

INSPECTION REPORT

ERNULF COMMUNITY SCHOOL

Barford Road, St Neots

LEA area: Cambridgeshire

Unique reference number: 110878

Headteacher: Dr Joe Pajak

Reporting inspector: Mr Akram Khan OBE
27296

Dates of inspection: 29 January - 2 February 2001

Inspection number: 187236

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11-18 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
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Appropriate authority:	Cambridgeshire
Name of chair of governors:	Mr E G Ascroft
Date of previous inspection:	11 March 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
(Ofsted No. 27296)	Mr Akram Khan OBE	Registered inspector		What sort of school is it? How high are standards? The school's results and achievements. How high are standards? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
(Ofsted No. 11041)	Marvyn Moore	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development. How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
(Ofsted No. 8390)	Richard Andersen	Team inspector	English. English as an additional language.	
(Ofsted No. 8520)	John Brigden	Team inspector	Art.	Accommodation.
(Ofsted No. 12825)	Niall Carr	Team inspector	Physical education. GNVQ.	Sixth Form.
(Ofsted No. 18447)	Ronald Cohen	Team inspector	History.	Staffing.
(Ofsted No. 22695)	Raymond Cardinal	Team inspector	Religious education.	Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
(Ofsted No. 19135)	Derek Ebbage	Team inspector	Mathematics.	Curricular opportunities.
(Ofsted No. 11672)	Peter Harle	Team inspector	Music.	
(Ofsted No. 27585)	Ken Hounslow	Team inspector	Science.	Resources for Learning.
(Ofsted No. 23324)	Sylvia Greenland	Team inspector	Geography.	
(Ofsted No. 13805)	Lynn Lowery	Team inspector	Design and technology.	
(Ofsted No. 1990)	Graham Preston	Team inspector	Information and communications technology.	Careers.

(Ofsted No. 17404)	Judith Tolley	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages.	How well are pupils taught?
(Ofsted No. 3838)	Aileen Webber	Team inspector	Special educational needs.	

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

This is a co-educational comprehensive school, educating pupils from the age of 11 to 18. There are 1085 pupils on the roll, making it slightly larger than other comprehensive schools with a sixth form. The percentage of pupils known to be eligible for free meals is in line with the national average. Pupil turnover is low compared with that found in similar schools. The percentage of pupils speaking English as an additional language is higher than in most schools. Overall attainment on entry is below average. Fifty-five pupils have statements of special educational needs and 32.9 per cent of pupils are on the school's register of special educational needs. Both figures are well above the national average.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

The school provides its pupils with satisfactory standards of education. It has a strong commitment to community education that extends the inclusive nature of the school. The attainment of students in the sixth form is in line with national averages. Pupils' attainment at the end of Year 9 has improved but not enough. GCSE results over the last four years have shown marked variation and need improving in some subjects. Teaching is good, overall, and staff work hard to ensure that pupils learn and make good progress. The management by the headteacher is good and the school is aware of its strengths and weaknesses, though there are inconsistencies in the effectiveness of middle managers. The school provides high levels of care, and provision for special needs pupils is effective. The school gives satisfactory value for money.

What the school does well

- Advanced level results over the past four years have been close to the national average
- Effective leadership of the headteacher who provides clear direction for the work of the school.
- A knowledgeable and highly effective governing body that monitors, supports and challenges subject faculties.
- There are particular strengths in the breadth and range of sixth form courses, including vocational education.
- Effective and improving provision for pupils with special educational needs.
- Good systems for staff development including good induction arrangements for new teachers.
- Effective systems for pupils' welfare and guidance and for careers education. Very good provision for extra-curricular activities in which many pupils participate with enjoyment.
- Procedures for monitoring pupils' attendance and personal development are very good.

What could be improved

- Pupils' attainment at the end of Year 9 and 11, in English, mathematics and in art and design, geography, history and modern foreign languages.
- Standards in modern foreign languages and information and communication technology (ICT). The school does not meet statutory requirement for ICT for pupils in Years 10 and 11.
- Effectiveness of senior and middle managers.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has tackled effectively most issues identified in the March 1996 report and addressed other areas for development, including raising standards of literacy and numeracy, developing strategies to improve pupils' behaviour and establishing systems for review and monitoring of standards. A-level results have remained in line with or above the national average. Pupils' performance in music, General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ), physical education and design and technology has improved but in modern foreign languages and ICT it has shown no sign of improvement. The provision for pupils with special needs has improved. Attendance has also improved. Lessons are now one hour each to improve pupils' concentration. The governing body has become highly effective in monitoring, evaluating and challenging the work of their assigned faculties. Sixth form facilities and their resources for information technology are very good. Careful financial management over the last five years has created the foundation for targeted investment for school improvement. Effective leadership by the headteacher

and a strong commitment of the governing body ensure that the school is well placed to continue improvement.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	Compared with			
	All schools			similar schools
	1998	1999	2000	2000
GCSE examinations	C	C	D	E
A-levels/AS-levels	D	A	C	

Key

well above average A

above average B

average C

below average D

well below average E

In 2000, results in the National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9 were below the national average in English, mathematics and science. The trend in the school's average score for all core subjects is also below the national trend. In comparison with similar schools pupils' performance was below average in English and science and close to the national average in mathematics. In 2000, the proportion of pupils gaining five or more passes at the higher grades A*-C in the GCSE examinations is below the national average. The results reflect partly the high number of pupils with special educational needs and are due partly to well below average performance in some subjects. The proportion of pupils gaining five or more passes both in the range of A*-C and of A*-G, however, was close to the national average in 1997, 1998 and 1999 and well above the average for similar schools. The trend in the school's average was above the national trend. Based on attainment in National Curriculum tests, in 1998, pupils' progress at GCSE/GNVQ was good but their attainment was well below in comparison with similar schools. Results in science and design and technology have improved over the last four years and are now close to the national average. Pupils in humanities have consistently performed very well. They have achieved consistently less well in mathematics, art, history, geography, English literature and their results have been poor in French and German. In English, pupils' results have varied; their performance was close to the national average in 1999 but was well below the national average in 2000. Over the last four years, including 2000, results gained by the students who were entered for two or more GCE A-levels or AS equivalent have been close to the national average. Inspection evidence indicates that attainment by the end of Year 9 is below national expectations in English, mathematics and science. At the end of Year 11, pupils' attainment is in line with the national expectations in all the National Curriculum subjects except mathematics and science where attainment was below average. Extra-curricular sports, music and drama contribute a great deal to pupils' personal development.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Satisfactory. Attitudes in the sixth form are very good. In Years 7-11 there is a significant number of pupils who are not motivated sufficiently.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Satisfactory. Most pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. The unacceptable behaviour of a few pupils, where lessons are not sufficiently challenging, adversely affects the work of others.
Personal development and relationships	Good. Pupils are given a good range of opportunities to take responsibility within the school. Relationships are good at all levels.

Attendance	Satisfactory. Levels of attendance are satisfactory. Procedures for monitoring and improving attendance are very good. The appointment of a
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	school records' officer has had a positive impact on improving attendance.
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Most pupils participate in the life of the school and willingly accept opportunities for responsibility. Appropriate ways of managing behaviour are being developed. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are generally satisfactory but they are unsatisfactory when teaching is also unsatisfactory.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Overall, the quality of teaching is good and has improved since the last inspection. It meets the needs of pupils, including those with special educational needs. It is good in the sixth form and in Years 7-9 and satisfactory overall in Years 10 and 11. The quality of teaching was satisfactory or better in 94 per cent of lessons seen. It was good in 38 per cent, very good or excellent in 21 per cent, unsatisfactory in 4 per cent and poor in two per cent. Overall, the quality of teaching in English and mathematics teaching is good and satisfactory in science. Very good teaching occurs in music throughout the school and good teaching was seen in GNVQ and physical education. Some ineffective lessons seen were in science in Years 7-11 and in modern foreign languages in Years 10 and 11. This ineffective teaching contributed to unsatisfactory progress. The strategies for the teaching of literacy and numeracy skills are good but they are not consistently applied across subjects. Pupils make satisfactory progress but their achievements are restricted for several reasons. Pupils are not set clear targets about how to improve. Insufficient use is made of homework. Information technology is used insufficiently to help learning. Most importantly pupils' progress is inhibited by staffing difficulties, lack of appropriate expertise in some subjects and unsatisfactory resources for learning.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory. The quality and range of learning opportunities offered are satisfactory in Years 7-11 and are good in the sixth form but the statutory requirements in respect of ICT in Years 10 and 11 are not met.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	The school has an inclusive ethos. Staff and pupils have very positive attitudes towards others with a wide range of special needs. Arrangements for assessing pupils with special educational needs are good.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Satisfactory, overall. Several subjects make no specific provision for these pupils, but many receive extra help from class teachers. The school is developing appropriate strategies to help these pupils.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good. The provision for pupils' spiritual development is satisfactory; moral development is very good; social and cultural development is good. In music and drama spiritual development is very good.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school provides very good care and guidance for its pupils. Procedures for child protection are excellent. Pupils' attainment and progress are monitored satisfactorily and procedures for monitoring attendance and ensuring health and safety are very good.

