

INSPECTION REPORT

Devizes School

The Green, Devizes, Wiltshire, SN10 3AG

LEA area: Wiltshire

Unique Reference Number: 126506

Headteacher: Mr C. R. Isted

School Inspection No: 187220

Reporting inspector: Mr David Potter
T11261

Dates of inspection: 11th – 15th October 1999

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
Type of control:	Foundation
Age range of pupils:	11 to 18
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	The Green Devizes Wiltshire SN10 3AG
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Appropriate authority:	Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr M Came
Date of previous inspection:	4 th – 8 th March 1996

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Donya Urwin, Lay Inspector		Partnership with Parents and the Community; Efficiency of the School
Phil Waite	Mathematics	
David Burns	English	
Boyd Gunnell	Science	
Jan Greenhalgh	Design and Technology	
John Tuey	Information Technology	
David Saunders	Modern Foreign Languages	
Jeff Hale	History	Curriculum and Assessment; Staffing, Accommodation and Learning Resources
Hazel Saunders	Geography	
Peter Kendall	Art	
Brian Ley	Music	
Di Valentine	Physical Education	
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MAIN FINDINGS

What the school does well

This is a good school in which pupils respond well to the good teaching, and make sound progress as a result. Good improvement has been made since the last inspection.

Pupils' standards of achievement and the progress they make:

Examination results at A level and GNVQ are good.

Almost all pupils achieve at least one graded result in the GCSE examination.

Results in English and mathematics in the tests at the end of Key Stage 3 are above the national average.

Pupils make sound progress throughout the school and many, especially older pupils, make rapid progress.

The quality of education provided by the school:

Teaching is of a good standard across the whole school, especially in the sixth form.

The provision for pupils' moral and social development is very good.

The care, support and welfare provided for pupils are very good, particularly through the pastoral system.

The school's ethos:

Attendance is very good.

Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good, and they respond well in lessons.

Relationships across the school are very good.

Management and efficiency:

- The governing body is very effective.
- The school is well led and managed, with very good strategic planning systems.
- Financial control and school administration are excellent.
- The school provides good value for money.

Where the school has weaknesses

Given the good teaching and response, GCSE results should be better.

Pupils' standards of achievement and the progress they make:

Results in science in the national tests at the end of Key Stage 3, although in line with the national average, are below those of similar schools.

The proportion of pupils achieving five or more graded (A* - G) results at GCSE are well below those of similar schools.

The progress made by pupils with special educational needs (SEN), although sound, is limited by the lack of Individual Education Plans (IEPs)* with precise targets.

The quality of education provided by the school

The curriculum in Key Stages 3 and 4 lacks the balance to meet pupils' needs fully.

Management and efficiency

- Departments vary in the degree to which they use the results of monitoring to plan for improvement.
- Unresolved management issues in some departments are inhibiting the drive for improvement.
- The outcomes of staff appraisal do not sufficiently inform staff development.

The school's strengths greatly outweigh its 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 the pupils at the school.

**IEPs are individual education plans for pupils with special educational needs*

How the school has improved since the last inspection

Since the last inspection:

teaching quality has risen still further from its already high level and there is more good teaching;

more pupils make rapid progress in their work;

test and examination results have risen in line with the national average, and faster in A level and

GNVQ;

recent results in the Key Stage 3 tests show an improvement.

Very good progress was made in addressing all six areas for attention identified in the inspection of 1996. The great majority of the detailed action points have also been addressed. The action plan written at that stage was a good document and was carefully implemented and reviewed. Governors and the school leadership team are committed to the improvement of quality and the raising of standards.

Overall, therefore, the school has made good improvements since the last inspection and has the capacity 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 1998:

Performance in	Compared with all schools	Compared with similar schools	Key
			<i>A* Very high</i>
			<i>A Well above average</i>
			<i>B Above average</i>
			<i>C Average</i>
			<i>D Below average</i>
			<i>E Well below average</i>
			<i>E* Very low</i>
Key Stage 3 test			
English	B	B	
Mathematics	B	C	
Science	C	D	
All core subjects	B	C	
GCSE Examinations			
5 or more grades A*-C	C	C	
5 or more grades A*-G	D	E	
1 or more grades A*-G	C	C	
GCSE points score	C	E	
GCE A/AS – level examinations			
Average points score of those taking 2 or more A levels	B	No comparative data available	

In the left hand column of the table above, the school's results are compared with those of all secondary schools in England. The school's results at all levels are generally in line with these averages, and in many areas they are above them, especially in the Key Stage 3 tests at A level and GNVQ. They are, however, in line with the national average in most aspects of GCSE, but below it for the proportion of pupils achieving five or more grades A* - G.

In the right hand column, Devizes' results are compared with those of schools with pupils from similar backgrounds. The school's results are above these schools in English and in line with them in mathematics at the end of Key Stage 3. They are also in line with them in the proportion of pupils achieving five or more higher grades, and one or more graded results, at GCSE. However, results in science at the end of Key Stage 3 are below, and in the proportion of those achieving five or more graded results at GCSE well below those of similar schools. The average GCSE points achieved per pupil is also well below that of similar schools.

Quality of teaching

	Overall quality	Most effective in:	Least effective in:
Years 7-9	Good	Teaching is of at least sound quality in all subjects, and in most it is good; this is true across both key stages and in the sixth form.	
Years 10-11	Good		
Sixth Form	Good		
English	Good		
Mathematics	Good overall; some very good teaching but also some, especially in Key Stage 3, which is unsatisfactory.		

92% of the teaching at the school is satisfactory or better, and well over half is good or very good.

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

Other aspects of the school

Aspect	Comment
Behaviour	Behaviour around the school and in lessons is very good. Bullying, when it occurs, is dealt with quickly and well.
Attendance	Attendance is very good, with very low levels of unauthorised absence. Pupils' punctuality is good.
Ethos*	Relationships among pupils are good, and they respond well in lessons. Their attitudes are very good. This is an orderly, civilized community.
Leadership and management	A well-led and –managed school with very good strategic planning systems. Evaluation should be used more consistently across departments to support improvement.
Curriculum	The balance of the curriculum in Key Stages 3 and 4 has weaknesses; the sixth form curriculum is satisfactory.
Pupils with special educational needs	The progress made by pupils with SEN, in lessons and over time, is satisfactory. IEPs are incomplete and the targets in them are imprecise.
Spiritual, moral, social & cultural development	There is very good provision for pupils' moral and social development; that for their cultural development has improved and is good, while provision for pupils' spiritual development remains satisfactory.
Staffing, resources and accommodation	There are sufficient teaching and non-teaching staff, and they are experienced and well-qualified. Staff development should be focused more sharply on raising achievement. The school's accommodation and resources generally support pupils' learning satisfactorily.
Efficiency	Good overall, with excellent administration and financial control.
Value for money	The school provides good value for money.

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

The parents' views of the school

What most parents like about the school

- the quality of education and care given to their children, and the attitudes which the school seeks to develop;
- the standards their children are achieving and the progress they are making;
- they report particular strengths in the way they are kept informed about the progress of their children, and in the care and support given to individuals;
- the way the school encourages attendance, punctuality and behaviour well, and the various awards given for good work, effort and attendance;
- the school's honest approach to bullying, and the rapid, firm response on the few occasions when it does occur.

What some parents are not happy about

- the impact of recent budget cuts, especially on
- the responsiveness of the school to parental
- the impact of staff turnover;
- views about behaviour and homework are
- a lapse in PE and sport last year.

Inspectors agree with parents' generally positive views of the school. They agree that the school provides a good quality education and that the care given to individuals is of a high standard. The quality of teaching is good, and better than at the time of the last inspection.

Budget cuts have resulted in reduced A level teaching time and some joint teaching of Years 12 and 13; the quality of teaching in these sessions is good, and not different from that in other lessons. The resulting arrangements are within national norms; their impact on examination results cannot yet be assessed.

Inspectors judge attendance, punctuality and behaviour, and the way the school encourages them, to be very good, and that homework is generally sufficient in quantity and quality and is well set. Inspectors agree that there was a temporary lapse in PE and sport, but believe that these areas are now well on the road to recovery.

There was no evidence during the inspection to enable the team to form a view of the school's responsiveness.

KEY ISSUES FOR ACTION

The school should ensure that its efforts to raise pupils' achievements, especially at GCSE, are ambitious and concerted by:

- ensuring that self-evaluation results in clear strategies for improvement in test and examination results, in all departments; (paragraphs 45, 46 and 71)
- improving the balance of the curriculum in Key Stages 3 and 4; (paragraphs 38 and 41)
- resolving outstanding departmental leadership issues; (paragraphs 70, 108 and 118)
- developing the staff appraisal system in the context of the new national framework, and linking its outcomes more effectively with staff development; (paragraphs 72, 73 and 76)
- dealing with the small amount of less than satisfactory teaching; (paragraphs 36, 96, 107 and 163)
- completing the writing of IEPs containing precise learning targets for all pupils who are entitled to them, and ensuring that they are used across the curriculum. (paragraphs 32 and 43)

None of these were key issues at the time of the last OFSTED inspection in 1996.

Items underlined have been recognised as priorities by the school, and feature in the current School Development Plan.

INTRODUCTION

Characteristics of the school

1. Devizes School is a large comprehensive school serving the market town of Devizes and outlying villages. The school has 1050 pupils, with slightly more girls than boys. Main school year groups range in size from 167 (Year 11) to 192 (Year 7), and there is a sixth form of about 150. The school is growing steadily and is fully subscribed.

2. The school takes in pupils of all abilities; a very high proportion is of average ability, and there are more pupils of below- than above-average ability. The results achieved by the intake in the national tests at the end of primary school have varied from year to year; while those of the current Years 7 and 9 were above the national average, results achieved by the other year groups in the school were below it. The proportion of pupils with special needs, including those with statements, is slightly above the national average for comprehensive schools. The school houses a centre for pupils with specific learning difficulties (SpLD or dyslexia); these pupils are fully integrated into the life and work of the school.

3. The school serves an area most of which is socio-economically neither advantaged nor disadvantaged, but which contains some areas of deprivation. A high proportion of families receive benefits, and the proportion of professional families is below average. Currently, slightly fewer than 12% of pupils are eligible for free school meals, a figure below the national average of 17.5%. The proportion of pupils for whom English is an additional language is very low.

4. The school has a good over-arching strategic plan, supported by a number of detailed improvement plans which show how its aims will be implemented by the different subjects and areas of the school. The strategic plan is a clear document which is both visionary and practical. It sets high aspirations, while basing its planning on projected numbers and realistic budgets, and on the strengths and weaknesses of each key aspect of the school and its consequent need for development.

The current school priorities are:

to raise the academic attainment and standard of behaviour of all pupils;

to provide staff with the necessary resources to improve the curriculum and its delivery;

to afford opportunities for the personal development of all pupils, within and beyond the formal curriculum;

to employ sufficient high-calibre teaching- and non-teaching staff, and to invest in their development;

to provide a secure, pleasant and effective physical environment.

5. 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	85	93	178

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Number of pupils at	Boys	53	64	59
	Girls	73	57	46
	Total	126	121	105
Percentage at NC Level 5 or above	School	71	68	59
	National	65	60	56
Percentage at NC Level 6 or above	School	38	42	19
	National	35	36	27

Teacher Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Number of pupils at	Boys	50	65	55
	Girls	68	58	41
	Total	118	123	96
Percentage at NC Level 5 or above	School	66	69	54
	National	61	64	61
Percentage at NC Level 6 or above	School	28	39	16
	National	30	37	30

Attainment at Key Stage 4

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for latest reporting year:	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	95	81	176

GCSE Results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A* to G	1 or more grades A* to G
Number of pupils	Boys	34	85	92
	Girls	47	71	78
	Total	81	156	170
Percentage achieving standard specified	School	46	89	97
	National	48	88	94

Attainment in the Sixth Form

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 who were entered for GCE A/AS examinations in the latest reporting year:	Year	Male	Female	Total
	1999	22	29	51

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	22.2	20.8	21.4	3.3	4.4	4.0
National (1998)	-	-	17.6	-	-	2.8

Number in final year of approved vocational qualifications and percentage of such students who achieved these qualifications		Number	% Success rate
	School	28	96
	National (1998)		79

Attendance

Percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest	Authorised	School	6.0
		National comparative data	7.9
	Unauthorised	School	0.4
		National comparative data	1.1

Exclusions

Number of exclusions of pupils (of statutory school age) during the previous year:	Fixed period	Number
		18
	Permanent	1

Quality of teaching

Percentage of teaching observed which is:		%
	Very good or better	10
	Satisfactory or better	92
	Less than satisfactory	8

PART A: ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS AT THE SCHOOL

Attainment and progress

6. Although Devizes is an all-ability school, a very high proportion of its intake is of average ability, and there are more pupils of below- than above-average ability. The results achieved by the pupils in the national tests at the end of primary school have varied from year to year; while those of the current Years 7 and 9 are above the national average, the other year groups in the school achieved results below it.

