post-16 options. Annual reports to parents are satisfactory and, with the exception of a summary of pupils' achievements in information technology, meet statutory requirements. However, all do not contain sufficient information about how pupils can improve their work and raise their level of attainment. Parents of pupils with special educational needs are appropriately involved with their annual reviews.
68. The links with partner schools are very good. Curriculum links are being effectively promoted with partner middle schools and are well developed in some subjects to ensure smooth transition across the key stage. Colleges of further education are invited to take part in post-16 choices events. Relationships with external support agencies are very effective.
69. Links with the community are excellent. There are a wide range of visits that enrich the curriculum. Pupils in the sixth form attend a series of science lectures at Cambridge University and have the opportunity to visit CERN (the European Organisation for Nuclear Research). Visits to the theatre and art exhibitions are a regular feature of the curriculum. After-school visits to major sporting events are also arranged. The local area is used effectively to support fieldwork in both history and geography. Exchange visits to France and Germany help pupils to develop their linguistic skills and understand the culture of these countries. There are excellent links with the local business community who help prepare pupils for work experience, take part in Industry Days and offer support in many other ways. Pupils in the sixth form have the opportunity to work-shadow a manager for a period of a week. These contacts provide positive role models for pupils and deepen their understanding of the world of work and careers open to them. Local business is also providing sponsorship to support the school in its bid for technology college status. The various musical performances provided by the school are of a high quality and much valued by the local community.

75. THE MANAGEMENT AND EFFICIENCY OF THE SCHOOL

Leadership and management

70. The overall quality of leadership and management of the school is very good. There has been good improvement in this area since the last inspection and senior staff and governors have played a key role in tackling the school's weaknesses as identified in the previous inspection report. This has resulted in significantly improving pupils' attainment, especially at Key Stage 4, in English at Key Stage 3 and in improving the overall quality of teaching.
71. The headteacher provides a very clear direction for the school's development and a strong sense of shared purpose to the school's work. He, together with members of the senior management team, has a direct concern for sustaining high quality educational provision and continually improving pupils' attainments. One of the key features of the school is the extent to which there is a shared understanding and commitment amongst staff and governors to school improvement. There is a well established culture of self-evaluation and critical analysis of the school's strengths and weaknesses which effectively enables the school to build on what is good and tackle what is weak. Thus, the school is in a good position to continue to improve further.
72. The headteacher delegates responsibilities well and a key strength is his ability to empower staff and

enable them to work to their strengths. The senior management team is well co-ordinated and effective in its role. Members of the senior team provide good support to the subject areas they line-manage and provide good leadership in their own areas of responsibility. The first deputy headteacher provides very good leadership in the thrust for school improvement, and in improving the quality of teaching and learning in particular. He is innovative and imaginative in the initiatives he proposes and is well supported by the headteacher, staff and governors in bringing those initiatives that are taken on board to fruition. There is good teamwork amongst staff at all levels. All heads of department provide at least satisfactory leadership and management of their areas, and the majority provide good leadership and manage their departments well.

73. Governors are very supportive of the work of the school and there is a good working partnership between them and staff. Governors provide good strategic oversight of the school's development and ask pertinent questions of the school. They are very well informed and bring a variety of expertise, such as financial know-how, to their roles to the benefit of the school. Many are actively involved in the school, for example some governors joined the working group reviewing homework. The committee work carried out by governors is well structured and well co-ordinated and provides them with an essential oversight of the school's provision and standards.
74. The school has sharpened up considerably its management systems since the previous inspection. There is good support and monitoring of curriculum development and teaching. Each member of the senior management team is attached to several departments, and provides regular and effective monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning and good support provided for improvement. There is regular monitoring and evaluation by heads of department of the quality of work, including teaching, in their areas. Regular examination of the quality of marking and setting of homework across the curriculum takes place. Overall, the systems and procedures in place for quality assurance are good and contribute well to continued improvement of provision and outcomes.
75. The school's aims and values are clearly shared amongst staff and governors. A good range of policies supports the work of the school. Good systems for monitoring and evaluation coupled with good communication and understanding amongst staff of the key purposes of the school, ensure that the implementation of aims, plans and policies is very good. This is an improvement from the last inspection. It is also a reflection of the good quality of management amongst heads of department.
76. The school development plan is a very well produced document and informed by assiduous evaluation and collection of information on the school's performance. The key objectives are very clearly set out along with well-established success criteria by which to measure progress through the plan. The plan is underpinned by more detailed action plans for each objective. Its use as a tool for guiding the school's future development is also very good. For example, governors' meetings always include a focus on progress being made by the school on the targets set in the plan. Where necessary, individual members of staff responsible for a particular development present progress reports to governors. Staff in the school likewise use the plan as a dynamic working document. Subject areas produce their own departmental development plans. These are of good quality in some areas, but in others need to focus more sharply targets which will promote the development and improvement of the subject rather than on resource acquisition.
77. The school fosters a very good ethos within which there is equally good attention paid to pupils' personal and academic development. A highly effective learning environment has been established and very good relationships promoted between staff and pupils. There is a good policy for equality of opportunity which is well implemented.
78. The special educational needs co-ordinator is an effective manager and provides good leadership in developing the provision for special educational needs throughout the school. The governor with responsibility for special educational needs visits the school regularly and observes support in lessons and the specialist work outside. The current review of the school development plan has monitored the use of individual education plans. The results of this review have identified the need for further training for teachers in how to support pupils more effectively in lessons in order to strengthen the implementation of the individual education plans. The special educational needs co-ordinator, the specialist teachers and the lesson support assistants have created a very good ethos which acts to

encourage pupils and give them the will and confidence to succeed. Consequently pupils with special educational needs are able to integrate fully and benefit from all the school provides.

79. Legal requirements are fully met in all areas of the school's work except the following:

- adequate provision is not made to teach the locally agreed syllabus for religious education in the sixth form;
- statutory requirements for the provision of a daily act of collective worship are not met;
- some pupils are provided with an opportunity to study business education instead of design and technology at Key Stage 4. However, they are not legally disapplied from the National Curriculum;
- national Curriculum reporting requirements for information technology are not fully met;
- the annual governors' report to parents does not contain all the required information.

Staffing, accommodation and learning resources

1. There is a satisfactory match of number, qualifications and experience of teachers and support staff to meet the needs of the school's curriculum. Teaching staff are nearly always well qualified, experienced and knowledgeable in the subjects in which they teach. There is, however, a need for further professional development concerning the teaching of mathematical ideas. Design and technology staff now have the full specialist background needed for the full range of courses they are teaching, which was an issue at the time of the previous inspection.
2. The quality and sufficiency of support staff is satisfactory. The quality of long serving technicians in science is very good, although the insufficient technical support for design and technology mentioned in the previous report persists. The amount of administrative support is higher than is usual in similar schools. However, these staff work very successfully to reduce the administrative burden on teachers and contribute well to the smooth day-to-day operation of the school, for example, in organising project days and parents' meetings. The work of support staff is highly valued by the school.
3. The school has successfully achieved, and maintained, its 'Investors in People' status. The overall arrangements for the professional development of staff are very good. A very good whole-school plan ensures a coherent approach and that departmental needs, individual professional aspirations and whole-school initiatives are taken fully into account. Non-teaching staff are included in training programmes. Professional development is well-monitored and reviewed through the line management system and most individual departmental planning takes into account the needs of staff. Noteworthy results of staff development include the successful implementation of the literacy project, the positive impact of the homework club in raising pupils' attainment and in providing departmental heads with deeper understanding of the complexities of timetabling. Much has been done to satisfy the criticisms of the previous report. The school development plan has prioritised the need for closer monitoring of individual teachers' record-keeping of their own professional development.
4. The system of appraisal has been in place for some time and has been an effective mechanism for ensuring staff development in most areas. Most departments work effectively as teams for in-service training and share good practice, for instance in English, design and technology and modern foreign languages. Currently, a programme for the formal appraisal of teaching and non-teaching staff has been temporarily suspended pending national recommendations, but the school's programme of monitoring teaching and learning continues. This together with professional discussion with all staff ensures that there is good attention to addressing individual needs through professional development as well as whole-school needs.
5. Induction of staff begins as soon as they are recruited and there is comprehensive documentation that ensures they understand procedures and practices. The school's annual programme of induction for both new staff and newly qualified teachers is good and enables them to quickly play an effective role as part of the school team. Newly qualified teachers value the support of their mentors and the weekly sessions with the deputy headteacher responsible for staff development.
6. In most subjects the provision of books remains adequate. There is a comprehensive range of materials to allow pupils with special educational needs to make good progress. There are some

shortages of A-level class texts in science and geography and deficiencies in books and artefacts in religious education. There is satisfactory provision for English and mathematics and materials are kept up-to-date in modern foreign languages. There is still a shortage in the number of tools in design and technology. Most classrooms have suitable equipment and audio visual aids and teachers have access to an extensive range of television recordings helping to broaden the curriculum.

7. There is a very good ratio of computers to pupils and most of the equipment is up-to-date and of good quality although there are still a few old computers around. The use of information technology has strengthened teaching and learning in several areas and more staff would like to use computer facilities more frequently. However, although there is a very good ratio of computers to pupils, the number of computer rooms available are not sufficient to meet the growing demands amongst subject teachers.
8. The library provides a highly stimulating environment, popular with pupils and staff. Besides very good access there is ample space for independent study which is helpful for pupils' progress. The librarian is very knowledgeable and experienced. She, together with an experienced assistant, effectively contribute to the promotion of a school-wide culture of reading. The library is a very good facility: it is well stocked for fiction books, with simplified texts at various levels, and GCSE texts for loan or reference. There are appropriate A-level texts. Overall, the library provision provides good support for pupils' studies in subjects across the curriculum.
9. Several departments make good use of a variety of resources outside the school; for others it remains an area for development. There are annual exchanges to Germany; work placements for A-level pupils to Dourges and the Ukraine and a significant number of pupils have toured with the Suffolk Youth Orchestra to Poland. Trips and conferences enrich the curriculum for pupils in drama, English, history, geography and science and their knowledge and experience are broadened as a result.
10. The overall provision of accommodation is good. The buildings are generally well maintained and the school now has a rolling programme of redecoration and refurbishment. Since the previous inspection a computer suite has been completed and this provides a high quality learning resource. The dining area has been designed from pupils' ideas and has proved to be a positive asset to the school allowing multipurpose use and a place where pupils can eat their meals in a pleasant, social setting. Displays around the school help to create a stimulating environment and celebrate pupils' work in many areas of the curriculum, although display is a weakness in science. There has been a significant improvement since the previous inspection in the condition of the buildings and the standard of cleanliness throughout the school. It is an ongoing challenge for the school to ensure that all areas achieve a high standard of cleanliness. All accommodation for subjects is now suited and is accessible to pupils with disabilities. There is a shortage of storage space in some curriculum areas, particularly music. The accommodation is adequate for design and technology as the curriculum is currently presented but there is no space for the development of textiles or electronics. The surfaces of the tennis courts are in poor condition and need urgent attention.