The school provides a wide range of A-level and GNVQ courses for the sixth form students whose academic progress is monitored systematically. The structure of the school day and the way humanities

is organised adversely affect teaching and learning. Some aspects of the design and technology curriculum in Years 7-9 are not taught. The excellent relationship with Samuel Pepys Special School enhances the opportunities available to pupils with special educational needs. Gifted and talented pupils are not challenged sufficiently. School assemblies do not make a strong contribution to pupils' spiritual developments. The school actively promotes the good work of pupils in the local press.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Satisfactory: The headteacher provides clear, purposeful and effective leadership. Senior managers and subject leaders need to share greater responsibility to improve overall effectiveness and accountability. The leadership of SEN is very effective.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Effective and competent. They provide good support to the school. They are highly effective in monitoring, challenging and supporting departments assigned to them. Some statutory requirements are not met.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good: there has been extensive monitoring and evaluation of faculties by the headteacher, governors and external LEA officers. Monitoring and evaluation by most heads of faculties is unsatisfactory.
The strategic use of resources	Valuable support is provided by learning support assistants and non-teaching staff. Insufficient learning resources and availability of appropriately qualified teachers adversely affect pupils' attainment and progress.

Great care is taken over financial planning. External grants and limited resources are used efficiently.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • their children like school; • their children are making good progress; • teaching is good in school; • the school expects its pupils to work hard and to develop responsible attitudes; • they feel comfortable approaching the school with any question and problems; • the school is led and managed well. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Amount and quality of homework; • Information given about their children's progress; • the behaviour of a significant minority of pupils; • range of after-school activities; • closer partnership with the school.

Inspectors agree with the positive views of parents. Inspectors found that homework is set in most subjects and the school organises after school homework clubs but not all teachers set homework according to the agreed timetable and set tasks do not always provide sufficient extension to the pupils' learning. A 'behaviour management group' effectively monitors and promotes good behaviour but a few incidents of unacceptable behaviour were seen. Relationships at all levels are good. Formal systems for providing information for parents are good. The range of extra-curricular activities is very good and much appreciated by many pupils. The Parent Teacher Association makes a valuable contribution. The senior managers and the school's governors are keen to further strengthen this partnership to enable pupils to benefit from the educational opportunities that are offered.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. Overall attainment on entry is below average. Standardised reading, cognitive ability and National Curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 2 in English, mathematics and science, confirm this. In recent years the school's population has increased and there is significant improvement in the pupils' ability profile in the present Years 7 and 8. Pupils' attainment in the National Curriculum tests is close to or slightly above the national average. The percentage of pupils, 32.9 per cent, on the school's register of special educational needs (SEN), has risen each year since the last inspection and is well above the national average. There is a high number of pupils, currently 55, with statements of special educational needs. The pupils having the highest level of need have moderate learning difficulties, emotional and behavioural problems and physical impairment or are autistic. There are 16 places reserved by the LEA for the education of pupils with physical disabilities. The percentage of pupils speaking English as an additional language is higher than in most schools. The school has an inclusive ethos and is developing appropriate strategies to help all these pupils, many of whom receive extra help from class teachers and classroom assistants.
2. By the end of Year 9 in 2000, the attainment of pupils in the National Curriculum tests in English, mathematics and science was below the national average. The percentage of pupils reaching levels 5 and 6 was below the national average in all three core subjects. The trend in the school's average score for all core subjects is upwards but was below the national trend. In comparison with similar schools pupils' performance was below average in English and science and close to the national average in mathematics. In the core subjects, there was no significant difference in the performance of boys and girls or between pupils from minority ethnic groups and other pupils.
3. In 2000, the percentage of pupils gaining five or more passes at the higher grades A*-C in the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) examinations was below the national average and at A*-G was well below the national average. The results reflect partly the high number of pupils with special educational needs and the well below average performance in some subjects. Based on attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 in 1998, pupils' progress on GCSE and GNVQ courses was very good in comparison with similar schools but the percentage of pupils achieving five or more higher GCSE, A*-C grades was well below average in comparison with schools with similar socio-economic characteristics. There was no significant difference in the performance of pupils from different ethnic groups. Girls, in line with national trends, outperformed boys. Over the past four years, the GCSE results have varied and in 1996, the percentage of pupils obtaining grades A*-C (52 per cent) was above the national average. In 1997, 1998 and 1999 pupils' attainment was close to the national average and above the average for similar schools, and the trend in the school's averages was above the national trend. In English pupils' results have shown considerable variation; their performance was close to the national average in 1999 but was well below the national average in 2000. Results in design and technology have improved over the last four years and are now close to the national average. Pupils' performance in GCSE science has improved but not enough. In GCSE integrated humanities pupils have performed consistently very well. They have achieved consistently less well in mathematics, art, history, geography, English literature and their results have been poor in French and German.
4. A-level results for students entering two or more General Certificate of Education A-level in 2000 were close to the national average. The average A/AS level points score of students entered for these examinations was above the national average and represents good value, relative to their prior below average attainment in GCSE examinations.
5. At the end of Year 9, the standards of achievement, as seen in lessons during the inspection and in an analysis of pupils' work, are in line with national expectations in religious education, art and

design, design and technology, music and physical education and below average in English, mathematics, science and information and communication technology. Inspection findings indicate that at the end of Key Stage 4, pupils' attainment is in line with the national expectations in all the National Curriculum subjects except mathematics and science where attainment was below average. Their attainment in modern foreign languages at the end of Key Stages 3 and 4 is low.

6. Overall, the progress of pupils with special educational needs (SEN) is satisfactory. The progress that they make when they receive additional lessons in the Individual Learning Department is good. Some pupils with a special educational need read fluently to reflect their level of attainment and use appropriate strategies to pronounce words and develop meaning. For example in Year 8 they think of different words with the same meaning and use prefixes and suffixes to change the meaning of words. They present their work very well, using colour and special writing, and this helps them to remember what they have learnt.
7. The gifted, talented and more able pupils are achieving national average standards and some are achieving above. The school is aware that a significant number of them are under-achieving in relation to their abilities in several subjects. Since the very recent appointment of the new assistant principal, however, heads of faculties have identified more able pupils and are providing opportunities to extend such pupils. In mathematics, for example, high attaining pupils are set extension work and in music able musicians benefit from instrumental tuition and extra-curricular activities. There are embryonic developments such as interactive computer programs to develop thinking skills, discussions with parents on raising expectations of their children's potential and the setting up of the "Master Class " Clubs. There is a need to monitor, evaluate and further promote these positive developments to maximise the achievement of able pupils.
8. In English pupils in Years 7-9, can speak accurately and participate well in group work. They read aloud clearly and fluently, sometimes with expression, and usually convey meaning. Levels of recall and comprehension are satisfactory: the great majority grasps the main points of what they have read, though fewer are able to locate specific references. Pupils invariably take care over writing, which is usually grammatically competent, but a large proportion of written work is poorly organised and lacks interest and variety of expression. The linguistic needs of pupils with English as an additional language, and of those with learning difficulties, are met effectively by in-class support. Pupils at Years 10 and 11 usually speak clearly and competently, and some very good group discussions were observed. Pupils read aloud well, with understanding and interest, and demonstrate satisfactory comprehension. Written work is broadly in line with expectations. Some media studies coursework displays good research, analysis and organisation of material. Those with English as an additional language are generally given satisfactory support and encouragement, which enables them to work to their potential. The attainment of students in the sixth form is about average. Oral skills of students in the sixth form are well developed and they have satisfactory knowledge of the texts they have read and can identify themes. Written work shows pupils' general competence across a broad range of tasks. Pupils in Years 7-9 show good familiarity with drama skills, which they can combine to create expressive freeze-frames. By the end of Year 11, pupils use dialogue and facial expression very effectively.
9. Standards of literacy are satisfactory across all subjects. Pupils are encouraged to speak clearly and with confidence in most subjects. Most pupils listen attentively with concentration and understanding to each other and their teachers. In most lessons, pupils express their viewpoints fluently, having a reasonable command of standard spoken English. The summer school had a positive impact on raising pupils' reading and writing skills. However, pupils' writing skills are developed inconsistently in some subjects.
10. Pupils' number skills are satisfactory and most have reasonably quick mental recall. At both Key Stages 3 and 4, the majority of pupils show considerable confidence in mathematics, including number, shape and space and most aspects of data handling. In Years 7-9, pupils studying gradients, inequalities on number lines, sequences of numbers and areas of regular shapes had satisfactory understanding of concepts which they could apply to solve simple problems. Pupils in Years 10 and 11, preparing for GCSE examinations showed a sound knowledge of algebra and could interpret statistical data. The mathematical skills are developed through a range of subjects and many pupils demonstrate a satisfactory level of competence in numerical and graphic skills.