7. Within Devizes School, pupils are making sound progress, and that progress accelerates through the school; their attainment is sound, and improves steadily through the school; results in national tests and examinations are at least in line with the national average in most areas and many are above it. Devizes School is therefore adding value to pupils' achievements.

8. In national tests at age fourteen, pupils' attainment in recent years has been around the national average - above it in English and mathematics, and in line with it in science. Trends in the school's results since the last inspection have mirrored national upward trends. 1999 results have improved on those of 1998 - they are above those of similar schools in English and in line with them in mathematics; results in science remain below those of similar schools but have nonetheless improved. In the core subjects as a whole, boys' results are above the national average while those of girls are in line with it. However, this varies from subject to subject: in English, girls do better than boys, while the reverse is true in mathematics and science. Teachers' assessments of pupils' attainment in the other subjects show performances generally above the national average, especially for girls. Teachers' assessments in history are much lower than those in other subjects; inspection findings suggest that standards are much higher than the department's assessments and that most pupils are achieving the standards expected of their age group. The department should review its approach to assessment at this level.

9. Of the work observed in Key Stage 3, about three-quarters was at or above the expected level, with good attainment in art and in higher ability mathematics groups. There is some under-achievement in music and in middle and lower mathematics sets. Work observed in English is around the expected level, with some very good work achieved by more able pupils. In science, pupils' knowledge and understanding is of a sound standard but their skills of investigation are not as fully developed as they should be.

10. The school enters a very high proportion of its pupils for General Certificate of Secondary

Education (GCSE) examinations, and almost all, including those with special educational needs (SEN), achieve at least one graded result. The proportion of pupils gaining five or more higher (A* - C) grades has been just above the national average since the last inspection, with a rising trend similar to the national rate of improvement, and is in line with the performance of similar schools. The proportion of pupils achieving five or more graded results (A* - G) is in line with the national average, but well below that of similar schools. The average points achieved per pupil (a measure of the quality of grades) is in line with the national average, but is well below that of similar schools. Although girls have achieved better results than boys in recent years, the gap is less than that nationally.

11. Recent results have been above the national average at GCSE in mathematics, English literature, art, history and geography. Above-national-average results have also been achieved in religious education (RE), music and drama, but the numbers entered for these subjects are small. Results in English and science have been variable in recent years, with some years above the national average and others below it. Results at GCSE in design and technology (D&T) and in physical education (PE) have been below average. In other subjects results have been in line with the national average. Results in science, music, history and geography in particular have improved on those reported at the time of the last inspection.

12. Of the work observed in Key Stage 4, about seventy per cent was at or above the expected level, with good standards in well over a third. Especially good work was seen in mathematics, history, art and RE.

13. Results at Advanced (A) level and General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ), in terms both of pass rates and average points achieved per pupil, are above the national average, and have risen steadily in recent years. Although there has been some year-on-year variation, the percentage of pupils achieving the highest grades has been relatively low. Some particularly good work was seen in GNVQ, where the quality of the whole sample of lessons and pupils' files and records was high, with some real excellence in the files of distinction candidates. Good A level results have been achieved in geography, mathematics and physics, but results in history have been below the national average.

14. Work in lessons in the sixth form almost always at least matches the expectations of the course, but little of it is of a very high standard. There are exceptions in A level art and mathematics and GNVQ, all of which display some work of a high standard. The work seen in lessons therefore repeats the pattern of examination results.

15. The great majority of pupils are making at least sound progress, and often it is good. Progress is sound from the national tests at the end of primary school to those at the end of Key Stage 3. Across Key Stage 3 there is generally steady progress but a “tail” of pupils, most of them of below average ability, is making slow progress. Progress is slightly more rapid in Key Stage 4 than in Key Stage 3, and more rapid still in the sixth form. Students of A level and GNVQ rapidly gain the skills to work at the more advanced level, and sustain a rate of progress which is at least satisfactory throughout the courses. Progress was at least satisfactory in all sixth form lessons, and good or better in over two thirds of them. Pupils at all levels in the school make rapid progress when they understand:

- the objectives of the course or lesson
- the criteria by which their work is assessed
- how to improve their work.

These criteria are met particularly in art, mathematics and GNVQ courses, and in much of the work of the English department.

16. Progress was judged to be sound or better in over ninety per cent of lessons, and good or very good in nearly a half. These are good proportions. The slow progress in a small number of lessons, most of them in Key Stage 3, is linked with teaching which is poorly matched to pupils’ abilities, and with the rare examples of poor behaviour.

17. Progress is sound to good in most subjects, with generally rapid progress in art. Progress is too slow in science in Key Stage 3, in that pupils’ investigative skills do not develop sufficiently. This is also true of some aspects of history. In PE, while progress in lessons is often good, it is unsatisfactory across Key Stages 3 and 4 because of an inadequate scheme of work, and because of timetabling problems. In mathematics and music, most pupils are making rapid progress but it is too slow for some in Key Stage 3.

18. Pupils with specific learning difficulties (SpLD) and those with other SEN make good progress with reading and writing, especially when they have either withdrawal or in-class support. Their progress is satisfactory overall, but it varies from subject to subject. These pupils make sound progress in English and science, but in mathematics teaching in lower sets is often unsatisfactory and does not enable them to make sufficient progress. The progress of pupils with SEN is inhibited by the lack of individual education plans (IEPs) to guide teaching, learning and assessment. Although the support provided for pupils in mainstream classes helps them to make satisfactory progress, that support is not sufficiently focused on targets stipulated in IEPs to ensure that all pupils make the best progress they can.

19. Standards and progress in the key skills - reading, writing, speaking and listening, numeracy and information and communications technology (ICT) - across the curriculum are generally sound, but support for the development of these skills is uneven. Recent attention to literacy through the summer school and extra support for pupils with low literacy in Year 7 is beginning to show benefits. The verbal reasoning of pupils on entry is below the national average and below their non-verbal reasoning. Although their accuracy in reading is generally sound, some pupils' levels of comprehension are low. Hard work, particularly by the English and learning support (SEN) departments, results in significant gains during Key Stage 3. Across the school, most pupils read well. Their writing is sound, but there are insufficient opportunities for extended writing and research below the sixth form. Written work is not given equal priority in all subjects. Whilst there were good examples of variety of writing styles and extended writing in some subjects, such as geography, other subjects are over-reliant on exercises requiring single-word answers and sentence completion. Attention is paid to the skills of constructing an essay and note-making in one or two subjects but many would find helpful the structured 'writing-frames' used in English and learning support. Good practice in developing pupils' literacy is currently to be found only in isolated pockets in the school.

20. Pupils' skills in speaking and listening are good and develop satisfactorily. Many pupils give extended oral answers to questions and listen to and challenge each other's views. There is strong use of oral and discussion work in most subjects, encouraging pupils to develop their speaking and listening skills. Less use is made of group work or other methods which involve pupils working directly with each other rather than through the teacher, although some good examples of such work were seen in English, the GNVQ courses and drama. Pupils are often unwilling to contribute orally in their modern foreign language lessons.

21. Pupils' numeracy skills are sound. Schemes of work in science, IT, economics, GNVQ and geography make reference to numeracy, and work in these and other subjects supports mathematics in raising pupils' numeracy. There is, however, no overall policy or planned approach; these will be needed in the light of the national primary-age numeracy initiative.

22. ICT is used in many but not all subjects, to some extent, because equipment is limited. Standards of ICT in taught IT lessons are sound to good but they are variable elsewhere, especially in Key Stage 3. ICT is well used in mathematics and GNVQ, especially business and economics courses, and in English in Key Stage 3, but its use is patchy elsewhere.

Attitudes, behaviour and personal development

23. Pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning are very good and make a considerable contribution

to their progress - an improvement on an already strong position at the time of the last inspection. Parents continue to be pleased with behaviour at the school, and with the firm, rapid action taken in the case of any bullying.

24. Pupils speak positively of the school and in the great majority of lessons they sustain good levels of concentration and enthusiasm. In art at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form, for example, pupils are highly motivated and spend additional time studying in the studios and at home. Pupils' work habits are well established in most subjects and in some lessons they take increasing responsibility for their own learning and are able to work independently. Pupils who are experiencing difficulties with their behaviour have the confidence and positive attitude to approach their head of year voluntarily to ask for structured support in managing their homework or their relationships with others.

25. The behaviour of pupils around the school and in almost all lessons is very good. Pupils require a low level of teacher supervision and at times demonstrate a high standard of self-discipline, such as when, in the absence of teachers, Year 11 move from socialising to sitting silently in rows ready for assembly. Pupils are welcoming to visitors and are respectful of property and equipment. The levels of fixed-term and permanent exclusions are very low and well below the national average for secondary schools. The school uses exclusion as a last resort.

26. During lessons in which they are withdrawn, pupils with SpLD and other SEN respond well to the teaching they receive; they sustain concentration and behave well.

27. Relationships among all pupils and between them and teachers are very good. Pupils from all backgrounds get on well together and form a cohesive community. Incidents of bullying are few and are seen to be dealt with rapidly and firmly by teachers. In lessons where they are given the opportunity, pupils work well together in pairs and groups. In tutorial lessons pupils are considerate of each other's opinions and in English, history and IT they readily assist each other in their learning.

28. Pupils' capacity to show initiative and take responsibility is good and has improved since the last inspection. They take pride in the work of their year-group councils and their contribution to the decisions made on the uniform committee. The sixth form is well organised and motivated to make a strong contribution to the life of the school and the wider community. Pupils take responsibility for groups of younger pupils on activity days, visits abroad and in sports teams; they volunteer to provide in-class support to help less-able pupils with reading and to mentor pupils who are experiencing difficulties. Sixth form pupils have also enjoyed considerable success representing the school in national and local competitions such as on a television general knowledge quiz and a town competition

for Christmas card design. During open evenings, pupils with SEN in Year 11 enjoy the responsibility of managing the car parking arrangements. Pupils from Year 8 receive considerable praise from parents for their role as guides on these evenings. An information café in the town is the successful outcome of the participation of Year 11 pupils in an inter-agency project. Year 11 pupils have participated in training which enable them to provide peer support in health-related issues and Year 10 pupils proudly manage their own Young Enterprise company. Fund-raising for charities is a feature at all levels of the school.

Attendance

29. Attendance is very good and has improved since the last inspection. In recent years the school has maintained an attendance rate consistently above, and an unauthorised absence rate well below, national averages. The majority of tutor groups achieve levels of attendance close to or above the school's target of ninety-five per cent. Pupils in all year groups and of all abilities enjoy coming to school and attend well; many of them achieve certificates for good attendance. Punctuality to school and to lessons is good.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED

Teaching

30. Teaching is of good quality. Over ninety per cent of all lessons observed were judged sound or better, and well over half were good, very good or excellent. These proportions compare well with the national average, and represent an improvement on the already good situation reported at the time of the previous inspection. The proportion of teaching judged to be good is high, but that judged very good or excellent is relatively low, the "shortfall" often being the expectations teachers hold of the degree to which pupils can take control of their learning.

31. There is a significant proportion of the highest quality teaching in mathematics, RE, economics, and throughout GNVQ courses. Teaching is good for pupils of all ages but, as in the 1996 inspection, it is at its best with older pupils. In the sixth form, all teaching observed was sound or better, and two thirds was good or very good. The quality of teaching in the lessons in which Year 12 and Year 13 were taught together was not different from that in other sixth form lessons. In Key Stage 3, however, half of the teaching observed was good or very good but twelve per cent was less than satisfactory. Overall, teaching promotes pupils' learning very effectively.

32. Teaching is of at least sound standard in all subjects, and in most it is good. In art, English,

drama, history, modern languages, RE, economics and business studies and throughout GNVQ, teaching is consistently of a good standard. While teaching in mathematics, science and music is sound overall and each has examples of very good teaching, these subjects also have a trailing edge of quality, mostly in Key Stage 3, which should be improved. The teaching of pupils with SEN, including those with SpLD, is good in withdrawal groups. In mainstream lessons it is satisfactory in English, science and the other subjects of the curriculum, but unsatisfactory in mathematics. The support provided by learning support assistants (LSAs) is satisfactory but it does not focus sufficiently on targets set for pupils in their IEPs. The improvement of teaching for pupils with SEN is constrained by the quality of target-setting in IEPs, which are not sufficiently precise to guide teaching and assessment.