The efficiency of the school

11. The school benefits from a higher than average level of income per pupil, supplemented by lettings and successful bids for additional funding. Careful planning and management by the headteacher, staff and the governing body ensure that good use is made of its financial resources. The budget is conscientiously managed and it is well directed at key educational developments and, thus, comprehensively linked to the school development planning process. Governors are actively interested and involved in the agreement of the budget. They show a clear understanding of the issues to be addressed and explore these carefully before the budget is finally set.
12. The allocations made for teaching, support staff, curriculum development and learning are equitable and beneficial. The teaching staff have sufficient time to prepare and assess pupils' work thoroughly and an appropriate allocation has been made to deal with their individual needs. Form time in the morning is often, but not always, used productively leading to opportunities being missed on occasion to support pupils in their work. Good economies have been achieved through the sixth-form consortium which allows a wider range of courses to be offered to pupils and enables the size of sixth-

form teaching groups to be viable. Overall, the consortium arrangements enable the sixth-form provision to be cost effective and to provide sound value for money.

13. Accommodation is maintained in good order and offers pupils a comfortable and attractive learning environment. It is well used overall. Many subject areas make effective use of good equipment and teaching materials, and can justify their expenditure by specifying how it has enabled particular improvements in provision and pupils' outcomes. In some subjects however, the cost of developments is less carefully calculated. The library is small but well stocked and provides a valuable resource, which is very well used. Pupils have good access to the school's computer suites, but the rolling programme of renewal of equipment is too slow to keep pace with the growing demands for computers in subjects. Hence subject teachers cannot always make as much use of computers as they would like. Funds for pupils with special educational needs are well used and enable effective support to be provided for them.
14. Financial control and administration are very good. The bursar, who works in close liaison with the headteacher, a deputy headteacher and the local education authority, efficiently leads day-to-day financial administration. The departments and the governors' finance committee are kept well informed, using well-established and approved computerised recording and accounting procedures. As a result spending is very well monitored and managed.
15. The marked improvement in GCSE examination results, the high quality of much of the school's work and the smooth running of the working day all testify to the effectiveness of the school's organisation. Efficiency is further improved by co-operation with external agencies including the careers service and local businesses. The school is well placed to pursue its intention to apply for technology college status. It is envisaged that a successful application will contribute to its further development.
16. Given the below average attainment on entry, the good progress made by pupils and the standards of attainment they reach, particularly by the end of Key Stage 4, the school is judged to provide good value for money.

PART B: CURRICULUM AREAS AND SUBJECTS

ENGLISH, MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCE

English

17. Attainment at the end of Year 9 is above average. Results in the national tests at the end of Key Stage 3 in 1999 were above the national average at both the level expected for age and the higher levels, though very few pupils attained the highest levels. The 1999 results were better than the results in mathematics and science. This was a significant improvement on the 1998 results which were just close to the national average and lower than the results in mathematics. When compared to similar schools, based on the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals, the results for 1999 are below average. However, the free school meals category the school has been placed in does not fully reflect the below average attainment of pupils on entry to the school. The school does well to enable pupils to achieve the results they do.
18. In Year 9, pupils' speaking and listening skills are average for their age. Most can explain themselves in appropriate standard English but many are not sufficiently expressive in reading aloud and speaking. Reading is above average. Encouraged by regular lessons in the well-stocked library, and reading in tutor time and for homework, pupils in Year 9 show considerable interest in reading and choose both fiction and non-fiction that is appropriate for their age. Some read challenging books. Pupils' understanding of persuasive writing is average for their age, though they sometimes jump to conclusions that they cannot verify. Many pupils of all levels of attainment write in a lively manner using dialogue and sentence structure for effect, thus reaching a standard that is above average. Much of the writing is technically accurate. Lower attainers attempt to engage their readers by expressing feelings and using detail, but their writing is below average in spelling, punctuation and sentence construction.
19. At the end of Key Stage 4, pupils' attainment is above average. GCSE results in English have risen steadily over the last three years to well above the national average in 1999, with both boys and girls doing better than boys and girls nationally, but boys much more significantly so. The percentage of A* and A grades in 1999 rose to above the national average for these grades. All pupils have attained a GCSE grade A*-C in English in the last two years. Results in English literature have fluctuated recently. Usually two thirds of the year group take this examination. In 1997 the results were below the national average for grades A*-C; in 1998 they were well above the national average with boys doing nearly as well as girls; in 1999 they dipped to being in line with the national average, with the boys' results much lower than the girls' and fewer A* and A grades than in 1998. In class pupils generally listen well. They are fluent and informative in speaking but they insufficiently engage their audience unless they are explicitly required to do this. Pupils of all levels of attainment have a good understanding of characters in their literature texts. They can explain what the author is trying to achieve through symbolism and imagery in visual and written texts and through setting in their literature. Pupils are interested in words but their vocabulary is nevertheless limited. Pupils write effectively for a range of purposes. There is a good deal of high quality imaginative writing very attractively displayed in classrooms and corridors, for instance poetry on childhood 'What will become of the children who play?' and stories written in the second person. Pupils use examples and quotations to support their ideas. Higher attainers write some very competent, well-ordered comparisons of literature texts though some others are less analytical. Lower attainers achieve a good deal of sustained writing clearly but simply expressed, with some ambitious use of vocabulary. A few have weak spelling and poorly formed handwriting but they do attempt to express feelings. Boys and girls are equally perceptive and thoughtful both in class discussion and in writing.
20. At the end of the sixth form, pupils meet the expectations of the A-level English literature course. Results at grades A and B rose from being below the national average in 1998 to being close to the 1998 average in 1999. All the pupils passed in both these years. Currently, Year 13 pupils often write perceptively about their set texts referring aptly to the texts and using quotations readily, often skilfully. A majority are writing coursework essays that are above expectations. In the best essays pupils analyse language, though they could push their analysis further, and they write confidently. Weaker essays tend to be more descriptive than analytical with some wandering from the question. In class,

pupils' comments on their set texts are not precise enough. This is largely because they do not remember sufficient detail from passages that they have read even recently. Pupils are at present slow to work out the meaning of unseen texts and in this are below expectations for this stage in their course.

21. Pupils in Year 9 make good progress, particularly in reading for personal interest and in reading critically and recognising fact, opinion, bias and persuasive techniques. They also write for a range of purposes and learn to use interesting detail. Pupils continue to make good progress in Key Stage 4. They write for an increasing range of purposes and learn to be ambitious with form and language, for instance writing the opening paragraphs of novels in a range of styles, and experimenting with 'stream of consciousness' writing. Pupils learn to enjoy words; a class of Year 10 pupils recognised that Shakespeare made his language work 'flat out' and subsequently rose to the challenge of translating Chaucer's description of the miller. Pupils in Year 10 read less for personal interest than they do in Year 9. Some pupils of all levels of attainment do not remember accurate detail of significant events in their set texts. Overall, however, they make more progress in reading and writing than in speaking and listening. Pupils in the sixth form make satisfactory progress overall. They make good progress in responding to a range of challenging literature and in writing about it perceptively and confidently. They also develop their own creative writing as in poems inspired by 'Hamlet' and 'Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead'. However, their progress is constrained by a limited vocabulary, by not efficiently using the context to help them to understand words, by limited personal reading in many cases and by limited general knowledge. All of these undermine their confidence in working out the meaning of texts, their capacity to challenge other people's ideas and their readiness to make connections between one text and another. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress at all key stages because of challenging and well structured lessons, extra support in class, some lessons when they are withdrawn from the mainstream class, and opportunities to use the Successmaker computer software. Some Year 11 pupils with special educational needs studying 'Macbeth' were able to understand relevant quotations to illustrate facets of Lady Macbeth's character which they had worked out as a class. Many pupils with special educational needs make good progress in organising their ideas.
22. Pupils' attitudes to learning are generally good. Their behaviour is usually good. In all years pupils are enthusiastic about their own creative writing. They work well in groups. In the sixth form, unless they are organised into being active, pupils are more inclined to be passive learners than they are in drama, where many of the same pupils search hard for ways of expressing ideas and challenge each other's thinking in a stimulating way.
23. The teaching is good overall. All the lessons observed were at least satisfactory; just over half were at least good; one fifth were very good. The best teaching was of lower attaining sets in Key Stage 4 and some classes in the sixth form. The strengths are that the teachers' knowledge of the subject and their enthusiasm have a strong impact on pupils' interest in reading in Year 9 and in personal writing in all years. Most of them teach both English and drama. Teachers plan well, linking a variety of activities over a span of time to teach pupils appropriate skills, and using pair and group tasks to help pupils generate ideas. Teachers nearly always manage their classes well. The best lessons are when the teacher challenges pupils and structures the lesson with a sequence of related but varied activities which engage pupils' interest and enable them to achieve beyond their expectations. This was seen, for instance, when Year 10 analysed symbolism in film and Year 13 discovered the meaning of unfamiliar poems. In such lessons teachers share the aims with the pupils and at the end neatly review what has been achieved. Weaknesses in teaching are that the objectives for the lesson are sometimes too numerous to be manageable. Sometimes the teacher talks too much, does too much of the reading aloud and repeats pupils' already adequate answers. Teachers' questioning could sometimes be more penetrating so as to make pupils think more deeply and express themselves more precisely. The pace of the lesson sometimes falters when one phase of the lesson goes on too long, or when too long is spent on an activity which is justifiably included but does not merit the length of time spent on it.
24. Since the previous inspection the English faculty has worked vigorously and appropriately and liaised effectively with the middle schools to raise both boys' and girls' attainment. Manifold drama productions and theatre visits, reading events and writing competitions make an outstanding contribution for a school of this size to pupils' interest in English. These achievements are in spite of

the pressures of being short of time in Year 11 for English and English literature, and of the head of faculty having to manage a team responsible for both English and drama, who, though well qualified and experienced, are currently all part-time except for herself.

The contribution made by other subjects to pupils' reading, writing, speaking and listening

25. The school's drive towards higher standards in these skills is further advanced than in many schools at present. Teachers in most departments of the school have been enthusiastically promoting pupils' reading and writing over the past three years. As a result they have stimulated pupils' interest in reading and writing, which are now generally above average across the school. The best practice is in geography, history and religious education where pupils research a good deal from textbooks, information sheets and CD-ROM. Art strongly develops pupils' knowledge of vocabulary specific to the subject, as do geography, physical education in Year 9 and music in the sixth form. Work in modern foreign languages teaches pupils to work out the meaning of words from linguistic and contextual clues. Pupils in Years 9 and 10 devote one tutor period a week to reading; in other years this practice is not consistent. The library is well stocked and well used and supports pupils' reading very well. In history, geography and design and technology pupils are taught to write for a range of purposes including note taking, description, reports, analysis, accounts written as if they were by eye witnesses, and evaluations. In modern foreign languages, pupils in the sixth form write extended essays on topical issues. Pupils' presentation of their work is variable; it is satisfactory when the teacher requires it. Pupils usually listen well to the teacher and to each other, though a small core of pupils in some classes have difficulty listening to explanations. Speaking is less well developed than reading and writing and is the school's next priority. Pupils reach an acceptable standard of fluency and in some cases, as in the debating club, in geography, religious education and food technology, they are well informed, confident and clear. However, many subjects do not give pupils sufficient opportunities to work out ideas in group discussion or to speak formally at any length.