There was sufficient evidence that pupils can use and apply mathematics with reasonable competence in a range of subjects. In geography, statistical skills are used to carry out surveys and interpret data. Pupils use measuring skills appropriately in subjects such as art, physical education and design and technology. They successfully manipulate formulae, perform calculations and interpret a variety of graphs confidently in, for example, business education and geography. In science, pupils' low mathematical skills hamper their progress.

11. In science at both key stages high attaining pupils and some average attaining pupils show sound knowledge and understanding across all Programmes of Study and demonstrate accurate use of scientific ideas such as the transfer of energy in food chains, electrical circuits and factors affecting rates of chemical reaction. Most pupils have confidence in setting up experiments, making accurate observations and recording results but they are less confident in hypothesizing and evaluating experimental results. Lower attaining pupils, in both key stages are less secure in their understanding of scientific ideas. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress, particularly when assisted by learning support assistants. They enjoy practical tasks but their understanding of scientific ideas is weak.
12. In art and design, pupils by the end of Year 9 can use a range of materials and techniques such as drawing, painting, printmaking, textile and ceramic work to communicate their ideas. Drawing skills of most pupils are sufficiently developed to record accurately from observation and to make careful designs for their craftwork. In Years 10 and 11 most pupils produce preparatory studies that are presented to show how their ideas are created and developed. Their work is of a higher standard when they show good technical control of materials and techniques.
13. By the end of Year 9, most pupils quickly develop an understanding of the design process. They are able to produce design specifications and suggest alternative solutions. They do not have the opportunity to study electronics or computer aided design and manufacture. Their experience in systems and control is limited. Consequently, their attainment in these aspects of the subject is below the national expectation. At Key Stage 4, pupils show that they understand the importance of carrying out research before deciding exactly what they are going to make. However, this research is generally at a basic level and the higher attaining pupils are unable to achieve their full potential in this aspect. Their practical skills are well developed and they all pay attention to the quality of finish in their products. The lack of access to use computer aided designing and making facilities has an adverse effect on the standards achieved in this subject. At A-level, students carry out extensive research and the quality of their work benefits from easy access to computers in the sixth form centre. The ability to evaluate their ongoing work is weak.
14. In geography pupils' attainment varies. Some pupils in Year 9, for example, demonstrated a firm grasp of geographical skills and good knowledge and understanding of the world's rainforests. More generally pupils' work suffers from restricted writing skills. At Key Stage 4, pupils can evaluate the impact of decisions like the relocation of a company from London to St Neots. A-level students accept responsibility to prepare class presentations on topics such as tectonic activity.
15. In Years 7-9 pupils have sound grasp of historical knowledge and they demonstrate increasing depth of knowledge to make comment about features of the period they are studying. At Key Stage 4, pupils are skilful at linking several facts together to make a comprehensive and cohesive historical picture. In the sixth form, students are highly competent in learning facts and can recall them with understanding in tests and essays.
16. In religious education, in Years 7-9, pupils' knowledge and understanding of different faiths is a strong feature of their attainment, although their knowledge and understanding of some of the six faiths studied are stronger than of others. At Key Stage 4, pupils display a good level of knowledge and understanding of a variety of social and moral issues, although their ability to apply and extend their knowledge of different faiths to different social and moral issues is weaker.
17. In information and communication technology (ICT), most pupils in Years 7-9 can log-on to the network and access appropriate applications. Most pupils can use ICT skills competently in presentations combining text and simple graphics. They can design attractive websites and show good understanding of how data is stored but their skills to measure and control are under-

developed. At the end of Years 10 and 11, very few pupils are given opportunities to consolidate and enhance ICT skills and standards at the end of Year 11 are low. Post-16 students studying vocational courses in ICT demonstrate high levels of skills. Year 13 students studying economics displayed above average skills in accessing the Internet to research appropriate information. Pupils with special educational needs make good use of 'Success Maker' which offers interactive, computerised individual programmes to support learning.

18. In modern foreign languages, in Years 7-9, most pupils write accurately set phrases but only write for a limited range of purposes and audience. High attaining pupils can describe events in present, past and simple future and can express likes and dislikes. In lessons pupils lack confidence and their listening and speaking skills are very poor. In Years 10 and 11, pupils lack confidence and have a very limited knowledge and vocabulary. They are able to explain patterns in the language but they are less secure in using and manipulating languages for themselves. Students in the sixth form remain at a low level of competence: they show hesitation in speaking and lack understanding of basic elements of language.
19. Music is a strength of the school, and the new team leader has had a major impact, balancing access for all with the pursuit of excellence. Younger pupils are developing good skills in listening and musical awareness. Most pupils play in groups with style and vitality. Older pupils could build effectively an ensemble performance. Extra-curricular music is also a strength, with many pupils involved, and the determination to perform well is shared by all.
20. In physical education, by the age of 14 most pupils are aware of the health and fitness implications of exercise and they appreciate the benefits of an active and healthy lifestyle. By the age of 16 many pupils are aware of what is acceptable social and moral behaviour, especially with regard to sportsmanship, self-control, co-operation and respect. By the age of 18, students who take part in the provided activities are gaining in terms of health-related fitness.
21. The standard reached on the General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) Business Foundation course by 14 to 16 year olds is above average. Pupils' attainment in GNVQs in Information Communication Technology, Leisure and Tourism and Health and Social Care, is above average. Key skills in all GNVQ areas are helping pupils to improve their learning and performance. Most students studying GNVQ courses show adequate understanding of themes such as employment opportunities within industry, nutrition and food, marketing and customer services. In economics and business studies, students' research skills are well developed and statistical analysis is used competently to generate business ideas and to communicate data and results. Most A-level students could suggest plausible solutions to business problems and challenges. Pupils with special needs at both Foundation and Intermediate level are well taught and they make satisfactory progress.
22. Since the last inspection, several initiatives have been pursued to raise pupils' standards and achievement, including literacy and numeracy projects in Years 7-9, in-service training on teaching and learning and monitoring classroom practice. Some departments employ a range of strategies to raise standards of achievement. Pupils are given opportunities to consult teachers. Outside formal lesson times, additional revision weekend sessions are organised, for example, in mathematics and history, to provide intensive support to average and below average attaining pupils. Standards, however, remain uneven across the subjects, which reflects the level of involvement and commitment of faculties to these initiatives.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

23. Pupils' attitudes and enthusiasm for school are satisfactory. The majority behave appropriately in lessons, listening carefully and showing a willingness to answer questions. Most pupils are interested to learn new knowledge and contribute constructively to the lessons. They persist with the tasks that are difficult, particularly when the teachers provide them with opportunities to use their knowledge and understanding to discover for themselves relationships between things that they already know and the topic being studied. Pupils are able to work together well and in class

demonstrate mature attitudes toward their work. For example, in a Year 8 personal and social education lesson on drug awareness, pupils were able to discuss in a mature way the cause and effect of drug taking and what efforts should be made to prevent drug abuse. Pupils in mathematics lessons concentrate for long periods of time on written tasks and respond well in question and answer sessions. In art, they listen to teachers carefully and use the advice they are given to improve the standard of their work. In music pupils' response is very good in Years 7-9, and excellent at both Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. Pupils are able to concentrate deeply and accept individual and mutual responsibility in groups and classes. A significant minority of pupils lacks motivation and, as a result, their behaviour in science, design and technology, geography and modern foreign language lessons can be challenging. There is a significant minority in Year 9 ready to disrupt lessons and others who need firm direction from their teachers. Pupils in the highest sets in science engage in irrelevant talking if allowed. A significant number of pupils in Years 10 and 11 have negative attitudes towards learning in modern foreign language. There is a direct link between this poor attitude and the lack of challenge in the minority of lessons.