33. Across the age range and the subjects, teachers know their subjects well and provide pupils with confident subject leadership. There is no non-specialist teaching. Teachers prepare lessons well, use a sound range of resources and have good relationships with their pupils. Behaviour in lessons is very good and teachers can generally get on with the job of teaching without losing time managing behaviour. Only in a small number of lessons with younger pupils did behaviour get in the way of teaching. Homework is generally sufficient in quantity and is often well set: early in the lesson and with clear explanation as to its purpose. Marking is sound rather than incisive; it is carried out regularly by most teachers, and many comments are helpful to pupils in guiding their improvement. Departments vary in the degree to which they analyse their assessments of pupils' work and examinations in order to refine teaching methods or schemes of work, or to address weaknesses in pupils' skills and understanding.

34. The teaching of literacy and numeracy, where it takes place, is good; such teaching tends to be in pockets, not adding up to a whole-school, consistent approach.

35. The best lessons seen had clearly stated objectives - pupils knew what they would learn from the lesson and how it would contribute to learning within the topic - a sense of urgency, and high expectations of what pupils can achieve. A combination of sharp, purposeful pace with lively, challenging work which sustains students' interest characterises the work of GNVQ courses in the sixth form. A very well-structured and demanding set of mock interviews in an advanced GNVQ business studies lesson gained an outstanding set of responses from students. GNVQ lessons also give students opportunity to take control of their own work by helping them to understand the assessment framework; since they know the criteria which their work has to satisfy, they can show initiative in the way they go about tasks. The best mathematics teaching sustains the pace through the hour-long lesson by providing a variety of tasks well matched to the pupils' abilities, including good use of ICT. In a Year 7 Spanish lesson with the least-able linguists, the teacher achieved good progress for the pupils through

the excellent variety of the tasks set, all taken at a lively pace and in an atmosphere of encouragement.

36. The amount of teaching which is less than satisfactory is small, and much of it is with lower-ability, younger groups. In these lessons, tasks were poorly matched to the ability and motivation of the class; pace was generally too slow and work lacked challenge. Particularly with less-able groups, explanation and tasks were not set with the necessary clarity.

The curriculum and assessment

37. The school provides a broad curriculum for the majority of its pupils. All statutory requirements, both for National Curriculum subjects and for health, sex and drugs education, are met and the school prepares its pupils well for the next stage in their education and for adult life.

38. The balance of the curriculum is constrained by the decisions first to offer an additional modern language to able pupils in Key Stage 3, which clashes with PE, and second to provide both double and single science courses in Key Stage 4, which limits pupils' choices. Both decisions have been ratified by the governing body, which takes an active and informed interest in curriculum issues. Nevertheless, time allocations are unsatisfactory for PE and RE across both statutory key stages, for music in Key Stage 4, and for some pupils in modern languages in Key Stage 3. Overall, therefore, the curriculum lacks balance in Key Stages 3 and 4. Although the time for A level courses has been reduced as a result of budget cuts, the time allocation for them is still within norms. However, time allocations for GNVQ courses are below national recommendations. The sixth form curriculum is satisfactory, being both broad and, with the exception of the time allocation to GNVQ courses, balanced.

39. The school's current curriculum has several strengths: the length of the teaching week, at twenty-five hours, exceeds the recommended minimum for Key Stage 3, and the Key Stage 4 curriculum is enhanced through short courses in history and D&T, and a wide range of other options. A photography course is available, for example, as are GCSE courses in drama and PE. A National Skills Profile course is available to support less-able pupils. Music, however, may be taken only as an after-school option as must elements of GCSE IT. ICT at Key Stage 3 is delivered using a cross-curricular approach in addition to discrete lessons. Although this arrangement generally works well, key aspects of ICT, such as control, receive insufficient emphasis when taught by non-specialists.

40. Setting arrangements, although they inhibit work in PE, help teachers target their work effectively in other subjects. Planning within departments guarantees progression and continuity.

41. The school has begun to review its curriculum in the light of the recent changes to the National Curriculum; sensibly, it has waited for the implications of the proposed changes to sixth form courses to become clearer at a national level. This review is now urgent, since the current curriculum model has weaknesses. At the time of the last inspection, the curriculum made a good contribution to the standards pupils achieve; since then it has been adapted to changing demands and had several additions made to it. As the school is aware, it now needs re-thinking.

42. There is a good range of extra-curricular provision available to pupils of all ages and, in 1998 and 1999, the school ran a Summer Literacy School. Curricular links with partner primary schools have improved since the time of the previous inspection. The programme of work experience available to all Year 10 pupils is excellent, careers education is good, homework is regularly set and marked and, in the sixth form, A level provision is supplemented by GNVQ courses, re-sit courses in English and mathematics and a general (modular) studies programme.

43. Pupils with SEN have access to the full curriculum except where there is appropriate disapplication in line with the requirements of pupils' statements of SEN, and these pupils are integrated fully into the life of the school. Extraction from mainstream lessons occurs when pupils require additional assistance to ensure continued improvement. While there are clear criteria for placement in withdrawal groups, there are no such criteria for their re-integration into mainstream lessons. The requirements of statements are met but procedures to write and use IEPs are unsatisfactory. Not all pupils at stages 2 to 5 of the Code of Practice have IEPs, and those which have been written contain targets which are insufficiently precise to guide teaching, learning and the assessment of pupils' progress.

44. The school's arrangements for recording pupils' standards and progress are generally good. Individual departments, such as English, mathematics, art and geography, monitor standards well. Across the school, pupils' work is marked regularly, and reports to parents are well written, detailed and comply with regulations. This is an improvement on the situation described in the previous inspection report. There is good use of Records of Achievement in Year 11 and equally good use of personal pupil targets lower down the school. The school tracks the progress of pupils early in Year 11 and targets those who need to improve their performance for GCSE. Systems for monitoring individual pupils' progress, therefore, are generally good. Senior managers monitor the assessment practice of individual departments, including their arrangements for completing and submitting statutory Key Stage 3 assessments, appropriately challenging targets are agreed with departments, and a schedule of review meetings is held to discuss the standards achieved by each subject. All subjects are required to

complete annual improvement plans to review the progress made from the previous year. These are all strengths of assessment.

45. The use of assessment to improve curriculum planning, however, is ineffective in several subjects, where there is insufficient use of assessment to make teaching more responsive to pupils' needs and progress. Departments vary in the degree to which they make use of the test results and teacher assessments pupils achieve at the end of Key Stage 3 to monitor their subsequent performance in GCSE and thereby to identify the value added or lost. Equally, few departments analyse their own marking of GCSE and A level coursework in order to refine teaching methods or schemes of work lower down the school, or to address any emerging weaknesses in pupils' skills and understanding.

46. The school is more confident and successful, therefore, in its strategies for target-setting than it is for the gaining of these targets and this weakens its overall approach to school improvement.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

47. The school's values are clearly reflected in its aim to enable pupils to become confident, independent and responsible members of society. Through its policies and procedures the school ensures that learning takes place in an orderly, respectful and caring community. Relationships are consistently good. Parents consider that the school contributes effectively to the development of pupils' own attitudes and values, and inspection findings support this view.

48. The provision for pupils' spiritual development is satisfactory. In assembly and at registration time a structured programme of reflection ensures that pupils consider carefully issues and concerns in society today. Some of the reflection themes are developed by pupils and cover a wide range of topics, such as Year 9 pupils reflecting on the recent coup in Pakistan or relating the reasons for their favourite choice of music. Where the reflections programme is particularly effective, the theme is explored in assembly and then followed up in the tutorial programme, as in Year 7 work on friendship and the Year 9 consideration of cultural differences. The school does not provide a daily act of collective worship as required by law, but the assembly programme does enable pupils to consider the teachings of different religions and see their relevance to the development of personal skills and qualities, such as exploring forgiveness and the Jewish Day of Atonement, Yom Kippur. In some assemblies pupils make a good contribution, as in the Year 7 role-play on bullying. RE provides good opportunities for pupils to explore the beliefs and values of other faiths, and in art and music pupils are encouraged to appreciate the wonder of artistic achievement. However, the contribution of the curriculum to the provision for spiritual development is not clearly identified and, as such, is under-developed. The situation is much

as it was at the time of the last inspection.

49. The provision for pupils' moral development is very good, and helps pupils develop their understanding of right and wrong. The discipline policy, in setting out the rights and responsibilities of pupils and teachers, establishes a strong set of shared values which underpins the school community. The tutorial programme and pastoral support system are used effectively to enable pupils to develop an understanding of the principles of right and wrong. Teachers provide good role models, as in a Year 11 tutorial lesson where a climate of openness and honesty was created in a discussion on health issues. In PE, pupils learn about fair play and explore moral issues in the use of drugs to enhance performance. In RE, Year 11 pupils use a case study approach to discuss dilemmas related to sex education. Science and geography provide valuable opportunities for pupils to consider the moral aspects of cloning, pollution and energy sources.

50. The provision for pupils' social development is very good. The tutorial programme and range of extra-curricular activities make an effective contribution to pupils' personal and social development. The tutorial programme includes important aspects of health education, such as personal hygiene, drugs and sex education, as well as themes on personal qualities and skills, such as time management and relationship-building. There is a good programme of citizenship and careers education from Year 9. The quality of teaching in the majority of tutorial lessons is good. The programme is well-managed but would be enhanced by clearer foci on learning outcomes and anti-discrimination work. Through the curriculum, pupils have good opportunities to explore social and moral dilemmas, such as in English where the choice of teaching materials focuses effectively on equal opportunities issues, and in ICT where pupils consider the implications for society of increased use of technology. During activities days, Year 10 pupils develop their skill in conflict management.

51. Since the last inspection the school has made good provision for pupils to exercise their responsibilities and initiative. Pupils contribute to decision-making in the school through year councils in Years 7 to 11, a sixth form committee and elected senior students. There is a good range of opportunities for pupils to take responsibility for others such as form captains, library and register monitors. In Years 9 and 10 pupils act responsibly as network managers during the lunchtime ICT activities. Sixth-form pupils act as mentors providing support for younger pupils and take responsibility for groups of pupils on activities days.

52. The provision for pupils' cultural development has improved since the last inspection and is good. The tutorial and reflections programme is planned to ensure that pupils explore aspects of a multi-cultural society. There is a good range of extra-curricular activities, such as creative writing,

photography and music clubs, visiting artists and theatre productions. Visits to museums, theatres and places of worship and residential experiences enhance pupils' appreciation of their own and other cultures. Year 9 pupils' understanding of Chinese culture is developed through a cross-curricular activities day involving music, art, dance and drama. Year 10 pupils visit the Black Country Museum.

The modern languages department provides a substantial programme of cultural visits and exchanges in France and Spain. In D&T, pupils are encouraged to draw on their own culture to develop ideas for their coursework.

Support, guidance and pupils' welfare

53. This area, especially the pastoral system, is a considerable strength of the school, and helps provide a caring, secure and pleasant learning environment for pupils. The support given to pupils makes a significant contribution to their educational standards and represents an improvement on an already good situation at the time of the last inspection. A well-co-ordinated structure involving the school leadership team (SLT - the headteacher and two deputy heads), heads of year and form tutors ensures that pupils receive effective support and guidance on a day-to-day basis. Pupils and parents value the care and concern shown by teachers and feel that they are responsive to their needs. Relationships are very good. Not only does the pastoral system provide good care for pupils, it is also beginning to provide systematic academic tutoring to help them set and achieve individual targets. Such tutoring is well established in the sixth form.

54. The school has very good systems and procedures, highly regarded by parents, to monitor pupils' academic progress, behaviour and attendance. Pupils agree targets each term, monitored by tutors through the homework diaries. Good records are kept of behaviour and attendance and heads of year regularly monitor them for any patterns which might give rise to concern. A monitoring sheet is completed twice a year by all teachers and is used effectively to indicate standards and identify concerns. Information gained from this is shared with parents. A mentoring process has been established for Year 11 pupils to raise standards of achievement in GCSE examinations. The school actively supports more-able pupils through the provision of masterclasses, residential courses and individual mentoring. The monitoring of the progress made by pupils with SEN is limited by their IEPs, as described elsewhere in the report.

55. Every effort is made to ensure that new pupils of all ages settle well into the school. New Year 7 pupils have a well-structured induction booklet which familiarises them with school rules and procedures and develops their organisational and social skills. A summer literacy scheme gives good support to pupils with literacy problems as they enter Devizes School. Also in Year 7, a 'buddy'

system ensures that pupils transferring to the school feel welcomed and settle quickly into school routines. The sixth form induction programme includes team-building. The pastoral support for pupils with SEN is satisfactory.