110. *Drama*

26. By the end of Year 9 pupils reach an appropriate standard for their age. They use their imagination and work sensibly in groups to make decisions. They make good use of drama techniques like freeze frame and mirroring. Some of their use of levels and shape and movement is above the standard usually seen at this stage. Their ability to sustain a role is sometimes below standard, as is their use of facial expression generally.

27. At the end of Key Stage 4 pupils' attainment is above average. Results in drama have risen significantly over the last three years from below the national average in 1997 to well above the national average in 1999, with boys doing better than girls. In 1999 44 per cent of the drama candidates gained A* or A grades. Pupils use a wide range of drama techniques to express ideas. They are able to work very effectively in groups. For instance a group building a series of scenes around a symbol quickly built a sequence of a monologue followed by a flashback and another monologue focused on a sea shell about a woman whose brother drowned in the sea when they were children. Highest attainers show a strong sense of audience and they create atmosphere. They achieve a high standard of acting in school productions. Improvisation is higher in standard than script reading where some pupils are reasonably expressive and up to expectations and some halting and below expectations.

28. By the end of the sixth form pupils taking A-level drama reach a high standard of performance in their assessed productions, and in school productions which are challenging in genre and language. In 1999 all the eight candidates passed but the proportion of A and B grades was lower than the national average for 1998. At the time of the inspection the current Year 13 pupils were working on their pieces for assessment using a very effective range of theatrical techniques to express a theme. They had plenty of ideas selected from a pool of resources which they remembered from other plays, poems, music. They used the A-level grade criteria to evaluate their performances. They were not sure how they would focus the audience's attention and their movement and facial expression was still to be developed. Key Stage 4 pupils and the sixth form learn to use sound and lighting for their own productions.

29. Pupils make good progress in Year 9, particularly in using some drama techniques, as in a group enacting a trench warfare scene in slow motion effectively using levels and intensity of expression. The large number who opt for GCSE drama make good progress in Key Stage 4. They rapidly acquire

drama techniques, their gestures, posture and movement develop well, and so does their confidence. Evaluating their own and other people's productions leads to their refining their rehearsed scenes. They make less progress in reading from a script. Pupils with special educational needs also make good progress. In the sixth form the pupils increase in maturity and assurance and in their capacity to use other resources. In groups they draw from this pool of inspiration, use their imagination, challenge each other's ideas and reach effective solutions in a remarkably short time, as did a Year 12 group working on the legend of the wild man of Orford with choral speech and both orchestrated and individual movement. Sixth-form pupils help with drama classes in the earlier years of the school and sometimes run their own workshops.

30. Pupils enjoy drama. They cooperate well and show much interest in the busy programme of extra-curricular drama and theatre visits. Each year a team of pupils act as technical experts on the sound and lighting for school productions and then trains up a new team before they leave.
31. The teaching is usually good; occasionally it is very good. The teachers all teach English as well and the strengths and weaknesses are much the same as in English. An additional strength in drama is that teachers require pupils to assess their own and other people's work in order to refine it. An additional weakness is that sometimes a teacher interrupts pupils in the middle of a task and then attempts to talk before the pupils are silent. As in English the very rich offering of challenging school productions and theatre visits greatly stimulates pupils' interest in drama. Both English and drama benefit greatly in this school from being so closely associated with each other. The drama studio is a good space for lessons and performances. However, with the greatly increased take-up of drama at Key Stage 4 satisfactory teaching space is now tight as the other room is poorly soundproofed.

116. **Mathematics**

32. Standards of attainment in National Curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 3 are close to the national average. In the 1999 National Curriculum tests, an average proportion of pupils achieved at least the expected level and the higher levels. In comparison to the average obtained by similar schools, based on the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals, results were well below average. However, the free school meals category the school has been placed in does not fully reflect the below average attainment of pupils on entry to the school. The school does well to enable pupils to achieve the results they do. Attainment by the majority of pupils in the current Year 9 is in line with national expectations.
33. Overall attainment at GCSE is about the national average. In the 1999 GCSE examinations, the proportion of pupils achieving a grade A*-C was close to the national average. Boys did marginally better than the girls. A greater proportion of pupils obtained a GCSE grade A*-G than nationally. The attainment of pupils currently in Year 11 is close to the national average.
34. In the 1999 A-level examinations pupils' results were below the national average. The attainment of pupils currently in Year 13 is close to the national average, with improvement in both higher and overall standards of attainment. The policy of allowing pupils who have obtained a grade C at GCSE mathematics has the impact of depressing the A-level results. However, these pupils are well taught and this enables them to achieve creditable results given their prior attainment.
35. Inspection evidence indicates that attainment in number, data handling and shape and space matches national averages in Year 9. However, pupils' skills in using and applying mathematics are below average. Higher attaining pupils solve equations confidently using trial and improvement methods. They recognise number patterns and use equivalence in fractions to identify the rule for adding and subtracting. Average attaining pupils in Year 9 use numerical information to draw bar charts and histograms correctly. They can identify the median height in a group of pupils and can calculate the mean of a set of numbers. Lower attaining pupils draw mirror reflections of simple mathematical shapes and can identify the order of rotational symmetry in more complex figures. The use of information technology is well integrated in the mathematics curriculum. In Year 9, for example, teachers make sound use of available information technology to support pupils' learning about number through the use of spreadsheets. Many pupils have few opportunities to talk about the mathematics they study. They use a limited mathematics vocabulary and are hesitant when explaining their work.

However, some teachers introduce, and encourage pupils to use, an appropriate range of mathematical terms and this enables them to discuss their work and articulate their ideas well.

36. At Key Stage 4, pupils' attainment in all aspects of mathematics matches national averages. Higher attaining pupils are competent across a broad range of more demanding mathematics. They know the techniques of manipulating numeric and algebraic terms and in Year 10, for example, used these well to solve inequalities and simultaneous equations. They are good at drawing graphs and their work, such as that used to solve problems involving inequalities, is clear and detailed. In Year 11, average attaining pupils used 'tree diagrams' well when solving probability problems. Lower attaining pupils calculate the lengths of the perimeter of simple and more complex mathematical shapes correctly.
37. In the sixth form pupils understand a broad variety of advanced level mathematics. In Year 13, for example, they extended their work on vector equations of lines in two dimensions to work in three dimensions quickly and confidently. Examination of their work shows they have covered a wide range of topics and there is, for example, a sound level of attainment in work on calculus, geometry and trigonometry.
38. In Year 9, overall progress is satisfactory. Most pupils make progress which is sound in most aspects of mathematics. Their progress in using and applying mathematics is, however, less satisfactory. Progress in the majority of lessons is at least sound and sometimes good. In a small minority it is unsatisfactory. Higher attaining pupils have good skills in number and apply these well when, for example, working with positive and negative values to solve equations. They understand proportionality and make good progress in work such as scale factor enlargement. By the end of Year 9, most high attaining pupils achieve standards above the national expectation. Lower attaining pupils make effective progress in basic number work. They use 'number lines' well in work on place value, and make sound use of diagrams and charts when learning to estimate percentages. Pupils enter Year 9 with a broad range of prior attainment, and testing is used to provide additional information about pupils' knowledge, and to identify appropriate courses of study. However, teachers do not always use Programmes of Study to support pupils' learning in a systematic, balanced and rigorous way. For example, average attaining pupils can calculate simple measures of average accurately. Progress is inhibited as they spend time on repetitive written exercises which demonstrate this competence rather than being moved on more quickly to higher level work which would develop their understanding of the use of statistics. Pupils have some opportunities to develop their understanding of mathematics through using and applying the techniques they learn, but these opportunities are not embedded securely enough in the curriculum.
39. Progress at Key Stage 4 is sound overall. High attaining pupils make progress which is good or better, across a broad range of more demanding mathematics. Most average and lower attaining pupils make satisfactory progress. Progress in individual lessons is often good and sometimes very good. Where lessons are stimulating, teachers effectively encourage pupils to talk about the real life contexts in which they experience the mathematics they study. Many pupils apply their mathematics skills well. Average attaining pupils calculate areas and volumes accurately and higher attaining pupils extend their knowledge of vector algebra quickly and competently. The progress of some average and lower attaining pupils is unsatisfactory. Their progress is sometimes inhibited by being moved to work at too high a level too quickly. In Year 10, for example, the understanding of basic number is so weak among some lower attaining pupils that they have difficulty with simple addition and subtraction. Their Programme of Study, however, moves them from drawing 'nets' of three-dimensional figures to calculating surface area and volumes within a short period of time.
40. Sixth-form pupils make good progress. The department runs well supported A-level mathematics classes. Sixth-form pupils are diligent, and respond well when teaching is lively and interesting. In Year 12, they are required to revise previous work thoroughly before embarking upon higher level study.
41. The progress of pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory overall. Teachers know their pupils well and they provide sound individual help in lessons. The department makes good use of team teaching and other learning support to help pupils understand the mathematics they study. Some teachers make very effective use of information provided by the special needs department to help

pupils make good progress towards achieving the targets in their individual education plan.

42. In Year 9 and at Key Stage 4, pupils' attitudes to learning are satisfactory. They are good in the sixth form. Most pupils want to do well and carry out tasks set in class and at home to appropriate standards. Pupils in the sixth form are well motivated. Many in Year 9 and Key Stage 4 are also well motivated and apply themselves well to tasks in lessons. However, a minority come off task and talk in lessons which lack demand and challenge. Most pupils are well behaved, polite, friendly and courteous. However, a small minority are rude and their misbehaviour is not dealt with effectively by some teachers. Behaviour in the sixth form is very good. Most pupils sustain concentration without direct supervision and, even when lessons are not as demanding as they could be, most work hard.
43. The quality of teaching in Year 9 and at Key Stage 4 is satisfactory overall. It is good in the sixth form overall and frequently good in Key Stage 4. A minority of teaching is very good but a small minority is unsatisfactory. In the very effective lessons teachers have high expectations and a very good understanding of how pupils learn mathematics. In these lessons, teachers lead lively discussions about the work, which allows them to assess pupils' knowledge, and stimulate their thinking about mathematics. They use a variety of activities to help pupils maintain interest and sustain concentration. These lessons are brisk, engaging and interesting. In lessons where teaching is least effective, pupils do repetitive time filling written exercises. In these lessons, teachers' planning is not focused well enough on pupils' learning needs, and their expectations of what pupils can achieve are low. The school has very good procedures for assessing pupils' overall attainment and these are well used in mathematics. Day-to-day assessment is not well used, however, to assess pupils' understanding and guide short-term planning. Teachers set and mark an appropriate amount of homework in line with departmental policy.
44. The very good quality of leadership within the department has made a very positive contribution to the improvements in educational standards achieved since the last inspection. This leadership has been very productive in providing the department with clear aims and policies for development, and in building a positive team spirit. The department is analysing assessment data to inform and guide future development. The head of department monitors the work of the department effectively, and has identified a number of areas for development.