24. Behaviour in and around the school is satisfactory. The majority of pupils settle at the beginning of the lesson. They are good listeners and follow carefully teachers' instructions and directions. The older pupils generally set a good example to the younger ones. Pupils have a clear understanding of the impact of their actions on others. They relate well to staff and peer groups and have respect for other people's feelings, values and beliefs. Incidents of unacceptable behaviour are generally managed effectively by staff. The school has effective strategies in place to deal with oppressive behaviour and bullying. During the inspection week no incidents of bullying, sexism or racism were observed. The satisfactory standards of behaviour and discipline observed in the previous report have been maintained.
25. In additional lessons in the Individual Learning Department, the attitudes and behaviour of pupils with special educational needs (SEN) are very good. They ask and answer questions well and discuss subjects with confidence. They concentrate hard, behave very well and take a pride in their work. They work at their own pace, accepting help and they all say that they feel very well supported and know where to go if they have a problem or need any help. They are involved well by teachers and their peers.
26. The pupils respect property and they are trusted with the school's equipment. The music rooms are always open and the pupils work there sensibly. For example, in a Year 8 information and communication technology lesson, pupils treated computers with care and respect and displayed maturity in their selection of materials to complete a website. The vast majority of pupils accepts school rules. They fully understand the code of conduct, adopted by governors and the senior management team and in general subscribe to the system of merits and commendations. A few pupils are, however, immature for their age and have not learned the social skills to conduct themselves well. The behaviour of a small group of pupils is not satisfactory. However, consistent application of the school's Code of Behaviour is effective in managing in most instances. The exclusion rate is low.
27. Pupils are given ample opportunities to take initiative and exercise personal responsibility. Two representatives from each year are elected to the School Council, which had just been reformed and has had funds allocated to it from the school budget. The School Council is a lively forum where pupils are able to contribute ideas for the well-being of the school and its work is much appreciated by pupils and staff alike. Years 12 and 13 students are trained as mentors for Year 7 and Year 8 pupils and the "buddy" scheme of mentoring ensures that new pupils arriving at the school are able to relate well to senior pupils and their settling-in period is enhanced as a result. Mainstream pupils relate well to the non-ambulant pupils and pupils who attend on a regular basis from the nearby Samuel Pepys Special School and pupils have a clear understanding of their special needs and interact extremely well with them. The pupils are sympathetic to other people's feelings, values and predicaments. They organise collections and contribute to charities well.
28. Relationships at the school are good. Pupils relate well to one another and to staff and are able to work harmoniously in pairs or groups. For example, in a Year 7 geography lesson seen during the inspection week, pupils were able to work in a mature and responsible manner in pairs,

discussing map work and tracking places of interest. The pupils are courteous to visitors and engage in conversation easily.

29. Attendance, at 90 per cent during the week prior to the inspection, is satisfactory. Attendance however, at Year 11 is consistently below this figure. The punctuality of the pupils to school and to lessons is good. There are few latecomers and the teachers ask for explanations when they are late. The registers are completed efficiently. Registers examined during the inspection week were accurate and complied fully with legislation. The school has effective strategies for monitoring and improving attendance. The school has recently appointed a Records Officer funded by the Standard Funds for Schools, whose work is dedicated to the promotion and improvement of attendance. She liaises effectively with parents, the staff and the Education Welfare Service and attendance has improved significantly since her appointment. Year tutors use a range of positive methods to improve attendance such as the awarding of certificates and in Year 9 the presenting of "raffle" prizes for good attendance.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

30. The quality of teaching, and the learning that such teaching promotes, is good in the school. In Years 7-9 and the sixth form the good quality of teaching and learning contributed to good progress and in Key Stage 4 was satisfactory leading to satisfactory rates of progress. The quality of teaching was satisfactory or better in 94 per cent of lessons seen. It was good in 38 per cent, very good or excellent in 21 per cent, unsatisfactory in 4 per cent and poor in two per cent. The quality of teaching is a strength of the school and leads to pupils acquiring skills, knowledge and understanding at a good rate. Examples of very good and excellent teaching were seen in lessons in almost all subjects. In these lessons pupils were challenged, with high expectations, which deepened their knowledge and understanding of new concepts and ideas. A few unsatisfactory or poor lessons were seen in Years 7-9 in science, geography and modern languages. In these lessons pupils made little or no progress.
31. In the vast majority of lessons teachers display good subject knowledge and they use this well to give clear demonstrations and explanations and engage pupils with their confidence and own enthusiasm for their subject. In music, Year 11 pupils made excellent progress in understanding the historical context of four pieces of music and were able to develop listening skills, identifying techniques being used, because of the detailed planning and well-focused questioning of the teacher. In a Year 9 lesson in information technology pupils were rapidly able to understand animated graphics and the need for compression, because of the clear demonstration given by the teacher through a simulated website graphic. In a Year 11 mathematics lesson pupils made rapid progress in understanding how to rearrange formulae, because of the clarity of the teacher's demonstration and explanation. In religious education secure subject knowledge enables teachers to introduce new topics, such as Islam in Year 8, through effective questioning, building on pupils' previous learning. In German the teachers' good command of the languages enables them to conduct activities effectively in the language being learned. In history Year 11 pupils made very good progress in understanding the role of government in promoting medical advances because of the teacher's detailed planning and very good use of questioning to extend pupils' knowledge.
32. In many lessons good planning with clear objectives, often shared with pupils, enables pupils to build successfully on previous learning. Lessons are usually well organised and well structured, pupils know what they are learning and as a result make good progress. In many mathematics lessons detailed lesson planning usually includes effective warm-up sessions and a review at the end, which clarifies the main points and consolidates learning. In a Year 8 art lesson pupils made good progress in developing their techniques and expressing their ideas in batik, building on their study of an artist's work through a well-sequenced series of activities. Pupils make rapid progress when they are given the opportunity to develop investigative skills and work independently of the teacher. For example, in a Year 10 English lesson pupils increased their understanding of the characters in 'Macbeth' through well-planned group discussions, tasks well matched to pupils' capabilities and effective use of the learning support teacher. In a Year 9 geography lesson good planning of group work using information technology enabled pupils to work together and take responsibility for their own learning, increasing their understanding of the impact of economic development on the tropical rainforest. In a Year 8 German lesson pupils made very good

progress in expressing and understanding preferences and degrees of like and dislike because of the clarity of the teacher's presentation and well sequenced activities provided.

33. Good control and management keep pupils concentrating on tasks and create an appropriate atmosphere for learning; as a result pupils make good progress. In a Year 9 science lesson pupils were able to understand the food chain through a series of practical explorations, because of the good management and high expectations of the teacher. In many lessons, pupils are given the opportunity to work together in small groups and exchange ideas; in these cases teachers move around the classroom supporting and challenging pupils effectively.
34. Teachers use a wide range of methods to promote learning. In modern languages, teachers make good use of the overhead projector to present new language and to enable pupils to identify patterns; in mathematics, teachers make good use of the board to clarify explanations and in geography video clips are used effectively to illustrate lessons. In art, teachers make good use of demonstrations to explain techniques and in a Year 10 physical education lesson pupils were encouraged to evaluate and improve their skills and techniques in lacrosse through a series of activities and the good quality of guidance given by the teacher. In geography in the sixth form, students presented their research findings to others and made rapid progress in knowledge and understanding of tectonic plate activity as a result. In history and English good use is made of plenary sessions to draw out the main points and increase understanding. Sensitive intervention with individuals by the teacher in art complements work done in class and is effective in raising standards. In economics in the sixth form good use is made of the Internet to retrieve project material and to develop understanding of economic development in other countries. Independent learning is encouraged and there are some good examples in music, drama, A-level economics and in the post-16 GNVQ.
35. Much of the teaching in the sixth form is supportive and sensitive. Almost invariably there are friendly, mature relationships between staff and students and generally good working conditions in the classrooms, which provide the basis for effective teaching. In some effective lessons sufficient time is allowed for students to think, formulate and express their ideas. Good discussion is organised through skilful questions and careful management by the teacher. However, in a few lessons some of the teachers' questions control too tightly and discourage prolonged exchanges.
36. Teaching and learning for pupils with special educational needs in their additional lessons in the Individual Learning Department are good. Pupils are given support with texts they are studying, and well-structured lessons on grammar, punctuation, spelling and reading. Lessons are well planned and methods are presented in an investigative way that includes practical activities, and consequently pupils are challenged and motivated. There is a positive and accepting learning environment that is helpful to the pupils and builds their confidence. For example, pupils who have previously been struggling with their reading, read aloud with great enthusiasm and with good expression. Pupils discuss characters in Twelfth Night with as much confidence as they would discuss characters in a "Soap Opera". In subject lessons the teaching for pupils with SEN is satisfactory. Pupils are well included and Learning Support Assistants (LSAs) provide good support and modify some of the work for them. However, the special needs co-ordinator (SENCO) is aware that teachers do not have a range of planning strategies to take account of the full range of individual needs in all subjects. Individual Behaviour Plans are beginning to help teachers to plan for SEN pupils.
37. In the less effective lessons in modern languages, art and design and design and technology, planning does not always take sufficient account of the needs of groups of differing ability and tasks do not adequately challenge average and higher attaining pupils. In modern languages lessons are planned for content rather than for developing skills, so that pupils do not build effectively on previous learning over time. In geography and science there are too few opportunities for pupils to develop investigative skills and work independently of the teacher. In design technology the range and variety of learning experiences are limited and fail to interest and motivate pupils. In some science and modern languages lessons teachers are not confident when teaching outside their specialist subject expertise and this has an adverse effect upon pupils' progress. In many subjects opportunities are missed to support and extend learning through the use of information technology.