56. The arrangements for monitoring, recording and promoting attendance are very good. There is a whole school target for attendance which is monitored weekly by the head of year and the SLT. The attendance rate of each tutor group is displayed in classrooms and pupils are awarded certificates for good attendance. Measures to follow up absence are in place and pupils with low attendance are targeted for additional support. A recent project has successfully raised the attendance rate of a group of Year 10 pupils. There is an effective partnership with the education welfare service.

57. The school has very good procedures for promoting high standards of behaviour and good relationships throughout the school. There is a strong but fair discipline policy and an 'expected behaviour' list displayed in all classrooms. Both are understood by pupils and regularly referred to by teachers. Standards of behaviour are emphasised in the induction sessions for new pupils and during the tutorial programme. Pupils understand the use of positive and negative advice forms and value the stickers, merits and letters home. The anti-bullying policy gives clear messages to pupils about the unacceptability of bullying and the right to tell. Most pupils feel that when bullying does occur it is handled well by teachers. Where there is concern about an individual pupil's behaviour, the school has a good system of referral and support which ensures that appropriate strategies are in place to promote and monitor improvement. The school uses an excellent case conference approach where subject teachers meet with the head of year and form tutor to discuss the needs of pupils and to identify common teaching strategies to support their learning.

58. The school complies with the statutory requirements for child protection. The nominated teacher has received training and teachers understand the school's policy and procedures. There are effective links with Social Services.

59. The school has very good arrangements for promoting the health, safety and well-being of pupils. Appropriate systems are in place to enable the school leadership team and the governing body to monitor the provision of safe and healthy working conditions for pupils and staff, and for them to meet the statutory responsibilities. Risk assessments are regularly carried out and pupils are trained in the safe use of equipment. The receptionist maintains records of lateness and accidents and is available throughout the school day to support pupils who feel unwell or who need first aid.

Partnership with parents and the community

60. The good partnership with parents and the community described in the last inspection report has been maintained and arrangements are good. Weekly newsletters, year group handbooks and regular consultation events keep parents well informed and the school prospectus is clear and easily understood. The governors' annual report is comprehensive and gives concise details of school activities, although the requirement to include details on the arrangements the school makes for pupils with disabilities is not met.

61. There are well-timed consultation meetings for parents to discuss their children's progress. In the autumn term, parents of pupils in Years 7 and 10 are given an opportunity to discuss how their children have settled on their new courses. Reliable pupil records are kept using a consistent monitoring process with supporting documentation and all parents are invited to review the annual report with the class tutor and subject teachers. Annual written reports offer a clear analysis of pupils' attainment and progress; they are well written, detailed and comply with regulations. Pupils are able to contribute to their own report and performance in all subjects is described. Reports to parents have improved since the time of the last inspection. Parents stated that they felt well informed about the progress their children are making. Individual targets are set with pupils.

62. Links with the parents of pupils with SEN are as yet under-developed. Parents are encouraged to attend annual reviews of statements but attendance is variable. The department has good links with relevant agencies to support the provision for pupils with SEN.

63. Homework is well managed and provides pupils with additional opportunities to learn. The involvement of parents is encouraged and there are homework diaries which record progress and invite comment where appropriate. These are regularly used by pupils and monitored weekly by class tutors. A good range of extra-curricular activities is offered and, although attendance at some is thin, the activities are appreciated by both pupils and parents.

64. All parents are encouraged to support the school. Each year group has a small parent-teacher association (PTA) and its contribution, although stronger in some years than others, provides a useful resource for the school. Parents are key members of the able children committee and of the working group which reviewed the school uniform. The school provides a pupil as receptionist who is available throughout the day to deal with immediate problems and make referrals where appropriate. Early contact is made with parents when there are problems, and most parents reported that they found the school approachable. Parents' views of the school's response to complaints vary; some report that they are taken seriously and dealt with sensitively and thoroughly while others report the opposite. There was no evidence during the inspection to enable the team to form a view of the school's responsiveness.

65. The school makes good use of visitors to widen pupils' knowledge, and community links are well developed. A range of business partnerships, such as the Devizes development partnership, neighbourhood engineers, Young Enterprise, volunteer outreach survey and peer mentoring all provide educational value and mutual benefit for those involved. Links with other educational establishments are good and curriculum liaison with partner primary schools has improved since the last inspection. Links in mathematics, English and literacy, supported in the case of the last-named by the summer school, are strong. Charity to others is a feature of school life and each year group supports a charitable activity with much benefit to pupils, such as the Year 7 work with action aid. Out of school hours the school provides facilities for hire to the local community.

THE MANAGEMENT AND EFFICIENCY OF THE SCHOOL

Leadership and management

66. At the time of the last inspection, Devizes School was described as having clear aims, a strong sense of purpose, and senior staff and governors who provided strong and effective leadership. The school was praised for its regular monitoring of departments' and pupils' work which helped fashion a strategic plan targeted at raising standards. Routine administration was described as very good.

67. All of this is still the case. Devizes is a well-managed and well-led school with excellent systems for monitoring and planning. The school leadership team (SLT) provides good leadership and is very effective. This team demonstrated its ability to carry plans through into action by the way in which it tackled the outcomes of the 1996 inspection. The action plan was a good, thorough document which was implemented and reviewed well; as a result, all of the targets in it were met. Departments are also well managed, with effective routines and good documentation. The best maintain a lively professional discourse about teaching their subject. Leadership and management of SEN are good. The co-ordinator (SENCO) has a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the department, and has formulated appropriate plans for improvement. With the support of exceptionally capable and helpful teams of office and site staff, the school runs very smoothly. Meetings, briefings and newsletters are well organised and documents are of a high standard.

68. The governing body is very effective, with very well-organised papers and working practices. Governors are regular visitors to school and are attached to departments, and the governing body receives reports from heads of departments. The governing body is formed into an appropriate set of committees, each of which has clear terms of reference and is linked with a particular member of the SLT. These committees meet regularly, calling for reports on how developments have been taken forward and enquiring into their impact on standards. These arrangements are very good and result in

strong, clear support to the school and effective means for governors to monitor progress. Committees were described by one governor as “policy-driven and finance-aware” - an excellent definition of how carefully they consider value for money.

69. For several years, including the period of the last inspection, the school had a clear educational direction: raising standards of achievement and establishing a strong school ethos by improving relationships, behaviour and attendance. This direction was successful: the school is orderly and courteous, adults and pupils enjoy friendly, professional relationships, and academic results have improved steadily. Since the time of the last inspection the ethos has remained very strong and positive, but the rate of improvement in results has slowed. With its powerful combination of good teaching, good pupil response and good management, the challenge for the school’s leadership now is to raise pupils’ attainments from their current level around the national average and in some aspects below that of similar schools. There are currently three aspects in need of improvement.

70. The first is the management of staff change. A number of key middle management post-holders left the school in recent years. In SEN and PE, following a period during which the departments stood still, new heads of department have recently come into post and have already had an impact by assessing accurately the need for change and formulating appropriate plans for improvement. Science and D&T are organised into sub-departments such as chemistry and food technology; while these are well managed and the departments remain well organised, the vision to raise standards and develop the subjects as a whole is lacking.

71. The second aspect is linking the results of monitoring to improvement planning. The termly programme of subject reviews, involving the scrutiny of pupils’ work, departmental plans and schemes of work, as well as lesson observation, is impressive. When coupled with the annual review process, whereby each department, supported by its line manager within the SLT, analyses its performance and sets priorities and targets, an unusually strong structure for school improvement is built. The process of school improvement planning is also good; a clear over-arching strategic plan is backed by departmental and cross-curricular action plans which show how the objectives of the strategic plan will be met. At an individual pupil level, the well-managed pastoral system sets individual targets with pupils. Patterns in the way these targets are met are not yet monitored.

The missing component is that the school does not link the results of its monitoring processes fully to the improvement plan by using available data, including:

- quantitative, benchmarked pupil performance data
- strengths and weaknesses of the teaching

- strengths and weaknesses in pupils' work
 - monitoring which pupils met their targets
 - data from examination boards about which papers/aspects pupils did more and less well
- to determine strategies for improvement at whole-school and departmental levels. In particular, departments vary in the degree to which they analyse pupils' performance, and plan for the improvement of test and examination performance based on the patterns revealed by this analysis. Thus the culture of improvement planning based on the secure evaluation of current strengths and weaknesses varies from department to department. Some departmental improvement plans are good documents with ambitious targets for improvement and perceptive analyses of the strengths and weaknesses of their teaching and the performance of pupils, while others are driven more by resource and curriculum development than by the need to raise standards and quality.

72. The third weakness is that the school has been somewhat insular in not having clear benchmarks: what constitutes excellence in schools and departments similar to Devizes. As a result, the school is not consistent in its ambition that standards can be improved. Teacher appraisal has not been used as sharply as it might to identify teachers' professional development needs, and thus has not yet played its full part in raising teachers' and managers' skills or in capitalising on individuals' contribution to school improvement.

73. Statutory requirements are met well. The governing body presents the work of the school in a prospectus and annually to parents as required by law; the annual meeting does not yet include reference to how the school discharges its responsibilities for pupils with disabilities. Statutory and recommended policies are in place and operational. Health and safety procedures are good. Staff appraisal operated effectively in the past but became patchy, and latterly has been suspended. Although suspension pending clarification of national requirements is understandable, it has reduced the effectiveness of staff development.

74. Although it was not raised as a key issue, the last inspection concluded that the school did not meet the requirement for a daily act of collective worship. The governing body has undertaken a thorough review, and has developed both policy and practice. Assemblies are very good; they celebrate achievement, make significant contributions to pupils' spiritual, moral and social development, and help build the school's ethos and values. However, they still do not meet the requirement for a daily act of collective worship.

Staffing, accommodation and learning resources

Staffing

75. The school is staffed by sufficient staff to meet the requirements of the curriculum, and they are well-qualified and -motivated. Staffing for SEN is sufficient, with adequate numbers of learning-support staff who make a sound contribution to these pupils' learning. Levels of non-teaching support and administrative staff are good. The strengths described in the last inspection report have been maintained.

76. Recent changes to the requirements for newly-qualified teachers have been implemented in full; staff inducted under the new system speak very highly of the support they have received and the school's approach is excellent. There is an excellent staff handbook which describes in detail all school policies and the approach staff are required to take to a range of aspects of school life. The formal appraisal system, a very powerful tool for school improvement, has been inconsistently implemented, with the approach taken by different departments varying considerably. Currently it is suspended, pending the clarification of the government's proposals for teachers' pay. Opportunities for the professional development of staff have been ample but are sharply reduced this year as a result of budget cuts. Links between the outcomes of monitoring and appraisal and professional development are not strongly built, reducing the impact of the latter on standards.

Accommodation

77. The quantity of accommodation is satisfactory. So too is its overall quality, other than in science and the learning strategies area where provision is unsatisfactory. The school has worked hard to improve the level of carpeting throughout the school and this has helped create a calm atmosphere. In drama, technology and the school's reception area, accommodation has recently undergone substantial improvement. The site is well maintained and there is a marked absence of litter and graffiti. Corridors and classrooms vary in the degree to which pupils' work is displayed; many are good but some gloomy corridors are not relieved by attractive display.

Resources

78. Generally, levels of departmental funding are sufficient to provide sound levels of books, materials and equipment. Consideration should be given to the phased replacement of ICT equipment nearing the end of its life, such as in science, and the extension of ICT provision in other areas, such as music, art, D&T and learning strategies (SEN). Some games equipment is worn out and in the geography department book stocks are barely adequate. In other subjects, resource levels are satisfactory. They are also satisfactory, except for ICT equipment, in the learning strategies department. The stock in the school library is small for a school of this size, and some outdated stock needs replacement; the library is however well stocked with poetry and fiction. The school underwent a substantial cut in its budget for learning resources last year; this budget has been restored in the current

year.

The efficiency of the school

79. Day-to-day financial management continues to be the strength of the school which it was at the time of the last inspection. The governing body is fully involved in financial management and plays its full strategic role in development planning. The link between financial priorities and the achievement of educational objectives is secure and the strategic plan is a detailed and thorough document with a regular review process. There is excellent financial control and the reconciliation of budget and spend is firmly managed. The principal administrative officer provides reliable information to the SLT and governing body. Routine administration is both efficient and unobtrusive, guided by sound procedures and consistent monitoring. The most recent audit report did not identify any significant weaknesses.