129. ***Numeracy across the curriculum***

45. Standards of numeracy are satisfactory overall; they are good in geography, technology and information technology in Year 9 and at Key Stage 4, and good in geography in the sixth form. Numeracy skills are well integrated in the science curriculum. Pupils use appropriate units of measurement and substitute accurately when using formulae in a wide variety of contexts. In design and technology pupils develop good skills in working with scale as they design and make toys, and in food technology measure accurately when preparing recipes for cooking. They use spreadsheets well when analysing data gathered in geography and information technology projects. In the sixth form, geography pupils use a wide range of more advanced statistical and mathematical models well when analysing and displaying data. Scientific and graphical calculators are used appropriately throughout the school.

Science

46. In the 1999 National Curriculum tests, the results of Year 9 pupils were in line with the national results and an average proportion of pupils achieved at least the expected level and the higher levels. Except for 1997 when results were above average, they have remained similar to the national averages since 1996. Teacher assessments are over generous indicating a need to improve assessment practice. Girls' results were higher than boys' in 1999, but boys and girls' results have tended to fluctuate up and down over the last few years. When compared to similar schools, based on the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals, pupils' results were well below average. However, the free school meals category the school has been placed in does not fully reflect the below average attainment of pupils on entry. Overall, the school does well to enable pupils to achieve the results they do. Results have improved since the previous inspection.

47. In 1999, 43 per cent of pupils achieved GCSE grades A*-C which is a little below the national average. A slightly higher proportion achieved a grade A*-C in the previous year, and this compared more favourably with the national average which was also slightly lower than the national average for 1999. All pupils gained a grade A*-G in 1999 and this was considerably higher than the national average. Boys' results in relation to the proportion of grades A*-C attained were substantially higher than those of girls. Boys achieved standards in line with the national average for boys; girls' results were well below the national average for girls. Overall, GCSE results are an improvement on the previous inspection.
48. The number of pupils studying A-level science continues to be too small for valid comparisons to be made with national figures. Only two studied biology in 1999 and their results were below average. Results in chemistry for 1999 were in line with national results, but were below in physics. Work seen during the inspection was mainly below average; a few pupils with A*-A grades at GCSE attained broadly average test results. Results have declined at A-level since the previous inspection.
49. Standards in lessons and work seen during the inspection show that attainment in Year 9 and at the end of Key Stage 4 is broadly average. Attainment is notably affected by the variable quality of teaching; standards reach expected levels for pupils' ages where a teacher has high expectations of their capabilities. Where there are weaknesses in teachers' planning pupils do not clearly understand the underlying theories of a lesson's topic and where teaching fails to perceptively monitor understanding they cannot grasp the links between practical work and subject matter.
50. Pupils' knowledge and understanding of scientific facts and ideas match national standards in most areas. However, their knowledge and understanding of biological facts and ideas are not as good as in the areas of materials and their properties and physical processes. In learning more about the behaviour of metals, higher attaining pupils in Year 9 use symbols and formulae to summarise what happens when zinc, for instance, reacts with iron sulphate and lower attaining pupils successfully write a word equation; they use chemical symbols appropriately with the support of their teacher. Pupils in a Year 11 set 2 class, competently test mock urine samples to detect whether they show signs of diabetes or any other abnormality, but have difficulties in explicitly applying their results to the functions of the kidney. Others in set 1, have secure knowledge and understanding about the changes in temperature often accompanying chemical reactions and understand the terms exothermic and endothermic. Sixth-form pupils show appropriate understanding of digital sound symbols and CD technology. They can, for example, distinguish between the sounds produced from different technological sources. Chemistry students grapple with understanding complex chemical ions. Although they demonstrate some understanding, they do find some of the ideas difficult. Those studying biology are able to set up successfully an investigation into competition between different species of plants and relate their work to the implications for farmers planning crops.
51. Pupils develop their number skills as they learn science: the rate of development depends upon the quality of teaching. In Year 11, low attaining pupils calculate the percentage yield of magnesium sulphate in their work on making salts with help from their teacher. A high proportion across the age-range can accurately graph results. However, opportunities to do sufficient calculations and use formulae at appropriate times are sometimes missed. Pupils use scientific vocabulary where teachers stress the use of technical language and display key words during a lesson. On the other hand, scrutiny of work showed too little use of technical words in explanation, for example in conclusions of class work. Information technology is used to advantage when access to facilities are available, for plotting graphs, using spreadsheets and searching the internet.
52. Pupils' skills in experimental and investigative work are sound, often very good for the brightest pupils in Key Stages 3 and 4. By the end of Year 9, a large proportion of pupils understand fair testing and a significant number make predictions and give reasons for their suggestions, which is a notable improvement since the last inspection. Experimental work is structured and guided but not always sufficiently balanced by enough independent investigative work, for instance opportunities for pupils to suggest and test their own hypotheses for class experiments are missed. Planning skills develop well when not curtailed by too much guidance by teachers and confused with 'method', which records what has already been done. Scrutiny of work shows that the highest attainers in Year 9 record course work investigations to a very good standard and that several pupils in Years 10 and 11 top sets, clearly

identify sources of error and extend their conclusions from closer evaluation of results. For example when results are analysed very good evaluations are made of patterns discovered while investigating the efficiency of the bow and arrow. Low attaining pupils in Year 9 also identify useful patterns as they find out what affects the performance of a brake. However, across the 14-16 age range there is a need to increase the sophistication of observations. Sixth-form pupils become more skilled at interpreting their findings as teaching continues to emphasise what is expected of them. Those studying for vocational qualifications are developing well their skills in planning investigations such as testing out the impact of factors which affect rates of chemical reactions.

53. Progress is satisfactory during Year 9 and in the sixth form and broadly satisfactory during Years 10 and 11. The majority of pupils are able to organise and use a growing range of equipment safely and make measurements with increasing accuracy, when using a chemical balance for instance, or a burette. In learning more about enzymes, pupils in a lower set in Year 10 improved their recording skills as they carefully measured flow of stewed apple juice because their task was relevant and interesting to them. Others in Year 10 made good progress in understanding energy transfer in new work because they clearly recognised how their task related to work done before on burning fuels. Year 12 pupils make good progress in learning about how the messages encoded on a CD-ROM can be translated into sound.
54. Pupils with special educational needs make similar progress to other pupils and especially when learning support staff monitor their developments in science. However, higher attaining pupils within sets, are not given enough challenging activities for them to make their best progress. Overall, progress is unsatisfactory when teachers fail to plan exactly what they want pupils to learn. Progress is slowed down by too much guidance by teachers and when insufficient attention is given to vigorously pacing ideas throughout a lesson; in the least successful, the pace became slower as the lesson proceeded. Very occasionally, poor behaviour noticeably disrupts learning and inhibits progress.
55. Pupils' attitudes to learning are generally good. They are co-operative with nearly all of their teachers and help each other. They keenly explain how they make liver salts and cheerfully test metals with oxides. Sixth-form behaviour is generous and polite. Where there are weak management strategies, pupils constantly chat together during explanations so, consequently, do not clearly understand tasks or complete work to a satisfactory standard.
56. The quality of teaching is nearly always at least satisfactory. Teachers usually have very good understanding of the information they need to teach and skilfully manage practical activities with help from good quality technician support. Pupils are regularly praised and encouraged to learn in a happy atmosphere although few areas celebrate the work that they do and laboratories are bereft of interesting and fascinating displays which could be used to support their learning. Good teaching shares the lesson's objectives with pupils so that they clearly understand what is expected of them. Occasionally expectations are too ambitious. Often, work is focused towards the middle attaining pupils, within sets, with activities for high attainers not demanding enough. Opportunities are also missed for pupils themselves, to ask questions to enquire more deeply into a lesson's topic. Comments on course-work investigations give good advice about how to improve and with good results. Good practice also checks class notebooks with similar rigour to monitor understanding, although this is not consistently done across the department. Regular, relevant and imaginative homework remains an area for further development. Where weaknesses occur in teaching they apply to unsatisfactory planning of ideas, lack of rigorous pace and unimaginative teaching styles which do not readily captivate and sustain the interest of pupils.
57. As a coherent team, the department is evaluates its own performance, but in seeking improvement further work is required in relation to planning successful lessons and in raising the attainment of girls.

OTHER SUBJECTS OR COURSES

142. Art

58. GCSE results in 1999 at A*-C grade were well above average for all pupils. Over 90 per cent of boys

achieved these grades when only 52 per cent did nationally. This indicates very high attainment. Girls' attainment was not quite as high as that of boys, but it was still well above the national average for girls. Results at A*-G were above average. A higher proportion of all pupils gained A* and A grades than in 1998 although then the proportion was high at 30 per cent compared with a national average of 17 per cent. A*-C grades in 1998 were well above average with girls getting the best results. They tended to do significantly better in art than in their other subjects. Results at A*-G grade were below average because a few boys were ungraded. Over several years GCSE results in higher grades and the pass rate have improved steadily. In, 1999 almost all gained at least the pass rate in the GNVQ Part One intermediate art and design course. Almost a third of pupils gained merits.

59. GCE advanced level results at A-B grades were well below average and 69 per cent of all pupils achieved the pass rate. In 1998 results in higher grades were well below average and the pass rate of 66 per cent of all pupils was well below the national average of 95 per cent.
60. At the end of Year 9, the attainment of the majority of pupils is in line with expectations. A significant minority are working above expectation and a few pupils demonstrate exceptional levels of attainment. The majority have an in-depth knowledge of making art, for example how cool and warm colour values create space. They use a precise art vocabulary, explaining how haptic line helps define objects in space. The majority have only a slight knowledge of art and artists. Most pupils make detailed observations such as the structure of an eye in a self portrait drawing. The most gifted see the fine modulations on the surface of an apple and have drawing and painting skills to express these vividly.
61. At the end of Key Stage 4, the large majority of pupils are working at levels of attainment that are above average and a significant minority are well above. In drawing and painting most pupils exploit line, pattern and tone effectively. Higher attainment is marked by the confidence and boldness in accurately drawing a plate of fish. Most can select strong visual elements from their drawings and develop imaginative abstractions and design motifs. The majority understand colour well, mixing a subtle range and applying paints and pastels expertly. The close analysis of the Delaunays' colour work or how Howson draws portraits contributes to the higher standards attained by a few. At the exceptional level a girl uses a finely modulated range of reds to express the deep shadows and highlights observed on fruit. All the pupils studying for a vocational qualification collaborate productively on illustrating a recipe calendar. They research their imagery thoroughly and in written assignments make high grade investigations of art and artists.
62. Sixth-form pupils follow the major part of their course at another school. The attainment in lessons and work seen by the end of the sixth form is largely average. A few pupils are above average. All approach developing ideas by researching widely and through experimentation. However, the amount and range of work at the preparatory stages is not sufficiently extensive. Drawing from imagination and observation is confident and skilful. Some pupils are very accomplished in using colour, for example in studies of fruit.
63. Progress is very good in Year 9 and in Key Stage 4. It is good in the sixth form. In Year 9, teaching is very well targeted on achieving the elements of art set out in the National Curriculum. Teaching about making art is addressed better than the knowledge of art and artists. Consequently the large majority rapidly acquire awareness of visual language and the process skills to apply this. They acquire a precise art vocabulary. Pupils learn to be painstaking in drawing accurately and using colour effectively. The majority's competence with proportion and form emerges quickly in the development of drawing skills. Work is sometimes done on a very small scale to create intense concentration on line and tone. Pupils are taught about colour values and do rote practices of mixing paints to make flesh tones or warm colours. In Key Stage 4 pupils learn to apply paints, systematically working from cool to warm colours, to express form and space. They create translucent effects painting colour overlays on white ground. Pupils deal with abstraction well, exploiting line, shape, texture and pattern and learn to mix media and materials imaginatively. Girls are especially adventurous in experiments with new and different approaches such as batik. Vocational pupils progress well by jointly planning a recipe calendar and very good gains are made by researching art and artists. In the sixth form pupils make good progress using drawings and direct observations to create a sculpture by weaving willow sticks into a figurative form.