38. Homework set varies in the extent to which it extends and consolidates learning. In some subjects relevant and constructive tasks are set to prepare pupils for the following lessons but there are not enough examples of challenging and imaginative tasks being set for homework and it is not always instrumental in bringing about learning. Pupils are often requested to complete for homework the topics on which they are working in class, which means that those who have made less progress in the lesson have a higher workload than their quicker peers. Homework planners are well established but not used effectively and consistently to monitor pupils' progress.
39. The quality and use of day-to-day assessment vary. In some classes teachers make effective use of well-judged questioning to probe understanding and use pupils' work to exemplify good standards. In a few weak lessons pupils' understanding was not secure because of lack of opportunities to discuss ideas in depth. Pupils' work is marked and comments are mostly positive. The GCSE and A-level coursework assignments are marked thoroughly, often using examination criteria. More generally, pupils' work is not evaluated with suggestions for improvement.
40. Since the previous report the school has worked closely with the LEA to monitor and develop teaching methods. Satisfactory progress has been made in most areas of the curriculum but there is still scope for sharing ideas and spreading good practice both within subject areas and across the curriculum. This is particularly so in relation to the effective use of assessment in planning lessons in order to meet the needs of all pupils and ensure that higher attaining pupils are set an appropriate challenge. However, progress has been too slow in modern languages and the quality of teaching and learning in this subject remains a cause for concern.

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

41. For Years 7-9 the school provides a broad, balanced and relevant curriculum, which fulfils its aims and meets the needs of all pupils. All subjects of the National Curriculum, together with religious education, are taught. The school provides a range of worthwhile opportunities, that meet the interest, aptitudes and particular needs of pupils. Drama and music enhance pupils' opportunities in the performing arts. In Years 7-9 all pupils study a humanities course that consists of separate lessons in history, geography and religious education. Each of the three subjects is taught for three lessons every week, in two different half terms during the school year. This inhibits progression and continuity in pupils' learning. From Year 7, pupils study French but only Year 9 pupils have the opportunity to study a second language. Information and communication technology (ICT) is taught as a discrete subject throughout Years 7-9 but its applications across subjects are insufficiently exploited. Not enough time is given to geography and science. The structure of the school day and the way humanities is organised adversely affect teaching and learning. Some Programmes of Study in design and technology are not taught adequately. Careers education, sex education and health education, including education on drug misuse, education for citizenship and environmental education, are taught thoroughly in the well-planned personal, social and health education lessons.
42. In Years 10 and 11, all pupils follow a core of English, mathematics, double award science, religious education, design and technology, a modern language and physical education. From the options on offer pupils make four choices. All students can study art, music or drama at Key Stage 4 as well as having the opportunity to follow a GCSE course in physical education, a second modern language or part of a GNVQ course. At Key Stage 4, the school does not, however, meet statutory requirements in respect of information and communications technology. The personal, social and moral education programme has improved significantly. The governing body has agreed the content and organisation of its sex education programme and has informed parents of their right to withdraw their children.
43. In the sixth form, a broad range of subjects is offered, including 14 GCE A-level courses and a number of GNVQ courses at foundation, intermediate and advanced level. All students are required

to undertake 12 units of work (equivalent to four AS qualification, three AS and GNVQ examination, or two AS and six units of GNVQ) In addition, students follow a skills programme as well as a general studies lesson, an activities lesson and a tutorial.

44. The school has a strong commitment to promoting all-inclusive education and works hard to ensure equality of access and opportunity for all pupils. For example, pupils identified as having special educational needs have access to a broad and balanced curriculum throughout the school. The range of additional lessons provided by the Individual Learning Department is good. It offers effective and suitably targeted support, which includes 'Success Maker' withdrawal groups for intensive support over short blocks of time, and specialist teaching for pupils with specific learning difficulties. Some subjects, such as music and mathematics, have developed courses to match the needs of SEN pupils. About four per cent of pupils do not study a modern foreign language. The SENCO is working closely with the faculty to develop an appropriate modern languages curriculum for these pupils with an emphasis on reading and writing. The school recognises the need to monitor their progress and the support SEN pupils receive in different subjects. There are good plans for an 'alternative curriculum' to be developed at Years 10 and 11. This will include practical activities such as painting, decorating and motorcycle maintenance. There is an excellent example of inclusion of pupils from a local special school who are fully integrated in the sixth form and have access to good curricular provision.
45. In planning, the attention given to the requirements of pupils' varying attainment is still insufficient in some subject areas, both within groups that are set by ability and in mixed ability groups. Schemes of work have been written for some subjects which reflect all aspects of the Programmes of Study of the National Curriculum and provide an effective framework for consistency in teaching and to promote learning in lessons. Schemes of work are not universally established in day-to-day practice to have a positive impact on attainment and progress. In some subjects, such as science and design and technology, not enough attention has been given to schemes of work, despite the concerns expressed in the 1996 OFSTED report.
46. The school organised good in-service training on literacy and numeracy across the curriculum, as a result of which satisfactory and effective ways have been developed to encourage consistent approaches to reading, writing and number work. However, in some subjects not enough time is given to the development of speaking skills and effective ways of consolidating pupils' literacy and numeracy skills are not well enough developed. In a few lessons, lengthy expositions by the teachers and printed and dictated notes impede development of these skills. Although the mathematics department has developed increasingly effective strategies to raise standards in numeracy, particularly in Years 7-9, there is limited use of opportunities to enhance numeracy across all curriculum areas. However, the school has recently introduced a whole-school 15 minutes numeracy thinking skills session which has been well received by pupils and staff alike.
47. The school has established very good links with the local press and media. Many visitors extend pupils' learning opportunities and make positive contributions to the planned personal, social and health education programme. Other links actively involve the pupils in raising money for local and national charities. The school has established excellent links with a local special school and it makes satisfactory links with the main local primary schools on an annual basis. However, curricular links with the core subjects of English, mathematics and science, are not strong. The school participates well in partnership schemes for initial teacher training with local higher education institutions. It regularly hosts trainees on pre-course placements as well as providing placements for the full school experience.
48. A wide range of extra-curricular activities enriches the curriculum. Physical education, music and drama provide excellent opportunities for pupils to display and develop their talents and to enable them to raise the standards of their work. Additionally, subject departments make facilities available to meet the needs and interest of pupils. These extra-curricular activities, including visits and excursions at home and abroad, are well planned across the academic and pastoral curriculum and well publicised so that everyone is aware of the overall provision. Teachers give generously of their time. Older pupils benefit from the opportunity to take responsibility and share their expertise by helping to organise sports clubs. From the evidence gathered during the inspection week pupils appreciate the range of opportunities offered and numbers using most of

the facilities are high. The homework clubs provide a valuable opportunity for pupils to do personal study and research.