80. Accommodation and resources are used well. There is a prompt start to lessons and consequently opportunities for learning are maximised. Staff costs are relatively high, but staff are generally well deployed. The core budget is distributed according to a sensible and open funding formula; there is in addition a sum allocated in most years for which departments can bid. A full business case has to be established, and governors are involved in decisions about allocation and value for money. The approach to funding has resulted in a culture which considers value for money carefully, and in generally sound levels of resourcing, with shortcomings in ICT equipment, and some tired books and equipment in some departments.

81. The governing body fulfils its legal responsibilities and works with the SLT to generate and evaluate initiatives and ideas. The governing body took a deliberate decision not to have a finance committee, so that all its committees would be financially aware. This has proved to be a wise decision, since all operations of the governing body have an eye to value for money, and the management and oversight of finance by the governing body is of a high standard. With the support of the SLT, an assessment of spending decisions is regularly undertaken at governors' meetings and costs are rigorously investigated. The school is currently operating with a small deficit and there is a cash flow strategy in place to protect the school from imminent changes in the basis for funding. Recent financial difficulties have been managed with some foresight by the school.

82. Taking into account the background of the pupils and their level of attainment upon entry into the school, their progress and attainment and the value added by the school, the quality of teaching and behaviour, and the efficient budgetary arrangements, with admittedly high unit costs, the school provides good value for money.

PART B: CURRICULUM AREAS AND SUBJECTS

ENGLISH, MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCE

English

83. This is a successful department. At Key Stage 3, attainment in English has shown a steady improvement since the time of the last inspection, with both boys and girls now performing better than national norms in both tests and classwork. In 1999, results were above those of similar schools. Girls out-perform boys by a margin significantly greater than that nationally, however, and this is repeated at Key Stage 4, where the literature results for girls are considerably better than those for boys. This problem remains unresolved from the school's first inspection. The proportion of pupils gaining higher (A* - C grade) results at GCSE are a little variable but they are generally around or slightly above national norms for English and consistently well above average for English Literature. GCSE Drama results, although variable year-on-year, taken overall are very good, and significantly above average. A level results in English are variable too, but typically tend to be around the national average.

84. Given the range of attainment on entering the school, it is clear that many pupils make good progress across both key stages. The summer literacy school prepares pupils with special needs well, helping them progress in the setting of their normal English lessons. The department's strong emphasis on reading-related activities such as the Bookworms Club for able readers, the annual Readathon and the extensive fiction stock in the library all support steady progress in pupils' reading.

85. The great majority of pupils across both key stages make satisfactory progress in their written work and are increasingly able to write in a variety of styles appropriate to differing purposes. The frequent use of writing frames to help pupils structure their work more effectively is proving helpful. Standards of presentation and handwriting are good. Although spelling, grammar and expression are variable, pupils in both key stages routinely use thesauruses and dictionaries to support their written work and many are writing fluently and appropriately by the end of Key Stage 4. Pupils in Year 11 and the sixth form commonly make notes on set texts without prompting. Much of the best work seen related to the study of the set texts or to straightforward narrative writing. There is a good Key Stage 3 ICT programme which introduces pupils to word-processing, leading to progressive tasks in each of the three years. Progress in the sixth form is good, with almost all pupils adapting quickly to the demands of the more advanced course.

86. Speaking and listening skills are developing well, from the enthusiastic telling of anecdotes in Year 7 to sophisticated commentary on a text in the sixth form. There was a tendency for some

teachers to be a little over-dominant in the many good discussion sessions which so often acted as a prelude to written work, with the result that dialogue between pupils was limited. Drama lessons provided an exception to this as pupils in groups consistently listened to each other, planned, amended those plans and then presented their work with confidence. Behaviour in lessons is consistently good: pupils pay attention when the teacher is talking and, in the main, stay focused on their work when working in pairs or small groups where they work well together – particularly in drama lessons.

87. In the lessons observed, all the teaching was at least satisfactory and in two thirds it was good or better. All drama lessons were good or very good. The best were conducted at a brisk pace, generated by varied tasks and activities well matched to pupils' abilities; the teacher had a clear view, shared with the pupils, of the lesson's key purposes. There is scope for this best practice to be more widely shared.

88. The department is well organised, efficient and well-led, and its curriculum complies with statutory requirements. The arrangements for assessment are thorough and effective, as is the day-to-day practice – whether through the marking of exercise books or the supportive interventions by teachers in the classroom. Recent innovations such as the developing links with primary schools, the increasing collaboration between the English and Drama departments (a further good response to the recommendations of the last inspection), the change to a more structured and coherent English curriculum and the more collegial approach to planning and development, will all support the department's continuing improvement.

Literacy Across The School

89. Support for the development of pupils' skills in reading, writing, speaking and listening across the school as a whole is uneven. The question-and-answer approach to teaching is widely and successfully used and, crucially, pupils in most subjects speak well and listen attentively both to the teacher and to each other. However, the quality of questioning is variable and in some lessons pupils have to listen for too long. Relatively little use is made of group work or other methods which involve pupils working directly with each other rather than through the teacher, though some good examples of such work were seen in English, history, the GNVQ courses and drama. The ability and willingness of pupils to answer at length when given the opportunity is good.

90. Written work is not given equal priority in all departments. Whilst there are good examples of variety and extended writing in some subjects, such as geography, other subjects are over-reliant on exercises requiring single-word answers and sentence-completion. Attention is paid to the skills of constructing an essay and note-making in one or two subjects but many would find helpful the

structured 'writing-frames' as used in English and learning support. The school should find opportunities for sharing the good practice in developing pupils' literacy which is currently to be found in isolated pockets.

Mathematics

91. At Key Stage 3 standards are above the national average. There has been a slight improvement in results in recent years, and the results in 1999 are in line with those of similar schools. The gap between boys' and girls' performances, in the favour of boys, is rather wide in national terms. At GCSE, examination results are above the national average, and have remained fairly consistent in recent years. With the improved tracking and targeting procedures recently put in place, the sharply raised hopes for more-able pupils in the next two years stand a good chance of being achieved. Standards of mathematics at A level are very high. Recent results have been consistently well above national averages and the subject is popular. These represent significant further improvements on the positive comments in the last inspection.

92. In lessons able pupils are performing close to their potential. This is not so true of middle- or low- ability pupils, for whom there is scope for increased expectations. Within Key Stage 3 there is the greatest potential for raising standards. Work sampling shows some high quality work from pupils of all abilities throughout the school, except in the lowest sets in Key Stage 3 where some under-achievement is evident and some work is poorly presented.

93. In number and algebra attainment is generally good. Mental skills are less impressive, but are improving because teachers have recognised the problem and are taking action. There are still some occasions when calculators are used inappropriately. Standards in shape, space and data handling are good. Practical measurement skills are weaker. Pupils' investigational powers are developing strongly. Clear and effective action on investigation skills has been taken since they were criticised in the last inspection. Within mathematics lessons there is now some impressive use and development of ICT skills in the context of high quality mathematics learning. Reading and writing standards are generally good, but some presentation is poor. Speaking and listening skills between teachers and pupils are good but are much less developed amongst pupils themselves.

94. Many pupils make very good progress in their mathematics. They arrive with average and just below-average scores in the national tests at the end of primary school, and go on to achieve above-average results in Key Stage 3, GCSE and A level examinations. The school average exceeds the national figure by increasing margins at 14, 16 and 18. In lessons, pupils also make good progress

except in a small proportion of lessons, mostly with middle or lower ability pupils in Key Stages 3, where progress is unsatisfactory. Progress is best when teachers give a positive view of pupils' potential, trying to develop their thinking powers alongside new mathematical ideas and language, and placing the mathematics in meaningful contexts. It is slowest when there is too little checking of pupils' previous knowledge and the planning detail of the lesson is vague. Occasionally, too much faith is placed on the effectiveness of individual help around the class as a main learning mechanism. The progress of pupils with SEN in mathematics is often unsatisfactory; it requires more sophisticated diagnosis and support, expressed through IEPs, than they are presently receiving simply by being part of a small lowest set.

95. Pupils' responses to lessons are a strength of the school and the department. In almost all lessons pupils are co-operative and willing to learn, and in many they are enthusiastic and industrious.

96. The department contains some excellent teachers and the proportion of high quality teaching is high. There were some lessons in which teaching was unsatisfactory, mainly in lower sets in Key Stage 3, with pupils failing to make appropriate progress with their learning. Teaching in the sixth form is often very good. Teaching quality has improved since the time of the last inspection, but it has also polarised, despite considerable attempts to share skills and support classroom practice. The best teaching was when teachers struck a balance between showing and asking, integrated practical activities into the lesson, used challenging problems or activities, and promoted discussion of results. The unsatisfactory teaching involved too much faith in single-style exposition and practice lessons, often involving too much unquestioned use of the textbook. The teacher does not build on pupils' previous knowledge and planning to address pupils' particular difficulties is inadequate. There is a tendency to try to talk weaker pupils towards an understanding, instead of finding activities for them to do that would bring out common misconceptions in a tangible way.

97. The mathematics curriculum fully meets statutory requirements. Its breadth and balance has improved and is now good. There have been a variety of effective curriculum improvement initiatives including enhanced use of using and applying mathematics and of ICT, curricular enrichment for able pupils, and a project to strengthen curricular links with partner primary schools. Useful schemes of work have been created around new texts and they are now ready to be elaborated through team discussion. The department sets good targets based on accurate assessment and record keeping. Pupils should be involved more in deciding exactly what mathematics they need to understand better and how this should be tackled.

98. Across the school, pupils' numeracy skills are sound. Schemes of work in several subjects,

especially science, IT, economics, GNVQ and geography, make reference to numeracy, and work in these and other subjects supports mathematics in raising pupils' numeracy. There is, however, no overall policy or planned approach; these will be needed in the light of the national primary-age numeracy initiative.

99. Departmental leadership has developed strongly, offering strong vision, a determined approach, and considerable creativity. Staff have been well managed through some difficulties. Departmental improvement planning is perceptive and links well into the whole-school plan. Strategies for implementation in small practical steps is less explicitly developed.

100. The number of specialist staff has improved. The present balance of experience within the department is sound but subject teaching expertise is too variable, despite determined staff development work. The very recent centralising of main teaching rooms is beginning to benefit team work. A stimulating mathematical environment is beginning to emerge. Resources are adequate and well used.

101. Judged by the number of significant improvements achieved and the well-founded forecasts of enhanced GCSE performances in the next two years, all achieved within moderate expenditure, this department achieves a good level of efficiency.

Science

102. Standards in 1999 national tests at the end of Key Stage 3 were in line with the national average for all schools but below those achieved by similar schools. Compared to the national trend, there was a slight decline in pupils' performance in the Key Stage 3 national tests from 1996 to 1998, but some improvement in 1999. Pupils' performance in science at GCSE has improved since the last inspection. In 1998 the proportions gaining A*-C and A*-G grades were above the national averages, but there was a marked decline in the proportion of higher grades in 1999. The performance of girls at GCSE has improved significantly since the previous inspection. Far more girls now study double science and their attainment in GCSE in 1998 was similar to that of boys, and in 1999 it was much better. Pass rates at A level are above the national average. The proportion of pupils gaining the highest A level grades is above the national average in physics, and in line with it in biology and chemistry.

103. Pupils, especially those of average and above average ability, make unsatisfactory progress in science during Key Stage 3. While the majority, including those with special educational needs, gain a satisfactory knowledge and understanding of science by the end of the key stage, the development of

their investigation skills is weak, particularly for pupils of average and above average ability. Pupils are able to follow instructions to carry out experiment, but too many do not write conclusions clearly or plan investigations in sufficient detail. Many do not distinguish between making tests fair and making sure results are reliable, and in particular they do not use their knowledge and understanding of science to help plan investigations or explain results.

104. Overall, pupils, including those with SEN, make satisfactory progress during Key Stage 4. Their progress in developing their knowledge and understanding of science is satisfactory and sometimes good. For example, while exploring the reactivity series, some low ability pupils successfully related the stability of elements to the arrangement of electrons in atoms. Progress in experimental and investigative science is also satisfactory and good for some average and above average ability pupils. Unsatisfactory progress by a significant proportion of boys has contributed to the decline in GCSE attainment from 1998 to 1999. Pupils studying A level science make satisfactory progress and there are examples of good progress, especially in physics. Progress in lessons is satisfactory overall. Progress is generally better in lessons focused on chemistry and physics than on biology.

105. Pupils make satisfactory use of their mathematical skills in science, for example, to measure, calculate and prepare graphs. Some, especially A level students and able GCSE pupils, make good use of mathematics to help process data and predict what might happen in investigations, such as when researching the affect of wire resistance on the power of light bulbs. Pupils make good use of their writing skills but the quality of presentation of work is too variable. Pupils are given few opportunities to use their listening and talking skills to present or explore the detail of their scientific ideas. Pupils successfully use ICT to make measurements, such as the speed of trucks launched by an elastic band in an A level physics lesson. However, pupils make insufficient use of ICT to research information, process data such as experimental results, or present their scientific ideas.