64. Pupils enjoy art and take the many challenges set for them seriously. For example, working in painstaking detail using cotton buds for painting or a single bristle brush for drawing. Pupils respond with concentration and perseverance and achieve high standards. Girls in Key Stage 4 are confident to explore new directions but sixth-form pupils often lack this to sufficiently manage the demands of their course.
65. Teaching is very good in Year 9 and in Key Stage 4. It is good in the sixth form. There is a high degree of expertise in teaching the knowledge and skills of visual language. This is fully expressed in the very high expectations made of pupils to acquire an appropriate vocabulary and to perfect the skills to create high quality work. This challenge is sustained very effectively through teachers assessing the success of each pupil's work and providing helpful instructions and the encouragement to persevere. Lessons are thoroughly planned and there is a clear vision on what Year 9 pupils and those in Key Stage 4 need to achieve. This is less the case in the sixth form. Teaching objectives are largely very sharp and these are supported by careful organisation in lessons. Homework is very well related to coursework and teachers give time to explaining clearly the expectation for these tasks. Teachers also take time to explain intentions for each lesson in clear detail. Questions are well focused and enable pupils to use an art vocabulary. Time is used productively and the most appropriate resources to achieve aims are decided imaginatively, for example single bristle brushes. Teachers set high standards of discipline and achieve this very effectively by establishing good and supportive relationships.
66. The curriculum is planned systematically with a clear view on the way pupils will acquire knowledge and skills. As they do so they are thoroughly assessed so that each pupil has a clear idea of their progress and how to continue improving. Since the last inspection these aspects have improved considerably. There is a substantial commitment to developing art. The artist in residence programme, for example, has been an enrichment introducing new possibilities for making work. The head of department gives generously of his own time to provide extra-curricular activities including a Sunday club. He ensures the whole school is enlivened with pupils' artwork and advises other departments on effective displays.
151. **Design and technology**
67. Attainment at Year 9 is broadly in line with national expectations. The results of teacher assessments since 1997 indicate an improvement from below national expectations to broadly average results, reflecting a good improvement in designing and making since the previous inspection.
68. In Year 11, inspection evidence showed pupils' attainment to be in line with the national expectation, but Year 11 A*-C GCSE results are below national averages. The difference is explained by the improved attainment of pupils entering Key Stage 4 from Year 9 and improvements in the educational provision, including teaching, brought about by a recently appointed head of department. GCSE examination results in resistant materials and graphics are slightly stronger than those in food technology. In the 1999 GCSE examinations, all pupils attained a grade A*-G. On balance, boys and girls results are relatively close. Sixth-form results at A-level are below national averages but the group is very small and national comparisons are difficult to make with sufficient validity. However, sixth-form pupils make good progress and achieve creditable results given their prior attainment.
69. The strong emphasis on identifying clear specifications for design work, the teaching of drawing skills and on how to evaluate products is having a positive impact on pupils' attainment. This is an improvement on the previous report and is generally raising attainment. In Year 9, pupils' designing skills are satisfactory. The majority of pupils give sound consideration to the work of other designers, clearly identifying the strengths and weaknesses in their designs. They experiment and clarify their ideas well through the use of drawings and modelling ideas in three-dimensions. Pupils' skills of construction and working with tools and materials are satisfactory and they work competently with a reasonable range of materials such as wood, acrylic, metal, food and graphics.
70. By the time they reach the end of Key Stage 4, pupils' skills in designing and making match the standards found nationally. The majority have sound skills in researching for information to inform their design work and are competent in devising questionnaires and analysing the responses. Many make

good use of computers and graphics programs to help them develop their designs. The majority of pupils have sound, and often good, skills in using tools and materials when making their products. They show satisfactory knowledge and understanding of the materials and the production processes they use. For example, a group of low ability Year 11 pupils demonstrated sound knowledge of the qualities of a range of different woods and acrylics.

71. Sixth-form pupils have sound knowledge and understanding of the technical background to structures and mechanical processes. For example, pupils in Year 13 can calculate clockwise and anti-clockwise moments competently. Design work by sixth-form pupils is often of good quality with good care taken over presentation of ideas.
72. Progress across Year 9 is good. Pupils develop well their skills in cutting, shaping and joining or combining a range of materials. They learn to choose appropriate tools for the task and develop their understanding of the principles behind designing for a particular purpose or for a specific group of users. The majority make good progress in learning to devise production plans and in evaluating their design and practical work, making appropriate modifications where needed. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in Year 9.
73. At Key Stage 4 progress is good. Pupils' designing and making takes on greater sophistication and most pupils make good gains in understanding how to analyse the needs of users when designing particular products. They gain confidence in understanding the link between an accurate design drawing and the final product. The amount of experimental work increases to aid pupils' understanding of the fitness for purpose of different materials. For example in a Year 10 lesson, pupils used a basic biscuit recipe as a starting point and modified this to test out the function of each ingredient in order to determine the most effective combination of ingredients for a perfect product. Good progress was also seen in another lesson in Year 10 where pupils were making a moving toy for a child. They made good progress in developing their knowledge and understanding of the use of the mechanisms which enable toys to have moving parts. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress through Key Stage 4.
74. Pupils also make good progress at A-level. They have a mature and well-informed approach to their work and individual tutorials with their teachers enables their work to progress appropriately, but the group dynamics of small numbers impede discussion. Good progress is evident in theory work and in pupils' knowledge and understanding of the scientific and mathematical background to technological applications. For example, pupils in a Year 13 lesson made good progress when revising structural theory and applying it to different situations.
75. Pupils' attitudes are good. They enjoy design and technology, especially when making products. They concentrate well on their studies because lessons are generally split into small components with a range of targets to be met each week. Behaviour is generally good but a minority of Year 11 pupils are uncooperative and disrupt the work of others. Relationships are good and group work flourishes, especially in food technology where mixed gender groups produce good quality products. Pupils' personal organisation is very good because the organisation of tools and materials and time management are taught well.
76. The quality of teaching in the department is generally good with some outstanding teaching and enables pupils to make good progress. Teachers have a wide range of experience from industry and other phases of education, which has a positive impact on pupils' learning. In the best lessons clear expectations at the start of the lesson and a series of time targets encourage pupils to remain on task and keep the lesson moving at a swift pace. Planning is effective in matching work to pupils' needs, but there are missed opportunities to disassemble existing products as a method of analysing how they are made and how they work. Teachers encourage well the development of independence and self-sufficiency amongst pupils.
77. A good range of teaching styles including some innovative group work extend pupils' interpersonal and discussion skills as well as their designing and making skills. On occasions restricted flexibility of the furniture in rooms constrains group work and this hampers progress. Lessons follow the lively format of the teaching and learning policy. This helps to maintain consistency in the department especially

with respect to discipline, marking and homework requirements. The lack of technician time has a negative influence on teaching because teachers are engaged in tasks normally covered by a technician. This diminishes their planning time, as well as affecting issues such as health and safety.

78. The department offers courses in food technology, graphic products, and resistant materials but the school is not yet able to offer textiles or electronics. Challenging end of module tests are used to track and compare pupils' progress with the National Curriculum level statements, but there is no accurate baseline of information to enable the department to calculate the value added effect of work covered in Year 9. All pupils have the opportunity to work independently, but are not sufficiently aware of National Curriculum levels to push themselves further. This is especially so for the higher attainers. Individual education plans for low attainers are integrated effectively into planning. This is an improvement since the last report, and is strengthened by the provision of subject targets given to help pupils promote their success and raise their self-esteem. There are good curricular links with the literacy programme, the numeracy programme and computer work, although food and resistant materials continue to have limited everyday access to computers as highlighted in the last report.

79. The leadership and management of the department are now effective and having a positive impact on pupils' attainment, but there are still issues which need further consideration. An otherwise comprehensive technology development plan misses the opportunity for design and technology to provide its own profile of costing and performance criteria in order to highlight the problems of inadequate funding. Inadequate tools and materials impinge on pupils' practical outcomes. For example, in graphic products good design intentions cannot be realised to their best because of the lack of appropriate modelling materials. There is scope for the department to make better use of the limited space for display.

164. **Geography**

80. GCSE results at grades A*-C were above the national average in 1999 and this is a significant improvement on the situation in 1998. Boys achieved at a slightly higher level than the girls and were above the national average for boys. Girls' results were in line with the national average for their gender. In the combined top grades of A*/A results were below the national figures. Results have been close to or above average at grades A*-G in all but one of the last three years. All of the ten A-level candidates obtained an A-E grade in 1999 but none attained the higher A or B grades, compared to 1998, when the average for higher grades was in line with national statistics.

81. Attainment overall at the end of Year 9 is in line with national expectations. A majority of pupils possess satisfactory mapping, diagrammatic and graphical skills. There is currently no evidence of significant underachievement, as was reported in 1996. Higher attainers in particular possess good enquiry skills and are able to collect and evaluate data in enquiry tasks. A significant number of pupils have a satisfactory knowledge and understanding of the factors influencing climate, the water cycle and the physical and economic geography of Italy and Kenya, particularly population structures and stages of development. Higher attaining pupils are also able to understand clearly the influences developed countries have on the less economically advanced nations. Because of appropriate reinforcement and regular emphasis placed by teachers, most pupils have satisfactory knowledge of geographical language. The standards achieved by lower attaining pupils are influenced by weaker literacy and retention and recall skills over time.

82. By the end of Year 11 attainment of both boys and girls is in line with the national average. GCSE pupils have a satisfactory and in some cases good knowledge of physical and human concepts and processes. These include the influences of development and tourism in particular on areas of natural beauty as well as the causes and consequences of natural hazards, such as earthquakes and volcanoes. Pupils are competent in carrying out independent learning tasks. Higher attaining pupils in particular, write accurately and speak clearly and coherently. There is some good extended writing because of the department's emphasis on the development of essay planning skills. They are able to carry out field study assignments, gathering and analysing data to test pre-set hypotheses. By the end of the sixth form, attainment is in line with course requirements. Pupils display at least satisfactory and in the case of higher attaining pupils, good knowledge and understanding of field study

methodology. They use information technology and statistical models effectively to represent data both in their individual studies and in other aspects of the course.