49. Preparation for the next stage of education is good. The careers programme is well planned to develop knowledge, skills and good attitudes to higher education and employment. In Years 10 and 11, all pupils undertake work experience, which is well planned and monitored effectively. There is a programme of outside speakers, mock interviews and visits to institutions of higher education and local businesses.
50. The school provides an environment in which the overall provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Provision for spiritual development is satisfactory. As at the time of the last inspection, the requirement to provide a daily act of collective worship is not being met. Although year assemblies offer a positive medium for the consideration of some social and moral issues and are a time to celebrate the success of pupils, they do not effectively promote pupils' spiritual development. Issue and theme based work in drama provides good opportunities for spiritual development with very good opportunities provided by school productions such as "Grease", presented at the end of last term. Provision for music has improved significantly since the last inspection and makes a very good contribution to pupils' spiritual development. In religious education pupils have good opportunities to study and reflect on religious belief from the perspective of different religions. Other subjects make a limited contribution to pupils' spiritual development including science with, for example, pupils considering the number of atoms on a pin-head. The school provides for pupils with a very wide range of special educational needs and, as noted at the last inspection, there are many opportunities within the school environment for reflection and celebration of achievement.
51. Provision for moral development is very good. The school's code of behaviour is a clear statement of appropriate personal behaviour. The code is consistently reinforced through posters, planners and during assemblies. Teachers and support staff provide very good role models for pupils. There are clear expectations of right and wrong behaviour, with good behaviour and effort being recognised through a well-established reward system. The school's comprehensive personal, social and health education programme provides very good opportunities to study a wide range of moral issues. The humanities course taken by all pupils in Years 10 and 11 also provides very good opportunities to study moral issues including the opportunity to study one in depth through a personal research assignment. Music makes a very good contribution, with pupils learning to value and respect each other's music making. There are good opportunities to discuss moral issues in history and in English and drama through a study of aspects of morality in literature, including choices between right and wrong and their consequences. Religious education provides good opportunities to look at right and wrong courses of action, for example, in studying the parables of Jesus. In information technology pupils respond well to the trust placed in them regarding care of equipment. Support staff provide pupils with good opportunities to understand the consequences of their actions.
52. Provision for social development is good. Music provides very good opportunities for social development as pupils work with others in pairs, groups and larger ensembles and where the end result depends upon the sum of individual contributions. There is good provision for social development at lunchtimes and after school, with a wide range of musical groups meeting for rehearsals and a wide variety of sporting activities taking place. In English and drama, pupils tackle a wide range of social issues including prejudice and gender. In art, pupils in Years 10 and 11 study the impact of the work of modern artists on how we view the world, our environment and our community. Information and communications technology provides good opportunities for pupils to work collaboratively and develop confidence in presenting and communicating information to others. There are good opportunities in humanities for studying aspects of society, including citizenship in Year 7 and family life in Years 10 and 11. The school's provision for a wide range of special educational needs places a requirement on pupils to help one another, for example in giving consideration and assistance to pupils in wheelchairs as they move around the site. There are some opportunities for pupils to take responsibility including a School Council and a scheme whereby sixth form students are trained to offer counselling to younger pupils. The school works very effectively as a community to raise funds for its own pupils in need as well as for wider charitable purposes.

53. Provision for cultural development is good. Religious education provides good opportunities for cultural development with the study of the six major world religions. The sixth form general studies courses examine a wide range of aspects of modern culture including the media, censorship and pressure groups. There is good provision in modern foreign languages to enhance pupils' cultural development, with trips to France and Germany, opportunities to work in school with French and German foreign language assistants and opportunities to develop speaking skills in French and German mock villages. English and drama provide very good opportunities for cultural development, including a variety of theatre trips, visits by drama groups, poetry presentations and a weekly book club. School productions including "Our Day Out", "Bill's New Frock", and "Grease" provide good opportunities for cultural development. In English, pupils enhance their understanding of different cultures through poetry. They read about the thoughts of people who experience racism and those who cope with the difficulty of retaining the language of their birth while having to use another. In art, pupils experience a wide range of cultural achievement through, for example, their study of Aboriginal, Mexican, Egyptian and European art. In music, pupils learn to appreciate music as an expression of different cultures. The growing number of pupils who have joined the school from Macao brings a significant extra dimension to all pupils' cultural development. Pupils from Macao have, for example, taught their fellow pupils about Chinese script. The school works very effectively in promoting these experiences through articles published in the local press.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

54. The provision for the welfare of pupils is very good. It is underpinned by an effective pastoral system that ensures that a tutor knows each pupil well. The system that allows group tutors and Year tutors to remain with the same group of pupils throughout their stay at the school is very successful. Staff know the pupils well and consequently the pupils feel supported by the school. A regular team meeting, at which each student's progress is discussed, ensures that pupils' welfare is constantly monitored by the school and is recorded effectively.
55. The tracking of pupils' attainment by the school, and systems for assessing and monitoring pupils' attainment and progress, are satisfactory. Pupils' progress is tested annually, through use of standardised scores in verbal reasoning and quantitative and non-verbal reasoning. The achieved scores are compared by form tutors and subject teachers and progress is predicted with the use of form records. The scores are entered on the mid-annual reports, which are sent to all parents.
56. Form tutors interview pupils twice a year, when their academic progress is discussed, personal development is monitored and target setting arranged. The awareness by staff of the pupils' personal strengths and weaknesses is good. The school uses assessment information to guide curricular planning in a sensitive way. As a result of pupils' needs also being identified by standardised test scores an alternative scheme has been introduced at Key Stage 4. Pupils have the opportunity of using the Youth Award Scheme or taking a GNVQ foundation level in Business Studies, ICT and Health & Welfare subjects.
57. The procedures that the school has for child protection and ensuring pupils' health and safety are excellent. The nominated child protection officer is well known to pupils and staff and the school has very secure procedures for child protection. During the inspection week the child protection officer dealt with three suspected cases of child abuse efficiently and expeditiously. Most effective liaison takes place between her and the appropriate agencies. The school has very efficient first aid arrangements, having an adequate number of appropriately trained first aid staff who are supported by the pastoral staff and external agencies as required. Adequate and appropriate records are kept of accidents and the school safety officer regularly trawls the accident book to identify patterns of accidents to pupils and staff, which can be attributable to health and safety issues. Regular health and safety audits are carried out. During the inspection week a regular fire practice was observed when pupils were able to vacate the school safely within a short period of time and staff and pupils in the building were correctly identified as being present.

58. The staff reward good behaviour, good work and effort with a good level of consistency. Most pupils know the boundaries of acceptable behaviour. The teachers have good behaviour management strategies but if a pupil misbehaves consistently in the classroom the class teachers deal firmly and fairly to maintain a learning atmosphere for others. For serious offences such as bullying, violence, theft or harassment of any kind, exclusion remains as the ultimate sanction. A behaviour specialist from the LEA offers good support to pupils where necessary and reviews progress or alternative action with a few individuals.
59. The care which staff show towards their pupils is good. The school successfully integrates special needs pupils, non-ambulant pupils and mainstream pupils, all of whom are shown a high level of care and concern. The support for pupils with difficulty in managing their behaviour is satisfactory. SENCO has begun to monitor this. Good Individual Behaviour Plans have been developed, which are being monitored by LSAs and teachers are developing strategies to support these pupils in making the right choices in their actions. The Individual Learning Team is aware that there is a need to monitor this further in lessons. New Individual Education Plans (IEPs) have been developed which can be reviewed each term, as they are easy to complete and provide useful suggested strategies for teachers. There are good plans to work with teachers to provide subject targets based on the pupils' IEPs. Parents feel confident and secure that the school cares for their children and offers them a high level of pastoral support and security. The school has satisfactory and developing procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour and monitoring and eliminating poor behaviour.
60. The school has a clear and agreed policy for assessment and recording procedures. Departmental practice is monitored directly by heads of faculties, with only limited monitoring by senior managers through attendance at departmental meetings. There are still inconsistencies, between and within departments, with assessments not always being regularly or clearly related to National Curriculum levels or GCSE grades. In most departments, assessment practice is more consistent and coherent at Key Stage 4 than at Key Stage 3. In English and mathematics long-term assessment is detailed and well planned. In art, systematic arrangements to monitor and support pupils' progress are not yet in place. Arrangements for assessment of pupils' work in design and technology at the end of every teaching unit are good overall, but scrutiny of past assessments for Years 7 to 9 suggests that the methods being used could be improved in order to assess a wider range of skills and knowledge. In history and religious education targets are set for pupils against National Curriculum criteria and assessment results are used to identify strengths and weaknesses in attainment. In information and communications technology, monitoring and assessment of pupils in Years 7-11 is unsatisfactory. Assessment practice in the sixth form is good, based on the well-established procedures of the GNVQ courses. Assessment procedures in the modern foreign languages department are satisfactory in tracking pupils' achievement but the use of assessment is not developed sufficiently to plan for pupils' progress in lessons or inform them about how they can improve.
61. The arrangements for assessing pupils' individual needs are satisfactory. Pupils are identified and additional support is given appropriately. The school is aware of the need to ensure that the register of pupils with special educational needs is accurate in terms of the numbers on the register and an understanding of the type of individual need. The school has identified clearly which pupils stated to have learning and behavioural needs have specific learning difficulties. Where these pupils are identified specialist help is provided. The school is developing a range of diagnostic assessment tests to support this work.
62. The school has a very effective programme for the delivery of personal, health and social education (PSHE). The programme, which covers Years 7-11, includes subjects such as drug awareness, sex education and citizenship and integrates with the delivery of humanities subjects. The school nurse assists with the delivery of part of the personal, social and health education curriculum and regularly attends school on a regular basis to offer an informal "drop in" session for pupils to consult her on health matters in complete confidentiality.
63. The positive work done by the school for pupils' welfare and guidance, mentioned in the previous report, has been maintained and improved and a significant contribution to pupils' welfare has been made as a result.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