106. Pupils' behaviour is good, an improvement since the previous inspection. They usually work responsibly and safely on their own and collaborate well in groups. Their concentration is often good although some younger and less able pupils find it difficult to sustain their concentration. Sometimes girls, especially when they are in the majority, make a strong contribution to lessons by volunteering answers and questions. In contrast, in too many lessons boys call out answers while girls wait to be invited. Sometimes pupils are highly motivated to apply their knowledge and understanding for themselves, such as when considering the theory behind their GCSE coursework investigations. Pupils with SEN are usually interested in science and work well.

107. While variable, the overall quality of science teaching is satisfactory and has improved since the previous inspection. Almost half of the teaching is good, in four out of every ten lessons it is satisfactory, but in about one lesson in ten it is unsatisfactory or poor. The majority of the less than satisfactory teaching occurs in Key Stage 3. A high proportion of the teaching at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form is good. In most good lessons teachers set high academic expectations and use questioning effectively to probe pupils' understanding. In these lessons teachers manage behaviour well, and use a variety of effective teaching and learning strategies. For example, a Year 9 lesson began with pupils brainstorming the properties of metals followed by the whole class sharing ideas during which the teacher used questions to engage most pupils and sensitively refine and reinforce their understanding. Some lessons are thoughtfully planned to stimulate and sustain pupils' interest, for example by using everyday applications of science and sequencing demonstrations so that the most exciting chemical reactions come last. Homework is frequently set and appropriate in quantity; it is relevant and carefully planned to complement class work. Work marking varies from superficial to thorough, at its best making clear to pupils what they should do to improve. In about half of lessons observed the main learning points were not made clear at the start, and learning objectives for pupils of different abilities were not planned. The main weaknesses in the unsatisfactory and poor lessons are teachers tolerating unsatisfactory behaviour, such as failing to insist that pupils work to class routines, weak lesson planning, ineffective delivery and an absence of questioning by the teacher.

108. The science department lacks leadership, and there is no shared or clear vision among staff of the key actions needed to raise standards. While staff support each other on day-to-day matters within the individual sub-departments, there is little co-ordination or teamwork focused on improving the planning and teaching of issues across science as a whole, such as the use of common approaches to reporting science investigations. Some science issues are well managed, such as health and safety matters, development plans for the separate disciplines, and the collection of Key Stage 4 coursework. However, the management of many key aspects of science is unsatisfactory. For example, while the curriculum meets statutory requirements, there are no plans to guide the step-by-step development of science investigation skills, nor a consistent approach to the teaching of experimental and investigative science at Key Stages 3 and 4. While teachers help each other, there are major inconsistencies in the way science teaching is monitored and supported to overcome weaknesses in teaching or improve teaching and learning across the department. There are effective systems for assessing and recording pupils' attainment and progress in science. However, this assessment information is not used effectively to identify what pupils can and cannot do, nor is it used to monitor the relative performance of boys, girls and pupils of different ability, especially their progress in GCSE coursework. The department has targets for the proportion of pupils who should gain, for example, A*-C grades at GCSE but does not set targets for improving specific weaknesses in pupils' achievement, such as the use of scientific

knowledge and understanding to explain experimental results. The department does not have effective strategies for improving science teaching and so enable it to raise standards and reach the targets it has set.

109. Science teachers are well qualified, but further professional development is needed, for example, to extend the range of teaching approaches and develop the use of ICT. Science benefits from an effective team of technicians. While there are sufficient science laboratories, their condition is poor. The arrangement of sinks and gas taps in some laboratories makes it difficult for teachers to monitor whole-class practical work. Much of the furniture is old and worn, floor surfaces are breaking up and decoration is dull. Teachers and technicians have improved the appearance of laboratories by displaying pupils' work but more could be done, for example, by tidying the storage within them. Resources for teaching science are adequate and in some respects good. For example, there are sufficient, albeit ageing, computers with sensors for a whole class to use at the same time.

OTHER SUBJECTS OR COURSES

Design and Technology

110. Overall, standards in the department are in line with the national expectation in Key Stages 3 and 4, although there is some variation between the separate material areas which make up D&T. There was a slight slip in standards at the end of Key Stage 3 in 1999. Following an investigation into the cause, the department is focusing more closely on the challenge offered to pupils in Year 9, and is undertaking more teacher assessment and moderation at the end of the key stage. Together with the development of the newly-devised assessment scheme, this is helping to raise the achievement of pupils by monitoring progression in their knowledge and skills. Most pupils in Key Stage 3 are now in line to reach the national expectation by the end of Year 9. This represents an improvement on the situation at the time of the last inspection, when the standards of work in Key Stage 3 in D&T received heavy criticism.

111. Overall GCSE results in the full D&T course in 1999 were below the national average, but results varied from one teaching group to another, with some groups above the national average. Work observed in this inspection suggest such inconsistencies are unlikely to occur in the present cohort. Short courses have been successfully introduced in the food and textiles area, and with less success in the resistant materials area.

112. Work in A level D&T is currently below the required standard in the depth of work being achieved at each stage in the design process, and in the precision of work. Greater emphasis should be given to these aspects if these pupils are to fulfil their potential.

113. In Key Stage 3 the majority of progress is sound. Since the previous inspection progress has been made in the development of pupils' designing skills. Pupils experience an increased range of design-and-make assignments and develop the skills of research and evaluation. The quality of pupils' design specifications needs further improvement, particularly with regard to technical function and refining formal drawings. Across the key stage all pupils, including those with SEN, work with increasing precision and control across all material areas. Work in Year 9 in resistant materials currently lacks challenge for able pupils.

114. Across Key Stage 4 the majority of progress is sound or good. Pupils work with a greater level of independence and develop their designing and making skills by tackling increasingly complex tasks with greater attention to finish. They learn well from each other. In the sixth form, greater challenges are needed to accelerate pupils' progress and increase their depth of knowledge and presentation skills, and the precision of their work. Throughout the department, pupils with SEN make sound progress, and it is more rapid when they are supported in practical sessions.

115. Across all key stages, pupils work with attention to health and safety, and are competent in the use of tools and materials. Within D&T lessons all pupils are well behaved and courteous. They show respect for the staff, each other and their environment.

116. The majority of teaching is sound to good. Lessons are well planned and draw on pupils' experiences as a starting point for design development. Classroom management is effective and there is good individual support for pupils. Assessment is being used for target setting in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form and being introduced to good effect in Key Stage 3 to encourage progression between modules.

117. The curriculum complies with statutory guidelines and co-ordination of work at Key Stage 3, criticised in the previous report, is now improved. This co-ordination now needs to be refined to avoid excessive coverage of particular programmes of study at the expense of developing detailed subject knowledge. Pupils' have access to all material areas, and the foundation course towards the end of Key Stage 3 helps pupils to acquire a holistic view of D&T.

118. Three members of staff presently manage parts of the department; they operate as a team and are keen to build on recent improvements. As a holding operation, this solution has been acceptable, but it is not sustainable in the longer term. This collegiate system of management requires scheduled meetings to ensure common goals, and thus places heavy demands on teacher time. There is no single

voice speaking for D&T, and the vision to take the whole department forward is lacking.

119. The textiles area has been refurbished to good effect. Accommodation and resources are adequate for all material areas, though there is a lack of ICT to support work in food and textiles. In the resistant materials there is no record of routine maintenance of machines taking place.

Information Technology

120. By extending the time provided for the teaching of IT across Key Stage 3 in all years, and by using broader applications of ICT within a wide range of curriculum subjects including geography, history, English, mathematics, science and D&T, and in GNVQ, the school has taken heed of the key points for action in the last inspection report, and improved as a result.

121. At Key Stage 3, pupils' attainment matches the national expectation and the school is developing further materials to challenge the more able. Pupils use spreadsheets, word processing, data handling and control software, all with confidence. They use ICT in a wide range of subject areas: CD-ROM, data handling and simulations in geography, spreadsheets in mathematics and information retrieval and word processing in history. The opportunity to apply skills in their use of ICT within other subjects needs closer co-ordination with the discrete course.

122. At Key Stage 4, pupils again achieve standards in line with the national expectation. All pupils follow a course which enables them to develop their ICT capability across the curriculum as well as in a taught course, and to gain certification. The use of ICT within GCSE subject courses, although variable, supports the improvement of standards. The mathematics department again contributes significantly to pupils' ICT knowledge and understanding. A small number of pupils is following a GCSE Information Studies course; this is the first year of this course, and the current cohort is achieving well in relation to the demands of the examination.

123. GNVQ students in the sixth form achieve high standards in their use of ICT which is structured extensively into their coursework.

124. Progression is well structured into the teaching programmes and all pupils, including those with SEN, are making at least sound progress at both key stages and in the sixth form. The course gives good opportunities for pupils to apply skills and knowledge gained in the discrete course in their use of ICT across the other subjects they study, and this helps speed progress and consolidate learning.

125. At both key stages and in the sixth form, pupils' response is good. They approach their work

with enthusiasm and concentration. Motivation is high. Pupils react well to challenge and learning is most effective when they are given responsibility for organising and making decisions, such as in the sixth form GNVQ courses.

126. The quality of teaching is at least sound in both key stages, and often it is good; it was good in the examples seen in the sixth form. Teachers have good expertise both in the discrete course and in cross-curricular applications. Clear objectives are set in lessons, tasks are appropriate to the abilities of pupils and teachers intervene sensitively and supportively. The pace of lessons would be improved by the setting of short-term goals.

127. Provision for ICT is generally satisfactory and appropriately distributed but consideration needs to be given to the phased replacement of equipment nearing the end of its life, such as in science, and the extension of provision in other areas, such as music, art, D&T and learning strategies (SEN). Technician support is good and efficiently utilised. Support for staff development is good. A scheme for effective assessment and reporting across both key stages is being implemented during the course of this academic year. The subject is well organised and led.

History

128. Teachers' assessments of pupils' achievements at the end of Key Stage 3 in recent years show a much lower proportion to have attained the required standard in history than in other subjects in the school. The proportion was also significantly below the national average. However, the standards of work in exercise books and in lessons are much higher than these assessments suggest. The majority of pupils are in fact achieving the expected standard, and the school should thus review its assessment processes at this level. Pupils' factual knowledge is satisfactory and they use source materials well. There was, however, less evidence that pupils could draw their conclusions together and their knowledge of 'what' and 'who' is better than their knowledge of 'why' and 'how'.

129. Since the last inspection, GCSE examination results have risen, but results have fallen back at A level. At GCSE, in recent years, the proportion of pupils gaining the higher grades has been well above the national average. Standards of work in Key Stage 4 are at least satisfactory and there were some splendid examples of pupils being able to empathise with the eighteenth century poor.

130. At A level, both the pass rate and the quality of grades in recent years have been well below national averages. Evidence from pupils' written work and from lessons indicates that their grasp of difficult concepts such as 'the historical novel' or 'historiography' are progressing well, and that

current standards are at least in line with those required at A level. Their essay work, however, again lacks the kind of structure that is needed if students are to attain the highest standards. Pupils' recall of factual detail is frequently impressive but their ability to use their knowledge independently is less secure and they are not really sure how to incorporate their knowledge into a discussion.

131. Pupils' progress in the knowledge and skills of the subject is at least sound, and often better, across both key stages and in the sixth form. The development of their understanding and ability to explain is less secure, and their progress in this regard is weak. Their ability to write extensively and to control the development of their themes also remains relatively weak. The progress made by pupils with SEN in Key Stage 3 is in some cases unsatisfactory, because there is certainly insufficient use of IEPs to tailor teaching to the needs of those with learning difficulties.

132. Pupils' behaviour is invariably very good across the age range. Study skills, such as the taking of notes when watching videos and the prompt completion of classwork and homework, are well-established. Written work is carefully presented, and pupils clearly take a pride in their work. Relationships among pupils, and between them and staff, are very good. When pupils made obvious errors or were struggling, other pupils were, without exception, tolerant, sympathetic and mutually supportive. Pupils generally respond well to challenges, but A level students sometimes preferred to engage in well-rehearsed but 'safe' discussions of issues they felt confident with rather than to take on themes they perceived to be more demanding.