83. Progress in Year 9 is good for a majority of pupils. Higher attainers frequently make very good progress and pupils with special educational needs are making good progress, particularly when supported. As pupils pass through the year satisfactory gains are made in mapping, graphical and diagrammatic skills. They also make good progress in the development of independent learning skills. Good progress was also observed in work on the changing pattern of farming in Kenya and the reasons for the high incidence of industry in northern Italy, compared to the south. Most pupils have developed a good understanding of geographical issues and the relationships between physical and human processes by the end of Year 11. A majority of pupils on the GCSE course are making good progress in developing decision-making skills and in the use of appropriate geographical language. Progress is influenced by effective teaching, with careful planning and appropriate objectives combined with the very efficient use of up-to-date and relevant resources.
84. Good progress by most pupils on the A-level course was seen in files and books in knowledge and understanding of environmental dangers facing the planet and in the growth, decay and regeneration of urban areas.
85. Attitudes to learning are good. There is no evidence of the under achievement reported in 1996. A significant majority of pupils takes pride in the presentation of their work. They listen carefully to teachers and to one another and work effectively in groups, as well as on independent learning tasks. Behaviour is very good and pupils settle quickly to tasks, listen attentively and respond well to teachers' questions and in discussions. The take-up for this subject at GCSE and A-level is high.
86. The overall quality of teaching is very good and this is a very significant improvement on the situation at the time of the last report. Well-planned lessons, employing interesting strategies, have a positive impact upon the standard of work. Teachers are very secure in their subject knowledge and understanding and they provide pupils with geographical content and case studies which are accurate and up to date. They encourage pupils to ask and analyse geographical questions and to develop mapping and atlas skills. Significant and valuable work has been done to develop accurate spelling, the use of geographical language and extended writing skills. Work is regularly marked and teachers provide helpful comments to enable pupils to improve their work. Teachers have high expectations and lessons are conducted at an appropriate pace. They maintain very effective discipline and use resources efficiently and effectively. The development of pupils' information technology skills has improved since the last inspection and a planned programme has been built into the scheme of work, to enable pupils to widen their learning in geography. Good use is also made of case studies to develop enquiry and decision-making skills, as well as providing up-to-date information on places, population growth and change and economic development.
87. The subject is very well organised and managed. Geography also contributes positively to pupils' spiritual, social, moral and cultural development. Appropriate priorities for development have been identified by the head of department, although further consideration needs to be given to how the priorities for development are to be achieved. The range of field studies, with opportunities in each year, is a very good provision.

172. **History**

88. Measures taken by the department to address issues raised at the last inspection have had a good impact on raising the attainment of pupils and a positive effect on the quality of teaching. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 in 1999 is close to the national average for A*-C passes at GCSE. Inspection evidence reflects a similar picture. This indicates considerable improvement on previously low attainment. At the end of Key Stage 3, attainment is broadly in line with the national average, with a significant minority of pupils reaching the higher levels. A comparison of A-level results against national results is statistically difficult because of the small number of pupils involved. Analysis of GCSE coursework indicates that pupils are well motivated for this aspect of their work and over half of them gained good marks in this section. Procedures for assessment in school and external assessments produce consistent results and the extra revision time given to boys last year has closed

the gap in attainment with girls so that it is statistically insignificant.

89. Key Stage 3 pupils have good attainment in knowing the factual background of events and personalities in their study of Europe in the 1930's and reach satisfactory standards in chronology and historical enquiry. At the end of Key Stage 4 pupils are writing at length on the social consequences for the Plains Indians and the settlers when the railways connected the east and west coasts of nineteenth century America. They use facts accurately to justify different points of view and have a clear understanding of bias when using contemporary resources. Their attainment in historical enquiry is good. In the sixth form, pupils have a good knowledge base on which to write their essays. They are able to identify bias in the materials and sources of historical evidence and sources of propaganda.
90. Progress at the end of both key stages is good. In Year 9, higher attainers make good progress assembling material for a good quality essay and have a good general knowledge base which they use effectively in their written and spoken responses in lessons. Year 11 pupils make good progress in understanding cause and effect in their course work on nineteenth century Haverhill and how evidence of trading tokens from Hull and London shows the extent of the local textile trade. Higher attaining pupils in Year 10 show good perception of what is relevant to their answers when researching source material and there is good progress over time by lower attaining pupils relating economic changes in the American West to breakdown in law and order. Pupils in the sixth form make good progress, for example, in analysing an article from a university journal for bias. They were developing well their skills in putting forward valid arguments to dispute points made in the article. Sixth-formers were also making good progress in understanding the religious atmosphere of Mary Tudor's reign and the difficulties she encountered as a female ruler.
91. Although the provision for special educational needs is satisfactory, the main support comes from teachers being conscientious and careful to include pupils in all aspects of the lesson. This approach has some success when the classes are small, but less so with full classes. Planning word lists or structured writing plans for these pupils is not well developed. Pupils in the sixth form benefit from a more tutorial style of teaching and access to outside sources, such as the County Records Office, which have a good impact on their progress and understanding of what is expected for A-level studies.
92. Most pupils are well motivated and have good attitudes to their studies. Some classes are slow to respond to questions, but once someone started the rest of the class became involved. One Year 11 class enjoyed their lesson, showed humour and made good contributions which moved the lesson along well. No examples of disruptive behaviour were observed and relationships between pupils and teachers have a good impact on the success of lessons. When instances of poor motivation occurred, teachers dealt with them effectively and firmly in a way that did not detract from the enjoyment or progress of other pupils. Through making their own decisions about the relevance of material and note-taking regularly, pupils are working independently and confident in their relationships with teachers to seek advice. This has a good impact on their progress and plays a significant part in the very good personal development ethos of the school.
93. The overall quality of teaching is good. This is an improvement on the situation at the last inspection and has been achieved by a consistent approach to lessons. All are qualified in the subject and begin lessons by explaining what the objective is and recalling previous work. Homework is set properly and has value through its use in future lessons. All make regular and effective use of time limits in lessons and support wholeheartedly the drive to improve literacy. One particularly successful lesson analysed a good essay by one of the pupils as an example for improvement by others. The consistent approach does not detract from the individual characteristics each teacher brings to their teaching, which shows in the relationships within classes and the way in which these are formed. There is a weakness in planning for pupils with special educational needs, which relies heavily on the level of teacher support at present and pays insufficient attention to the style of work needed for those pupils.
94. Careful analysis of examination results and measures designed to bring about changes in teaching has been successful in improving attainment. Plans for further development of the subject, such as pupils' skills in discussion, are clear, although specific time targets for achievement are not stated. Improved resources since the last inspection have had a good impact on the status of the subject and on pupils' attainment.

179. **Information technology**

95. Results of assessments carried out by teachers indicate that pupils' attainment in Year 9 has been consistently in line with the national expectations since 1997. The teacher assessments for 1999 match the inspection findings and indicate above average attainment overall with well above average attainment for a small group of pupils. This indicates good improvement when compared with the previous report. Pupils do not follow any accredited courses in Key Stage 4 and information technology skills are taught through subjects. Pupils make satisfactory progress and, by the time they are in Year 11, their attainment matches the standards expected nationally.
96. In Year 9 and Key Stage 4, communication and information handling skills are good and the strongest elements of information technology. Work in control, modelling and measuring, which was criticised in the last report, is now in place and of sound quality. The majority of pupils in Year 9 have good basic information technology skills, such as loading programs, saving and retrieving work. Their desktop publishing skills are good and most understand and know how to make use of spreadsheets and CD-ROMs. The majority of pupils coming to the end of Key Stage 4 have good skills in using wordprocessors. Most edit their work competently using a suitable variety of facilities offered by the programs. For example, they use spell-checkers with skill and import pictures and graphs to illustrate work they have wordprocessed. Pupils are aware of the potential for using computers to improve the presentation of their work. For example, Year 11 pupils in a business education lesson were able to use a combination of programs to prepare a presentation to others in their class. Some of the best work made good use of programs to produce an on-screen presentation with automatic scrolling of the screens. Year 11 pupils also demonstrate sound skills in handling information. They capably search the internet for information and know how to set up spreadsheets. The girls have less confidence with computers and this sometimes holds back their progress. Steady encouragement of girls is ensuring that their personal perception of their ability with computers is becoming more positive.
97. At sixth-form level attainment in information technology is in line with course expectations for pupils following GNVQ courses. For other A-level pupils, standards of attainment are broadly average. The majority of sixth-form pupils make regular and competent use of programs such as wordprocessors, spreadsheets and databases. They have the skills to surf the internet and to access information stored on CD-ROMs. A-level pupils have an option to complete modules of an externally accredited course to suit their specific need. For example several pupils have completed the word processing module and are moving on to global communication.
98. Progress in Year 9 is good. Pupils rapidly build on their prior learning which varies quite considerably. There is no structured check on pupils' level of competence on entry to the school to enable the best match of work to their needs. Progress in Years 10 and 11 and in the sixth form is satisfactory overall. Most pupils move quickly from learning a skill to applying it to their work in a wide range of subjects and situations. For example learning to use the school intranet and experimenting with the internet led pupils to design their own web page. Pupils develop their use of a range of equipment and software with professional flair. The school newsletter is a good example of this. It is self funded, researched and presented by a pupil team led by a member of the sixth form. Pupils throughout the school evaluate problems and use the computer to model a solution. For example, in a design and technology lesson using control technology, the range of equipment provided and the challenge of the task they were given fired up pupils' enthusiasm. The experiments to control sound, light and movement made the classroom buzz with excitement as pupils discovered solutions to problems such as home security. On the whole, pupils' use of computers in a good range of curricular contexts enhances their skills and helps them to make secure gains in their knowledge and understanding of a variety of programs. However, there is no clear mapping of skills for all to see or for the co-ordinator to monitor. This leads to occasional gaps in pupils' skills. For example, some in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form still use a space bar to centre text. Progress for pupils with special educational needs is good throughout the school. They have good access to computers and specialist programs to meet their needs.
99. Pupils' attitudes to computers are very good. The majority, throughout the school, are autonomous when using information technology and make good use of the help sheets provided to encourage their perseverance in completing tasks. Regular use of the computers at lunchtime allows pupils to share

their new knowledge. Computers draw pupils like magnets, there is rarely a time when the main information technology room is not a hive of activity. Behaviour is good even when the teacher's monitoring is discrete. There are some smaller information technology rooms that are not used so frequently because the machines are old and in need of repair in some cases. Personal development is very good because pupils become proficient users with a purposeful drive to improve the application of their skills.