64. The school aims to be approachable and easily accessible to parents and to work in partnership with them in supporting their children's education. In the questionnaire and at the meeting with inspectors, parents said that they feel comfortable in approaching the school with questions or problems. Nine out of ten parents also think that the school is helping their children to work hard and achieve their best and to become mature and responsible. Overall, parents' views of the school are satisfactory and the school has established a satisfactory partnership with them. Most parents have confidence that staff respect pupils' individuality and will act in their best interest. The vast majority of parents who responded to the parental questionnaire feel that their children like coming to school, their children make good progress in school; they feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or problems, the school expects their children to work hard and achieve their best, the school is well managed and the school is helping their children to become mature and responsible. The inspection team findings concur entirely with those views.
65. A significant minority of parents feel that behaviour in the school is not good, their children do not get the right amount of homework to do at home, they are not well informed about how their children are getting on, the school does not work closely with them and the school does not provide an interesting range of activities outside lessons.
66. Behaviour in the school is, overall, satisfactory but on a few occasions is unacceptable where teaching strategies and learning outcomes are not appropriate. Homework is not given uniformly throughout the school. The school organises a full range of extra-mural activities for pupils including: a football club, sports clubs, drama groups, homework clubs, etc. The inspection findings are that parents are well informed about their children's progress. Two reports are given to parents each year, one giving full and detailed information about pupils' progress in each subject area and an interim report giving grades and projected grades for external examinations. The reports do not always give achievement grades in examinations and do not relate to National Curriculum levels. The school makes full and effective use of the pupil planner, which gives parents information when homework is given, and parents are invited to make comments about their perception of the progress their children are making.
67. The school has a very detailed and well-presented brochure, which is parent friendly and gives parents full information about the organisation of the school and the school ethos. In addition, separate booklets are provided for post-16 students and for parents of Year 7 pupils prior to their entry to the school. Regular newsletters are sent home, giving full details and information regarding pupils' activities. A number of the newsletters are produced professionally and funded by independent advertising from business and commerce.
68. The parents are able to approach the headteacher, senior management team and staff at all times to discuss their children's progress and are contacted directly by group tutors if they feel there are issues of concern that they wish to discuss regarding pupils' progress.
69. Transition arrangements for new pupils are good. Prospective pupils attend a "taster" session for three days prior to their selection of the school. After selection, parents of new pupils are invited to come to the school, prior to their admission, to meet their group tutors, Year tutors and discuss any items of concern that they may have. The Individual Learning Team has a good partnership with parents. Parents ring and visit the school and attend reviews of their child's annual reviews.
70. The Parent Teacher Association (PTA), although small, is a lively body and aims to be involved in the life of the school. Parents are encouraged to come into school for help, although few take the opportunity to do so. The PTA arranges social events, to forge closer links between the home and the school. It raises funds to support educational initiatives. Parents were consulted appropriately about the contents of the home-school agreement. The PTA works closely with the school and discusses priorities but there is scope for greater consultation on the school's curricular and spending decisions. Parents are able to offer help in supervision on school outings

and holidays, help with reading and in other school activities. The school engaged a professional company to carry out a very useful perception survey of parents and is in the process of analysing the results. When completed, the survey will form the basis of the school's plans to further inform and involve parents in the life of the school and this is seen as a very useful exercise, which will be well supported by parents. The positive links that the school has had with parents in the previous report has been maintained.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

71. Overall the management of the school is satisfactory. The headteacher provides a purposeful and effective leadership. He has a clear vision for the future development of the school based on good understanding of current national initiatives. A high priority is given to pupils' attainment and progress. The school identifies priorities and targets and takes appropriate actions to review progress towards them. Since the last inspection there has been a satisfactory rate of improvement. The school has been re-organised on a faculty basis to enable more effective and efficient management processes to be implemented. The impetus for improvement in standards is provided through detailed scrutiny of performance data, bench marking, standardised reading score and pupils' attainments in the National Curriculum tests, which are used to determine the relative performance of subjects. The school has recently been involved in a major process of self-evaluation driven by the European Business Excellence Model. The work of all faculties was reviewed and evaluated by the senior officers and inspectors of the LEA. Lines of communication are clear and effective. Staff generally feel that their views are valued and the headteacher and senior staff are approachable.
72. At the time of the last inspection, there were weaknesses in whole-school strategic planning and monitoring and evaluation procedures were at an early stage of development. The leadership is now based securely in the school's mission statement and aims. The senior management team is trusted with the overall responsibility to ensure that priorities for improvement within the school development plan are delivered effectively. Its main functions are to challenge and support in raising standards by helping faculties to evaluate themselves, by identifying their developmental needs and supporting school improvement through curriculum, management and staff development. The headteacher is undertaking too much responsibility for monitoring evaluation and challenge. The responsibility is not delegated throughout the senior management team and heads of faculties. Support is generally satisfactory overall but the monitoring and challenging the effectiveness of faculties have been unsatisfactory. Though some paired observations with the LEA inspectors have been carried out, they have not yet participated with assigned faculties in evaluating rigorously the quality of teaching, standards and aspects of other provision.
73. There are sound and effective strategies for consultation, planning and review. Parents and staff were consulted and the governing body's forward planning committee was involved actively in drawing up short-term and long-term strategies for development. The school's development plan for 2000/2001 has many good features, such as clearly defined tasks, responsible staff and strategies for curricular development. The development plan addresses effectively all of the weaknesses, some of which have persisted since the time of the last inspection, and includes strategies for remedying them. Appropriate priorities and tasks focus sharply on standards, teaching, learning, management and learning resources. Whole-school measurable targets are communicated through the annual governors' report to parents. Team plans are of variable quality and do not include specific quantifiable targets to determine value-added achievements in the subjects.
74. Heads of faculties provide sound professional leadership but the overall quality of leadership and effectiveness vary. Some subjects - for example, history, English, mathematics, humanities and music - are well organised and curricular planning is good. They have been effective in generating ideas, enthusiasm and support for staff. Some faculties have responded positively to the issues identified in the last OFSTED report and have made considerable effort to develop departmental policies and procedures that are having a positive impact on raising standards in their subjects. The best departments are beginning to scrutinise pupils' work and analyse public examination results. In some subjects, issues identified in the March 1996 OFSTED report have not been tackled effectively. Schemes of work in science and design and technology, for example, are still weak and do not provide adequate support for teachers when they plan their lessons. Some

significant weaknesses persist. Development planning in modern foreign language does not adequately address issues raised in the last report. Standards remain low in modern foreign languages and information and communications technology. More generally, in most departments aspects of monitoring and self-evaluation are not well developed. There are inconsistent approaches to homework, marking and assessment. Subject plans do not focus on value added improvement at the end of all key stages. They do not include measurable targets and clearly defined success criteria against which the improvement can be measured. The school recognises that work in this area is a priority