133. The quality of teaching is consistently good: no unsatisfactory lessons were observed during the inspection. Lessons are well paced and have clear objectives; teachers' subject knowledge and behaviour management are good, and they all use questions that refine understanding, draw precise distinctions and prompt individuals to contribute. It is the high quality of such teaching that explains the very good results at GCSE. Insufficient emphasis is however given to developing pupils' essay skills, and this shows in the A level results. Equally, for all that teaching is 'pacey' and directed from the front, it is sometimes difficult for less-able pupils to make progress. In general, whilst teachers' marking is very good and pupils are given clear guidance on how to improve, the focused use of assessment by the department to bring about improvements, is less effective.

134. The curriculum offers the required breadth and meets statutory requirements. There is good use of educational visits, a range of resources is used, including artefacts and video, and there is good use of ICT. History contributes well to pupils' social, cultural and spiritual development. However, because teachers concentrate unduly on the skills of historical interpretation and analysis, the curriculum lacks overall balance and this limits the scope for pupils to make the necessary

improvements as they move up the school and encounter more demanding work. As suggested by the department's results, there is a need to develop all pupils' research skills, and older pupils' abilities to place questions in historical context, to create a balanced essay and to communicate effectively.

135. The department is well led. The department has met the targets contained in its own improvement plan, and the history handbook and departmental policies are both straightforward and clearly written documents, the recommendations of which have been consistently implemented by all staff. The department needs, however, to identify more precisely the strategies to be used to secure improvements. The arrangements for the induction of newly qualified teachers are very good and the monitoring of teaching is undertaken in line with school policy. Appropriate opportunities for professional development have been made available to all staff. Budget management is good. Staff are well-qualified, accommodation is satisfactory, although a little drab, and resources are satisfactory.

Geography

136. Pupils' performance in GCSE and A level examinations has improved very significantly since the last inspection. In 1999 at GCSE the proportion of candidates achieving A*-C grades was well above national averages. At A level the percentage of the highest grades was also significantly above national averages. Since the last inspection, the department has taken appropriate action to raise standards in public examinations with a range of strategies including a tightly focused programme of revision at GCSE and 'A' level. These strategies have been very successful.

137. In lessons and work samples, attainment is at least in line with national expectations at both key stages and at A level. Attainment in geography is secure in terms of the knowledge and understanding of physical and human processes, in the study of places and in the acquisition of map skills.

138. The majority of pupils of all abilities make sound to good progress at all key stages. They make progress in knowledge and understanding of places through a range of case studies, in themes in both physical and human geography and in the application of map skills to specific places. Pupils in Key Stage 3 use their map skills to interpret physical and human features on Ordnance Survey maps. At Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form, pupils use case studies from more and less economically developed countries to illustrate geographical themes and offer explanations for ways in which physical and human processes can lead to similarities and differences between places.

139. The response of pupils in lessons is generally good. They show interest in the subject, listen

attentively, answer questions when asked and concentrate on their written tasks. Most behave very well in class. The quality of relationships is good but few opportunities were provided for pupils to work collaboratively. There was also little evidence, particularly at Key Stages 3 and 4, of pupils taking responsibility for their own learning.

140. The quality of teaching is satisfactory and good in roughly equal proportion. Teachers have secure subject knowledge, lessons are well prepared and in most lessons objectives are made clear to pupils. There is mutual respect between teachers and pupils. Where the quality of teaching was notably good, pace was brisk, pupils' thinking was challenged and they were encouraged to develop a range of geographical and learning skills. However, a few lessons suffered from loosely-defined teaching objectives and an insufficient variety of teaching approaches.

141. The geography curriculum provides breadth and balance and meets the requirements of the National Curriculum. Comprehensive schemes of work are now in place and are well planned to ensure continuity and progression. Fieldwork opportunities are built into the schemes of work except in Years 8 and 9, where their inclusion would further enhance curriculum opportunities. The use of ICT, an issue raised at the last inspection, is being developed well across the department and examples of good practice were observed, particularly in Key Stage 3.

142. The department has no specific policy on literacy but the development of literacy skills is taken very seriously. A variety of texts is used and accurate written work stressed at all levels. There is good evidence of extended writing, particularly at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form, but further opportunities should be provided for the more able at Key Stage 3. The department also makes a good contribution to the development of numeracy skills from Year 7 to A level through graphicacy and the interpretation of data. Attempts by the department to meet the curricular requirements of pupils with special educational needs and provide equality of access are hindered by the lack of IEPs and support staff in some lessons.

143. Arrangements for assessment are systematic and have improved considerably since the last inspection. Marking is thorough, although at times it is not made clear to pupils how they can improve their work. There is also scope for further analysis of assessment data to identify patterns of performance among boys and girls and for specific strategies to be put in place to address differences. The department makes a sound contribution to pupils' personal and social development.

144. The subject is very well managed and led. Issues arising from the last inspection have been methodically addressed and improvements have resulted. The ethos of the department reflects a strong

commitment to raising standards and to the provision of a good learning environment. However, in the further pursuit of higher standards particularly at Key Stage 3, the department should consider staff training to help widen the range of teaching and learning strategies. Resources for learning are barely adequate and some require urgent updating.

Modern Foreign Languages

145. Modern languages (French and Spanish) make a very satisfactory contribution to the academic and cultural life of the school. Standards reached overall are in line with national norms although, at GCSE, results in French are consistently better than those in Spanish. There has been better analysis of pupils' strengths and weaknesses, and better planning for improvement based on this analysis, in French. The discrepancy in quality is not evident in the classroom, where higher attaining groups in both languages perform at levels likely to result in A*-C passes at GCSE. Throughout Key Stages 3 and 4 and in both languages pupils listen attentively and accurately to foreign language speech. They are more reluctant to speak for themselves and cannot easily be persuaded to make a spontaneous foreign language utterance, as was the case at the time of the last inspection. In spite of the good example set by their teachers, some pupils take little pride in their foreign language pronunciation. As in most schools, written work at Key Stage 3 is very limited in scope, while there is evidence of extended writing as pupils move towards GCSE. Sixth-formers maintain this progress and, although their diffidence in speech continues, there are real advances in fluency and grammatical accuracy, culminating in generally good A level results. The school reflects the national tendency for girls to outperform boys at all levels. Pupils with SEN make sound progress overall and are doing well in the special classes in Year 7.

146. Languages benefit from the good disciplinary climate of the school and pupils generally show interest in their work. Small but viable groups continue into the sixth form and these students show an assiduous approach to their work. Pupils in Key Stages 3 and 4 behave well, although the hour-long lesson, particularly in the afternoon, places a strain on their concentration. The generally calm atmosphere in classrooms enables teachers to make themselves heard and to make effective use of the tape-recorder.

147. All teachers are competent, by birth, qualification or both, to instruct in the languages they teach, and make very good use of the target language as a means of classroom communication. They have high expectations of pupils, plan their lessons well and use a variety of methods and equipment to drive the lesson forward. As a result, two-thirds of lessons seen were rated good or better in respect of teaching, and no sub-standard teaching was observed.

148. Statutory requirements for modern languages are met in full. Spanish and French are taught as joint first foreign languages throughout the school. A new curriculum structure now working its way through the school will enable higher attainers to pursue both languages to GCSE and beyond. This is a competent and thoughtful department, cohesive in its aims and methods and well led in both

languages. The department is satisfactorily resourced.

149. The department has maintained the good quality described in the last inspection report, has taken its comments seriously, and has improved still further. Key tasks for teachers to address now are first to make homework more universally relevant to the work done in class; second, to make the aims of each lesson apparent from the beginning; and third, to bring the same quality of analysis to performance in Spanish as has been the case in French.

Art

150. Departmental results are good at all levels, and the department has sustained the quality described in the last inspection report. Assessments at the end of Key Stage 3 are above the national average. GCSE art results in recent years have been above or well above the national average for those achieving the higher grades. There has been little difference in the examination performance of boys and girls, and the school has a higher than average uptake for art courses in Key Stage 4. The number of students taking A Level art in recent years has been low, making any national comparison unreliable; able students have achieved the highest grades.

151. Attainment across Key Stages 3 and 4 is almost all above expectations for the ages of the pupils. Nothing less than satisfactory work was seen. In the sixth form attainment is good or very good in relation to the expectations of the course.

152. In Key Stage 3 drawing skills are developed in a structured programme which builds skills with handling visual elements such as tone, texture, shape and colour, and observational skills such as linear and aerial perspective. By Year 9 the quality of drawing skill is generally good or very good. The quality of drawing underpins many other art processes like painting and printing, helping pupils to reach good levels in these aspects. There are plenty of examples of good quality paintings, prints and sculptures. Pupils' knowledge and understanding about art and artists is not so well developed.

153. Drawing continues as a strong feature in Key Stage 4, where it gives strength to much of the imagery created in a wide variety of materials and processes. Colour is used expressively in printmaking and in sculptural constructions. Photography work is of a particularly high standard. Knowledge and understanding of the work of other artists is better in Key Stage 4 than in Key Stage 3, with several examples of well-researched topics informing pupils' own creativity.

154. Good drawing skills again play a prominent part in the overall quality of sixth form work.

There is plentiful evidence of vigorous experimentation and research using a good variety of materials and processes. There are many richly-presented sketchbooks. Understanding of critical and historical matters often inspires pupils' own creative work. Some of the work is large scale with dramatic use of colour and tone.

155. At all stages, the progress of all pupils is at least satisfactory and for many pupils it is rapid. Pupils of all levels of ability, including those with SEN, are able to make progress mainly due to the large amount of individual attention they receive. Progress is made in lessons where productive use is made of time, and longer-term progress is evident in many folders and sketchbooks. Pupils are able to make gains in specific skills, for example in Year 7 colour work and Year 9 studies of tone control and perspective.

156. Pupils across the school are attentive listeners in art lessons. They ask intelligent questions and can provide well thought-out answers. They concentrate on their work and are well behaved, pleasant, considerate and polite. In Key Stage 4 and the sixth form, pupils increasingly make individual choices and work independently. Some are very highly motivated and committed in art, spending extra time in studios.

157. All teaching in the department is at least satisfactory and almost all is good. Teachers' knowledge, skills and understanding of art enable them to provide expert subject leadership. Their subject enthusiasm is communicated to pupils through their clear commitment and concern for high quality outcomes at all levels. Organisation is thorough, classroom discipline and relationships are secure, lesson time is maximised for productive work and the detailed, individually-tailored support that all pupils receive. The quality and consistency of marking and assessment is good. The subject makes a good contribution to pupils' spiritual, social and cultural development: they are encouraged to reflect on feelings, and to study the art of their own and other cultures, past and present; teaching methods promote pupils' personal development.

158. All National Curriculum requirements for art are met. Levels of attainment in investigating and making have risen slightly since the last inspection, but ICT still needs further development and more work is still needed to integrate knowledge and understanding of art in Key Stage 3. This is a well-managed department which has maintained the strengths described in the last inspection report and improved in the small number of areas which were criticised.

Music

159. By the end of Key Stage 3, attainment as measured by the end-of-key-stage teacher assessments is broadly in line with that expected of pupils of similar age, although a significant minority attain lower standards. Work observed in the inspection supported these assessments. At Key Stage 4 and A level, standards are similarly in line with those expected of pupils of similar age. In the 1999 examination, eighty per cent of those entered for GCSE attained A*-C grades, an increase from previous years - which were themselves above the national average. There were no entries for A level in 1999, but the work produced by the single current A level pupil is of a good A level standard. Standards achieved in instrumental lessons are mostly good while those achieved in extra-curricular activities are satisfactory. Overall, standards are somewhat improved on those reported in the last inspection.

160. Across Key Stage 3, pupils' playing skills develop systematically. Singing is under-developed, for example, in lessons with Year 7 and 8 pupils where unison singing lacked clear diction or good intonation. Composing skills, a weakness at the time of the last inspection, are improving slowly, but pupils do not yet develop their musical ideas fully. Pupils' knowledge of music is generally secure. The integration of listening and appraising with performing and composing is not always fully explored. In Key Stage 4, pupils' performing skills develop appropriately though opportunities for composing are limited and musical knowledge is restricted. The single sixth form pupil's skills, knowledge and understanding of music are developing satisfactorily. There is little use of ICT at any stage.

161. The majority of pupils make satisfactory progress but it is too slow for a significant minority of pupils in Key Stage 3. High musical achievers progress insufficiently and pupils with SEN make slow progress in class lessons because too little account is taken of their prior attainment.

162. Pupils generally have positive attitudes to music and most work with sustained concentration on the task. Relationships are positive. Pupils in Key Stage 4, at A level and in instrumental work are developing independent study skills well.