100. The quality of teaching in information technology lessons is good. On occasions in application of computer skills within subjects, for example in design and technology, teaching is very good because the pupils are challenged to be independent learners. Planning is good and includes exciting opportunities to be creative as well as logical. Planning encourages pupils to experiment and to share their skills, as well as taking account of the learning needs of pupils with special educational needs. The most effective development of computer use was seen when teachers were team teaching because of the combination of specialist information technology skills and subject knowledge made available to pupils.
101. The information technology co-ordinator and technician are a confident team and enthusiastically spread their personal skills and interest. All teachers have been involved in an effective audit of their computer skills in order to inform the staff development programme to be put in place once the external training to be provided through the New Opportunities Fund is available. Organisation and use of resources in the new computer room are good but less efficient in other areas. There are items of equipment such as the weather satellite that have fallen into disrepair and are no longer used. Records of pupils' work are kept centrally by the co-ordinator and progress is tracked. However, the department has not managed to maintain a comprehensive collection of annotated work from all subjects for all pupils. There is also a lack of a cross-curricular file of exemplar work to benchmark standards for staff and pupils to use. The school does not offer a summary report to parents at the end of the year or a statement in the National Record of Achievement and so does not fulfil their statutory requirement on reporting. Wall displays clearly identify expectations and around the school there are good examples of information technology used to promote subject understanding, for example in the mathematics corridor.
102. Management of information technology is complex and central to the school's forthcoming Technology College bid. Although there is good practice in the information technology department that is permeating all subject areas there is little management structure to allow the co-ordinator to use his time effectively to monitor the information technology policy. There is no forum, beside the heads of faculty meeting, to allow feedback from departments on information technology development and departments do not report on the information technology competence of pupils in their subject. On occasions cross-curricular computer work is hampered by lack of access to computers. From the information technology policy and the inspection evidence it is clear that the increasing demand from subject teachers to use computers is starting to outstrip availability. These factors result in progress at Key Stage 4 and the sixth form not being as good as in Year 9 because pupils in these key stages are taught through the curriculum.

187. **Modern foreign languages**

103. In 1999, GCSE results in French at A*-C were significantly below the national average but higher than in the previous year. Boys did marginally better when compared to boys nationally than did the girls when compared to the proportion of girls attaining a grade A*-C nationally. All pupils who entered gained a GCSE grade within the A*-G range. GCSE results in German at A*-C were below the national average and significantly lower than in 1998. Results in the A*-G range were in line with the national average. In 1999, no passes were gained in A-level French, although previously the small numbers entering had mostly been successful. Only one of two pupils entering for German gained a grade, lower than those achieved in previous years. In all instances, girls attained higher results than boys.
104. Pupils' attainment in French at the end of Key Stage 3 was above the national expectation, in the most recent tests set by their teachers. Inspection evidence, however, points to below average attainment and highlights inaccuracies in teachers' assessments. By the end of the key stage, pupils have acquired a range of vocabulary and structures in French, with which they seek and convey information about everyday situations. The highest attainers speak confidently, and write descriptively using different tenses to refer to the past and the future. Lower attainers, including some pupils with special educational needs, express themselves more simply but can extract details from short texts dealing with topics such as the environment. All pupils start German in Year 9, learning to talk and write about themselves, their families and daily lives, in lessons mostly delivered in the foreign language. At Key Stage 4, higher attaining pupils in both languages adapt their speaking to particular purposes such as interviews and presentations and write imaginatively, justifying their ideas and opinions. Lower attainers can understand and compose short dialogues using the basic language needed to travel and stay abroad. The small numbers studying French and German to A-level have widely different levels of attainment. A minority of boys and girls are fluent and spontaneous when discussing topics such as pollution and the media, but most refer to notes, prepared beforehand with their teachers.
105. Most pupils make satisfactory progress in French and German lessons, and their progress is frequently good. Within a few weeks of joining the school, pupils have consolidated and built on the French learnt in middle school, and most have made a good start in German. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress, and when they are supported their progress is good. In Key Stage 4, higher attainers cover a series of topics and learn to express feelings, opinions and reactions. They work methodically towards the good grades they expect to achieve at GCSE. Many lower attainers make satisfactory progress, although a minority show little interest and achieve little. In the small sixth-form classes, most pupils make good progress. They work conscientiously in lessons and do individual research, but a few find the work hard and have difficulty keeping up with the rest.
106. Many pupils of all ages show interest in their work and pride in their achievements. Most have good relations with their teachers, respond to encouragement and work co-operatively in groups and pairs. Many classes in Key Stage 3, particularly in German, are orderly and industrious, but occasionally learning is impaired through sluggish reactions or inattentive behaviour. When lessons are imaginative and the pace brisk, pupils are caught up in the variety and rhythm of activities but they are less stimulated by pedestrian lessons based on textbooks or worksheets. In Key Stage 4, most pupils persist well with reading and written exercises. They enjoy interviews and discussions, and keep track of their own attainment and progress. Sixth-formers work enthusiastically in class, and appreciate the efforts of their teachers and fellow pupils. They enrich their studies through travel abroad, contact with native speakers and use the school library and computers for research and presentation.
107. The quality of teaching is good overall and at least satisfactory in all lessons. In over half of these teaching is good, or very good. Teachers have good subject knowledge and while they have different teaching styles, they use authentic French and German to challenge and stimulate their pupils. Teachers sometimes use English unnecessarily, and occasionally exercises are too long or unrewarding to sustain pupils' interest. Expectations are usually high. Teachers usually plan and prepare their work sensibly. They provide a balanced series of activities, sometimes graded in difficulty, to exercise important skills. In the best lessons there is a brisk interchange between teacher and pupils and learning takes place in a positive and busy atmosphere. Teachers assess their pupils' work in class informally, and much of their marking is thorough and supportive. In Key Stage 3 they do not involve pupils enough in their own assessment.

108. Improvements in provision have followed recommendations made at the last inspection. Changes in staffing and alterations to the curriculum have resulted in an unsettled period with some outcomes lower than expected. Currently, the quality of teaching and learning is rising. There is scope for raising achievement further through the wider adoption of varied and dynamic teaching methods, more detailed assessment, including target setting, and by planning work to suit the range of attainment within classes.

193. **Music**

109. Pupils are receiving a good musical education and standards are rising.

110. In Key Stage 3, the large majority of pupils are reaching national expectations, with a few above and below

.
Standards in composing 111.

are slightly above expectation. Compositions are well constructed but some times quite short.

Performing skills are largely at expectation, but with a few pupils above and a

significant
minority
below

.
Pupils can maintain a consistent pulse and play confidently together in groups, but some pupils

technical skills are limited. Most attain the nationally expected standards in listening and appraising skills. Many can self-appraise their group work competently, but a

minor
ity
quickl
y lose
focus
unles
s
firmly
direct
ed by
their
teach
er.

1. The attainment of pupils in Key Stage 4 is above average. Standards of composing are often very good and sometimes excellent, many pieces are both complex and quite lengthy. Standards of performing vary from below average to exceptional. A feature of performing is the good ensemble work, which partially derives from the high quality of extra-curricular activities available in the school. In listening and appraising pupils' standards of work are above expectation, with the vast majority of pupils being at or above the levels expected for their age. Pupils can recognise music from different periods of musical history, giving accurate reasons drawing on appropriate technical vocabulary. The number taking GCSE is too small to compare with national figures but results in 1999 were above the national average.
2. Attainment of pupils post-16 is above average, especially in composing which is well above average. A-level results since the last inspection have had a 100 per cent pass rate with all pupils attaining a grade A-E. Pupils across the school are confident users of information technology for research, for example, exploring CD-ROM sources for information; for composing and high quality presentation of pieces in printed form.
3. Progress in Key Stage 3 is satisfactory. Pupils' perseverance, and clear planning and encouragement by the teacher, enable pupils of all levels of prior attainment to make progress. However, a minority of pupils, mainly boys, are less focused and only make progress when closely supervised by their teacher.
4. In Key Stage 4 progress is good, sometimes very good, as for example in Year 11 when using high quality worksheets to explore CD-ROMs for information about chamber music. Pupils can draw on their research and past experience to help them answer listening questions from past GCSE papers.
5. Progress of sixth-form pupils is good, and very good in composing due to meticulous teacher planning and good quality use of information technology resources. Progress of pupils with special educational needs, especially gifted musicians, is good.
6. Pupils show interest in music. They arrive promptly and many arrive keen to work. Concentration is often good, for example Year 9 composing groups are usually on task, asking themselves how they can improve without prompting from their teacher. However, a minority of Year 9 boys are less able to concentrate and they show a tendency to giggle. Most pupils are well behaved, the rare exceptions again being Year 9 boys. Pupils are polite to the teacher and courteous to each other. Instruments and information technology equipment are treated with respect, even when working in a room crowded with vulnerable stringed instruments pupils are careful in moving round them. Working relationships are good, particularly among GCSE and A-level groups who often arrange to meet in lunchtimes or after school to practise ensemble playing. Numbers taking GCSE are small but rising. For its size, the school has an impressive record for the number of pupils going on to study music when they leave.
7. Teaching is always at least good, often very good and sometimes excellent. Minor weaknesses at the last inspection have been addressed. Subject knowledge is particularly evident in meticulous planning, for example in the creation of worksheets for Year 11 research linked to practice of listening questions, and in individual assignments prepared on computer for Year 13 pupils. Strategies are good, with a mixture of group and individual work. Questioning is well-informed but occasionally older pupils are not given sufficient time to think about answers. Class discipline is excellent at all times, even the liveliest and least committed of Year 9 pupils are made to work, and work hard. Good use is made of new information technology resources, and the impact is

particularly obvious on Year 11 research and composing work, and in Year 13 individualised composing projects. Marking is helpful and homework appropriate.

8. Pupils follow a broad and balanced curriculum. Extra-curricular activities are reviewed annually so that the mix of instrumental players in the school each year has the right ensemble opportunities to extend performing skills, though at present opportunities for singing are limited. Provision for pupils with special educational needs, and particularly for high musical attainers, is good. Assessment procedures are very good, but pupils' attainment in Key Stage 3 is not yet analysed by gender or by component to identify particular areas of weakness. Music makes a good contribution to pupils' spiritual and moral development, and a very good contribution to their social and cultural education through the breadth of extra-curricular activities which include concerts in the community and in Germany.
9. The department is led and managed well. Development planning is consistently good, showing logical progression and balanced consideration of needs of the whole age range of pupils, as for example in the systematic acquisition of information technology resources, which have improved since the last inspection. In-service training is closely linked to development planning. The accommodation is good, though short of storage for instruments. Provision of books, instruments and listening resources is generally good, and book provision in the library is very good, but A-level pupils do not have access to sufficient breadth of music for listening.
10. Since the last inspection the department has improved links with middle schools and raised standards of literacy particularly in the use of technical language in class. It now needs to raise further the attainment of the lowest achieving boys, continue good work in information technology, and increase the provision of listening resources for A-level pupils.