163. The quality of teaching ranges from unsatisfactory to very good, though it is mostly satisfactory. The better lessons are characterised by good musical skill and subject command, by careful lesson planning with clear objectives, high demands of pupils and good use of resources. Weaknesses in teaching occur where planned work takes little account of pupils' differing abilities, where expectations are low and when few opportunities are provided for pupils to evaluate their work. Homework, which is set infrequently, does little to support or improve musical learning.

164. The curriculum fulfils the statutory requirement at Key Stage 3, but the time allocated for GCSE is inadequate. It disadvantages pupils and compartmentalises the programme of work. The instrumental teaching programme, which is well organised, has a positive impact on those receiving tuition. Music makes some contribution to pupils' social and cultural development; pupils are encouraged to appreciate the music of a variety of cultures, past and present. Playing and singing together, and presenting music for performance, promote pupils' personal and social development.

165. Overall planning in the scheme of work lacks coherence. Assessment procedures are not formalised sufficiently and assessment data does not effectively inform planning. The department does not, for example, use detailed analysis of pupils' results to plan for their improvement. Some accommodation is cramped. Current computer equipment needs upgrading to run modern music software.

Physical Education

166. In 1998, the percentage of pupils who gained levels A*-C at GCSE was below those achieved by schools nationally and by pupils in similar schools, but there was an improvement in 1999. The higher target set for 2000 indicates a commitment to raise standards; ways forward have been identified and some action has taken place.

167. At the end of Key Stage 3, the majority of pupils attain standards which are close to expectations in their acquisition of games skills. They can control the ball, receive and pass with reasonable accuracy but only a minority have good tactical awareness or demonstrate good use of space. Boys are more knowledgeable than girls about principles of play in invasion games.

168. At Key Stage 4 average- and higher-attaining pupils taking GCSE have satisfactory knowledge of fitness, but their ability to observe and analyse skills is weak. The presentation of theory work is generally satisfactory; for a minority it is good. On the whole, boys attain higher standards of practical performance than girls. In core lessons standards are variable with higher-attaining Year 10 boys demonstrating good receiving, passing and kicking skills in rugby. In Year 11, girls' knowledge and skills in volleyball and basketball are below those expected. Some pupils gain representative honours at district, county and national levels and the school is proud of their achievements.

169. In almost all lessons pupils make appropriate and often good progress; pupils with SEN progress well. All pupils consolidate and often improve their skills in games. Most respond well when asked to observe others and make the best progress when their observation is tightly focused and they are then required to use the knowledge gained to improve their own work. Discussion with Year 12

pupils, and scrutiny of their written and practical work, shows that they have made at least satisfactory and often good progress in the new A level course which they are enjoying.

170. However, progress within and between Key Stages 3 and 4 is unsatisfactory. This is because schemes of work lack detail and the school timetable denies students in Years 8, 9, 10 and 11 access to the full programmes of study in the required areas of activities. In Years 8 and 9, some students do not come to PE in the same teaching groups or to the same teacher for the same activity and this has adversely affected their progress.

171. Many pupils have positive attitudes to the subject. The level of participation in lessons, which was criticised in the last inspection, is generally high and relationships are good. The few non-participants are not always involved in the lesson. With the exception of a minority of boys in Year 7 who display some immature behaviour, pupils behave well. The recent increase in extra-curricular activities through clubs and matches and the assistance of Year 12 students with younger groups provide good opportunities for pupils' personal development. In most lessons pupils persevere as they practise their skills when working independently of their teachers. They act responsibly as they undertake different roles of performer, coach and official, and as they provide physical support for each other in girls' gymnastics. Consequently, the subject makes a very good contribution to pupils' social and moral education. In competitive activities students show determination and good awareness of fair play.

172. In almost all lessons, teaching is at least satisfactory and often it is good or better. It was unsatisfactory in only one lesson when stronger class management was needed and there was insufficient emphasis on improving the quality of performance. Very good and outstanding teaching was observed in two lessons. In these lessons A level students and Year 10 rugby players were engaged in a consistently high level of physical and intellectual activities. The brisk pace of the lesson and purposeful questioning gave pupils opportunities to recall their knowledge and to use their observational skills in order to make decisions to improve their performance as individuals and as a team.

173. At Key Stage 3, strengths across the department are high expectations of pupils' behaviour and of their ability to improve. Generally, time is well used and lessons are well planned. Encouragement and effective feedback enable pupils to know what they need to do in order to improve their work. On occasions tasks are not adapted sufficiently to meet pupils' different needs and some students wait too long for feedback.

174. In some core lessons at Key Stages 4 and the sixth form, teaching is lively and purposeful; on occasions, where teachers' knowledge of the pupils and the sport is less secure, their main concern is managing the activity. Homework is used to enhance pupils' knowledge and pupils who have access to computers at home are researching effectively and sharing the results with others.

175. Since the previous inspection, there have been improvements in the involvement of pupils in planning and evaluating their own and others' work and this process is used consistently across the department. During this inspection, girls' participation was generally good. This term Year 11 students have had some choice of activities; boys still have no access to dance in the curriculum.

176. During the past year, both experienced members of the department have held significant posts of responsibility in other areas of the school. This pressure on time resulted in a lack of leadership and direction and had an adverse effect on the quality of provision both in the curriculum and in extra-curricular activities. Schemes of work are insufficiently detailed to guide less experienced staff and there is no departmental approach to assessment and no moderation of standards on which to base the statutory teacher assessment at the end of Key Stage 3. There are no records of pupils' progress in any aspect across either key stage. Few targets recorded in the maintenance and improvement plans were met in full. Since September, a new head of department has begun to re-energise and re-focus the department. She has identified appropriate immediate priorities in relation to curriculum planning for GCSE and A level, raising the profile of the subject and establishing consistent practice within the department. She has effective strategies for reviewing and improving curriculum planning and assessment, and has begun to monitor teaching. Staff have worked hard to increase the extra-curricular opportunities and pupils have responded well.

177. The amount of time for gymnastics and dance is insufficient to ensure high standards. In the sixth form, PE is regarded more as recreation and in some groups teaching input is limited and pupils have to wait for turns.

178. The facilities shared with the District Council are good and provide access to a broad curriculum. A department office and subject teaching room has been established and the learning environment has been enhanced by the display of posters and pupils' work. The changing rooms adjacent to the gymnasia are small and drab.

179. Games equipment has been re-organised; some worn items remain and the quantity is insufficient for some activities. Students have little access to ICT resources for examination courses but the department is aware of this and keen to improve the situation.

180. If timetabling anomalies can be overcome, effective leadership and the commitment of the staff auger well for sharing the good practice in the department in order to improve provision for and pupils' attainment and progress in PE.

Religious Education

181. This is a department which has achieved good results and demonstrates good teaching skills. It has been adversely affected by recent reductions in teaching time; whereas at the time of the last inspection the Locally Agreed Syllabus was taught in full, this is no longer the case at Key Stage 3. At Key Stage 4, RE does not receive the amount of teaching time for which the GCSE short course syllabus was designed.

182. There have been several improvements since the last inspection. Standards have remained high and the key points for action in the last report have been successfully addressed. Links have been developed with faith communities and there is an increase in take-up of RE within the modular course in the sixth form. There have been two good years of results from the short course GCSE that had just been introduced at the time of the last inspection.

183. In both 1998 and 1999, GCSE results were above the national average; they were particularly good in 1999. At Key Stage 3, attainment is in line with expectations. Pupils are aware that Christianity is the principal religion, and that other religions are represented, in Britain. They can talk about some of the distinctive features of Christianity, Hinduism, Judaism and Islam, but with limited technical terminology. They interpret religious symbols. All, including those with SEN, make good progress when they are able to reflect on religious points of view and to learn from religion. They work hard in their lessons but, with the inadequate time allocation, insufficient opportunities are presented for consolidation of their learning.

184. At Key Stage 4, attainment is good in relation to the requirements of GCSE and the Locally Agreed Syllabus. Pupils can discuss moral and philosophical issues with confidence, gathering arguments, and identifying how religious belief and teaching can be applied. They recognise diversity within religions and identify religious stances. From this they express clearly their own opinion supported by evidence. They make good progress towards examination success because there is a strong emphasis on the organisation of facts and opinion and the gathering of evidence from religions. They exercise the same skills and apply them to new situations in the sixth form in the short RE course.

185. Teaching is always at least satisfactory and in a third of lessons observed it was very good.

Each lesson has a clearly defined focus and a good range of activities is used. Lessons are well organised and managed. Good use is made of local religious buildings and ministers. Marking of pupils' work does not give enough information about what they must do to improve their standards. The developing range of both personal and factual writing reported in the last inspection is not now evident - the range is limited. Not enough attention is paid to the range of abilities within the class. The lessons make a good contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils, particularly when they are given opportunities to reflect on the ultimate questions of life and explore the beliefs and values of others.

186. As in the last inspection, pupils throughout the school demonstrate positive attitudes, enjoy the subject and value it as a major contributor to lifeskills.

187. The strength of the department is in the good teaching. The reduction in time has created much difficulty for the subject. It has resulted in a hurried pace and the need to omit some key elements. The publication of the new Agreed Syllabus has resulted in the need for more change and has been implemented as far as possible. The scheme of work identifying learning outcomes and an effective assessment policy is at an early stage of development, but at present are weak. The management of these changes is affecting the work of the department adversely. The school has recognised the need to restore the appropriate time to the subject and so further work is required to plan developments and to maintain the high standards shown by previous examination results.

PART C: INSPECTION DATA

SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE

188. The school was inspected over a period of five days by a team of sixteen inspectors who, together, spent fifty-two inspector days collecting evidence in the school. The evidence leading to the team's judgements comprised the following.

The observation of:

- two hundred and thirty-two lessons/part lessons; all members of staff present during the inspection period were seen teaching at least once, and most on several occasions;
- twelve registrations;
- six assemblies;
- a range of lunchtime and after-school activities.

Interviews/structured discussions with:

thirty-five pupils, in addition to a large number of brief discussions with pupils during lessons and around the site;

thirty-six members of the teaching staff;

four members of the non-teaching staff;

seven members of the governing body;

the education welfare officer;

headteachers of two partner primary schools;

a parent from the Able Children Committee;

thirty parents, at a meeting held by the registered inspector in advance of the inspection.

The scrutiny of:

the work of a large sample of pupils of all ages and abilities, in addition to the large amount of the work of all year groups seen during lessons;

one hundred and sixty-five questionnaires returned by parents, an analysis of which appears at the end of this report;

forty-two letters from parents to the registered inspector;

well-organised documentation provided by the school about every aspect of its life and work.

189. 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
Y7 – Y13	1054	25	202	123

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers (Y7 – Y13)

Total number of qualified teachers (full-time equivalent)	57.4
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	18.3

Education support staff (Y7 – Y13)

Total number of education support staff	16
Total aggregate hours worked each week	288

Average class size: 23.9

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes: 78.5

Financial data

Financial year: 1998/9

	£
Total Income	2562496
Total Expenditure	2588056
Expenditure per pupil	2532
Balance brought forward from previous year	43589
Balance carried forward to next year	18200

PARENTAL SURVEY

Number of questionnaires sent out:	1050
Number of questionnaires returned:	165

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	15	64	17	4	1
I would find it easy to approach the school with questions or problems to do with my child(ren)	24	52	14	8	3
The school handles complaints from parents well	9	52	23	9	6
The school gives me a clear understanding of what is taught	10	65	18	6	1
The school keeps me well informed about my child(ren)'s progress	24	58	11	5	2
The school enables my child(ren) to achieve a good standard of work	17	67	11	4	1
The school encourages children to get involved in more than just their daily lessons	22	56	17	5	
I am satisfied with the work that my child(ren) is/are expected to do at home	17	59	10	11	3
The unit's values and attitudes have a positive effect on my child(ren)	15	57	18	7	3
The school achieves high standards of good behaviour	10	56	20	10	3
My child(ren) like(s) school	24	62	9	2	3

Other issues raised by parents

- most parents are generally positive about the quality of education and care given to their children, and the attitudes which the school seeks to develop;
- parents are generally satisfied with the standards their children are achieving and the progress they are making;
- particular strengths are reported in the way parents are kept informed about their children's progress, and the care and support for individuals;
- parents feel that the school encourages attendance, punctuality and behaviour well, and they value the various awards given for good work, effort and attendance;
- they find the school's approach to bullying to be honest, and that bullying is dealt with quickly and well on the rare occasions when it occurs;
- they are concerned about the impact of budget cuts, especially on the sixth form, and of staff turnover; a lapse in the standards in PE and sport last year concerns some parents;
- there are mixed messages about homework (some think there is too little, some too much); behaviour (most think the school does well, but there are dissenting voices); and about the school's responsiveness and approachability.