205. **Physical education**

11. Pupils will sit A-level examinations for the first time in 2000. In the 1999 A/S-level examinations there was an entry of 4 pupils. They all attained grades between A-E. Pupils in Years 12 and 13 have a wide range of abilities but overall they are attaining in line with standards nationally. Over time, the results in GCSE examinations have risen from 21 per cent A*-C grades achieved in 1996 to 54 per cent in 1998. However, in 1999 there was a fall in results, and 43 per cent of pupils gained A*-C grades which was below the 51 per cent achieved nationally. The school has identified that five of the 23 pupils who took the examination in 1999 had special educational needs. Boys have outperformed girls every year in GCSE examinations. Pupils in the examination groups in Years 10 and 11 are maintaining standards expected nationally and a few boys are attaining above this level in football. Non-examination pupils in Years 10 and 11 are achieving above national expectations. Girls know the difference between high and low impact aerobics and boys understand the types of exercises necessary to build stamina and flexibility. Boys and girls are able to identify their target fitness zones. In Year 9, attainment overall is above national expectations. This confirms the end of key stage teacher assessments. In basketball and football most boys are able to create enough space to allow one another to perform basic skills consistently in the game. Girls are able to plan tactics in netball and most have sound footwork and ball handling skills. The attainment of some individual pupils and teams at all key stages is very good. They achieve good results at district and county level in netball, football and athletics. Attainment levels at all key stages have improved from those reported at the last inspection.

12. Progress in Year 9 is good. Pupils come to the school with sound basic skills in netball, football and basketball. They build and consolidate these skills and gain confidence when working together as a team. Pupils develop their performance techniques more than their planning and evaluative skills. In Years 10 and 11 progress is mostly good in core physical education and sound in GCSE lessons. All pupils develop good understanding of the components of health and fitness. In a small minority of GCSE lessons, progress is sometimes hindered by teaching that is not rigorous enough, lacks pace and does not sufficiently challenge pupils. Progress in the sixth form is good. Teachers build on prior learning and progress is made with the use of information technology for research and review. Year 13 pupils improved their skill, their planning and their analysis of performance in the badminton lesson observed. Boys and girls are seen to make the same rates of progress. The equal progress of all pupils, including those with special educational needs and regardless of the different physical skills or levels of prior attainment, is mostly well supported by the use of appropriate equipment, the teaching in single gender groups and the well timed intervention of teachers. However, too many pupils within these groups are expected to perform the same tasks, when their range of attainment demands greater flexibility and guidance.

13. Year 9 pupils are keen and interested. The boys work energetically and the girls cooperate well in small groups. In Years 10 and 11, pupils' attitudes vary but the majority show a keen interest and are prepared to join discussions and to demonstrate activities. Pupils in Years 12 and 13 are enthusiastic but are not sufficiently committed to their learning. They quickly become off task and lack concentration. Over one third of all pupils, boys and girls, regularly participate in extra-curricular sporting activities. The large number of boys opting to study physical education at GCSE level shows their interest in the subject.

14. All teaching in Years 9, 12 and 13 is good. However, teaching at Key Stage 4 varies from very good to unsatisfactory, but it is good overall. When teaching is unsatisfactory it lacks pace, subject knowledge is weak and learning tasks are low level and repetitive. Good and very good teaching addresses all strands of the National Curriculum in the appropriate balance. It gives pupils independent learning tasks and encourages them to take responsibility and show initiative. The pace of these lessons is fast and much is achieved in the fifty-minute lesson. Overall, the consistency of teaching has improved from that reported at the last inspection.

15. The addition of the health-related fitness module at Key Stage 4 is a good initiative and extends the required curriculum. There is a very good extra-curricular programme of activities and includes some Saturday and Wednesday afternoon and evening fixtures. The department makes a good contribution to the social and moral awareness of pupils. It could make a greater contribution to their literacy and information technology skills at Key Stage 4. The department has very good indoor and outdoor facilities with the exception of the poorly surfaced courts which are in need of urgent attention. The head of department is in a temporary position making long-term development difficult. However, the department has already identified some useful areas for future planning. These include: monitoring of teaching; review of the Key Stage 3 curriculum, including improving curricular liaison with the middle schools to ensure that all pupils have similar prior experiences in the range; depth and balance of curricular coverage across Key Stage 3, and meeting the development needs of the staff. Since the previous inspection there have been improvements in attainment, teaching and the sharing of assessment criteria with the pupils.

210. Religious education

16. Pupils were entered for short GCSE examination for the first time in 1999. Results were above the national average, compared with 1998 figures. No A-level or any other discrete course is offered in the sixth form.
17. Attainment by the majority of pupils at the end of Year 9 is in line with the expectations of the Suffolk Agreed Syllabus. Most display satisfactory listening and speaking skills and they are using a satisfactory range of writing styles, although the opportunities for extended writing are limited. Pupils' knowledge of the richness and diversity of religions and beliefs is at least satisfactory and in the case of higher attainers, it is good. Understanding and interpretation of religious beliefs is much less well developed. Many pupils find it difficult to explain beliefs and what the teaching of the Buddha means to a Buddhist. A majority continues to show satisfactory knowledge of symbolism in different faiths and is aware of the importance of rituals and ceremonies and the reasons for festivals and pilgrimages.
18. All pupils take religious education in Years 10 and 11 as a short GCSE course. By the end of Year 11, attainment of these pupils is in line with the national average. Most pupils show good listening and discussion skills. The higher achievers in particular are able to argue a position on moral issues and on the responses of individual religions. A majority is also able to form and communicate their own responses to issues surrounding the value and sanctity of life and the role of the family and marriage within a religious framework.
19. Progress is at least satisfactory for the majority of pupils in Year 9 and in the GCSE course, it is good overall. Progress of higher attainers in particular, would benefit from a more rigorous challenge in the work provided. Most pupils, however, are extending and consolidating their knowledge of the importance of religious symbolism, but progress in understanding significant beliefs, ceremonies and festivals is less well developed. This lack of progress in understanding was seen in lessons on the teaching of the Buddha and on the sayings of Guru Nanak in a lesson on the Sikh faith. Progress in the use of information technology to widen pupils' awareness of world religions is weak. Pupils' progress would also benefit from regular marking, which is not established at the moment. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress and good progress when supported.
20. Pupils respond positively and attitudes to learning are good in a significant majority of lessons. They show a satisfactory interest in the subject and quickly settled down to tasks. Some pupils in Year 9, however, do not interact in class discussions or respond to the teachers' questions. Pupils are well behaved and relationships between pupils and teachers contribute to the standard of work achieved. Most pupils in Years 10 and 11 join in lessons, answering teachers' questions and taking part in discussion.
21. The quality of teaching is satisfactory and in lessons in Years 10 and 11 it is often good. Teaching continues to be characterised by positive relationships and a considerable level of pastoral concern combined with firm and fair discipline. Some improvement has been made in the planning of lessons, but attention is still required to ensure that pupils' understanding of beliefs and values in Year 9 is improved and that higher attaining pupils are more rigorously challenged. Marking is not as good as was reported in 1996 and strategies to provide regular and helpful marking needs to be established as a matter of urgency. The teacher provides a working environment in which pupils feel confident to discuss their own views and beliefs. Behaviour management is very good,

as are relationships both between the teacher and pupils and between pupils. The teacher has a very secure knowledge and understanding of the subject and this has a beneficial influence on standards. Discussions are directed with confidence and authority and pupils are encouraged to formulate their own views on a range of religious and moral issues, for example the existence of a God, the importance of life and issues arising from religious faith responses to marriage, the family and the sanctity of life. Paired and group working is encouraged.

22. The curriculum meets statutory requirements, except in the sixth form, where the school is not following the recommendations of the Agreed Syllabus to provide all pupils with their legal curriculum entitlement. The introduction of a successful short GCSE for all pupils is a significant improvement on the situation at the time of the last report. Religious education contributes significantly to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development but its impact is restricted by its absence within the sixth form. A total lack of religious artefacts has an inhibiting affect on teaching and learning. There are no visits to places of worship and this reduces the possibilities for pupils to widen their knowledge and understanding and to learn from religions.

PART C: INSPECTION DATA

SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE

23. A team of twelve inspectors visited the school for a combined total of 43 days. During the week of inspection, the team observed 152 lessons, or parts of lessons, a sample of morning and afternoon registration periods and all assemblies.
24. All full-time teachers at the school during the period of inspection were observed teaching, most on more than one occasion. Planned discussions were held with governors, the headteacher and deputy headteachers as well as with all members of staff with management responsibilities. Further, informal discussions were held with non-teaching staff and support staff.
25. Documentation provided by the school about all aspects of its work was scrutinised before, as well as during the inspection. In addition, inspectors looked in depth at all the work of a representative sample of pupils in each year group as well as the work of many others during lesson observations. Inspectors also held discussions with a representative sample of pupils from each year group. Informal discussions took place with many pupils on numerous occasions during lesson observations, and around the school, for example at break times.
26. The registered inspector held four meetings at the school before the inspection: with the headteacher, with governors, with teaching staff and with a group of six parents who attended the parents' meeting. The team considered responses from 194 parents to a questionnaire about their views of the school.

DATA AND INDICATORS

Pupil data

	Number of pupils on roll (full-time equivalent)	Number of pupils with statements of SEN	Number of pupils on school's register of SEN	Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals
Y9-Y13	531	18	121	37

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers (Y9-Y13)

Total number of qualified teachers (full-time equivalent)	34
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	15.62

Education support staff (Y9-Y13)

Total number of education support staff	10
Total aggregate hours worked each week	184

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes: 74.5

Average class size (Y9-Y11):	22
------------------------------	----

Financial data

Financial year: 1998/99

	£
Total Income	1,472,738
Total Expenditure	1,455,284
Expenditure per pupil	2,899
Balance brought forward from previous year	40,552
Balance carried forward to next year	58,006

PARENTAL SURVEY

Number of questionnaires sent out:	531
Number of questionnaires returned:	194

Responses (percentage of answers in each category):

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I feel the school encourages parents to play an active part in the life of the school	17	72	11	1	0
I would find it easy to approach the school with questions or problems to do with my child(ren)	34	61	5	0	0
The school handles complaints from parents well	15	59	24	2	0
The school gives me a clear understanding of what is taught	19	71	8	2	0
The school keeps me well informed about my child(ren)'s progress	30	61	7	2	0
The school enables my child(ren) to achieve a good standard of work	27	66	7	0	0
The school encourages children to get involved in more than just their daily lessons	31	61	7	1	0
I am satisfied with the work that my child(ren) is/are expected to do at home	20	68	6	4	1
The school's values and attitudes have a positive effect on my child(ren)	19	66	15	1	0
The school achieves high standards of good behaviour	16	70	14	0	0
My child(ren) like(s) school	28	61	7	3	1

221. Other issues raised by parents

Parents' views as expressed in their responses to the questionnaire and at the meeting with inspectors were very positive. There were very few who raised any concerns and the bulk of the concerns raised were related to homework. Where parents have specified their concerns about work to be done at home, they have tended to indicate that their concern is about too much homework. Inspection evidence does not support this view. In many subjects, the quantity and quality of homework are good. In one or two subjects, namely science and modern foreign languages, there is scope to improve both the quality and quantity of work to be done at home.