74. The school's mission statement makes a strong commitment, "to create a culture of high expectation and success within a caring environment where teaching and learning are the core purpose." To a large degree the school achieves these aims. The pastoral team is very effective in providing good support and care. There is a strong commitment to raising pupils' attainment and a continuous whole-school involvement in the development of a more consistently applied code of behaviour focusing on rewards systems.
75. The school has a strong commitment to inclusive education. The school has explicit aims and values, including a commitment to good relationships and equality of opportunity for all, which are reflected in all its work. The appointment of a special needs co-ordinator at assistant principal level underlines the school's determination to support and challenge pupils with special educational needs and the talented and gifted pupils in the school. The co-ordinator provides effective leadership of the Individual Learning Department. Effective and efficient procedures are in place to manage provision for pupils with special educational needs. The school meets the statutory requirements of the SEN Code of Practice. The new co-ordinator provides very good leadership to the department and delegates well to the learning support assistants who are effectively deployed across the timetable to ensure that those pupils with statements of special educational needs receive the support to which they are entitled. However, there are only two part-time teachers in the department and as a result the SENCO has to spend a high proportion of her time teaching withdrawal groups and does not have the opportunity to delegate management responsibilities. The management, monitoring and training of learning assistants are not devolved to departments and this reduces her capacity to evaluate the impact of many commendable initiatives on inclusion. Funding for special educational needs is used appropriately and resources are targeted appropriately to support the teaching and learning of these pupils.
76. The governing body is working in partnership with the senior management team to improve standards. It is very supportive, meets most of its statutory duties and is involved actively in overseeing the work of the school. Positive relationships and mutual trust exist between the governing body and the senior management team. The governors' main interest is in the quality of education and some governors use their expertise in supporting and challenging existing provision in finances, curriculum and behaviour management and monitoring the work of their assigned faculties. The headteacher and governors have, in the past, taken difficult decisions in the interest of pupils and parents in challenging ineffective teachers. The headteacher keeps governors fully informed of all the school's challenges and achievements. They readily question policies, procedures and practices, particularly in respect of curriculum, teaching and standards achieved by pupils. The governing body does not ensure that the full curriculum for information and communications technology is taught at Key Stage 4. The annual report to parents includes much useful information and actions taken to address issues identified in the last OFSTED report.
77. The school has sufficient well-qualified staff who are deployed satisfactorily to meet the requirements of the National Curriculum and support the learning of pupils. The match of staffing levels, qualifications and experience is satisfactory across the school. There are, however, considerable variations across the subjects of the curriculum. In modern foreign languages, English, music and GNVQ courses, staff are well qualified and experienced and are deployed effectively and efficiently. In science and design and technology there is a lack of specialist staff. This has a detrimental impact on standards of attainment. In design and technology there is an unqualified teacher acting as "instructor". Her unqualified status prevents her from being able to engage in the teaching of resistant materials, which is an integral part of the pupils' course of study. In each of the three discrete areas of the humanities in Years 7-9, the structure of the course means that non-specialists teach two-thirds of pupils. There is still a lack of specialist teachers to enable the development of an information and communications technology team

supported by a skilled technician. The technicians' support is unsatisfactory in science and design and technology. This wastes teachers' time and means that pupils have to wait while teachers do some mundane tasks. In mathematics, the problems of recruitment of qualified mathematicians on a long-term basis, exacerbated by the employment of non-specialist mathematicians, has impacted severely on pupils' standards of attainment in the subject. Recruitment is a key issue for the school. Three advertisements, for example, have as yet failed to attract a qualified teacher for design and technology. The school has a high proportion of pupils with special educational needs. This puts a tremendous strain on the position of the SENCO and at least one more permanent additional teacher is needed to lift that strain.

78. The school has a strong commitment to staff development. An effective induction programme for newly qualified teachers is supported by good relationships and mentoring in faculties. The academic staff are well supported by warm, friendly and competent administrative staff. All staff have been involved in a systematic review of job descriptions and staff have a clearer understanding of their roles and responsibilities. Professional development days are well planned and have a focus that relates to the school's plans. The LEA's officers and external consultants have provided in-service training to inform staff of the national initiatives and share good practice with a clear focus on improving teaching and learning strategies to achieve consistency and expectations. Inspection evidence indicates that some weaknesses persist and additional training is needed to improve teaching methods, raise expectations and to develop behaviour management skills. The school has developed very strong working partnerships with the University of Cambridge and De Montfort University in the area of initial teacher training.
79. Overall, accommodation is satisfactory. Accommodation on this large site is well cared for and most of it provides an environment that is conducive to learning. The library is large, spacious and well set out to provide good access to learning resources and facilities for private study. The provision for physical education is very good and includes a recreation centre, sports hall and gymnasium. Most subjects benefit from a suite of rooms, which are usually of a suitable size for groups of pupils. In some areas, for example, English and modern foreign languages, however, some rooms are too small and there are cramped conditions. In mathematics, accommodation is unsatisfactory when rooms are unheated and when a small hall is used as a classroom as well as a thoroughfare and social area. The computer suite for Years 7-9 is also small. The school has worked hard to improve conditions in some subjects. The music rooms have been improved and there is good space for practical work and rehearsals. The sixth form area has purpose built rooms, study space and a suite of computers for business studies but no base for GNVQ students. The general state of decoration and maintenance is good. In classrooms and open areas there are some attractive displays, to celebrate the work of pupils and to illustrate the range of curricular activities the school provides. The school has recently considered ways of improving the use of display in and around the school to increase pupils' motivation and interest in their learning. The school and Local Education Authority recognise that the significant rise in pupil numbers has raised the need to increase accommodation and facilities and recent proposals for a building programme are being supported by the LEA.
80. In most subjects, resources for learning are not adequate to meet the demands of the National Curriculum. In religious education, resources enhance learning; a wide range is available to match different levels of attainment. Within design and technology, science and media studies, serious shortages of appropriate equipment inhibit the coverage of all aspects of the Programmes of Study. In mathematics, resources for learning are unsatisfactory, as there has not been a corresponding increase in funding to match the substantial increase in pupil numbers. Too few textbooks in science are still a problem. The information technology resources are much improved, particularly in the sixth form, where computers with modern specifications are networked and are used efficiently to support work. Additional computers are needed to support ICT applications across the curriculum. Some subjects, including English, GNVQ, history and geography, enable gains to be made in communicating information using word processing and Internet facilities, but their use is under-developed in most subjects. In vocational courses, there has been an improvement in the use of books, documents and a wider range of texts, which is having a very positive impact on standards.
81. In English, the provision of textbooks and other resources is satisfactory, with an appropriate range of poetry, novels and plays available for all parts of the curriculum, and it is used efficiently

to extend pupils' literacy skills. In history, textbooks and other resources are used effectively to support pupils at varying levels of attainment. The resources for the Individual Learning Department are good. In addition to sufficient basic skills resources, including software, there is a suite of computers set up with "Success Maker." The library has been refurbished but the book stock is barely adequate to foster the habit of reading to aid research through books. The subject teams do not promote its day-to-day use effectively.

82. Procedures for financial management and control are effective and efficient. Principles of best value are applied consistently to evaluate value for money from service level agreements with the LEA including investment in major projects, such as national grid for learning. The school has attempted to target its limited resources to improve standards in some weak subjects but it does not assess the cost effectiveness of various sixth form courses and the impact of additional investment in ICT and LSAs. The school accounts are audited regularly. The recent audit report commented favourably on the financial statement prepared by the governors, proper accounting records and effective internal controls in respect of grants.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

83. In order to improve and to raise levels of attainment and the quality of education in the school, the governors, senior management team and teaching staff, with the support of the local education authority, need to take action on the following:

- **Raise pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stages 3 and 4, in English, mathematics, science and in art and design, geography and history by:**

- challenging ineffective teaching and providing further support for teachers;
- targeting in-service training on effective teaching strategies, where needed;
- challenging the unacceptable behaviour of some pupils;
- improving the quality of schemes of work in science and design and technology;
- implementing more rigorously the policies on literacy and numeracy across curriculum;
- using Key Stage 2 National Curriculum test results to build upon pupils' strengths and weaknesses;
- setting targets for individual pupils;
- ensuring that the school's policy on homework is followed consistently;
- ensuring that pupils' work is marked consistently and their strengths and weaknesses are identified to facilitate effective learning;
- improving the library resources and ensuring that teams encourage its day-to-day use;
- reviewing the structure of the school day;
- reviewing the teaching organisation of humanities in Years 7-9;
- ensuring suitably qualified teaching staff are in place to teach all the subjects of the curriculum;
- enhancing learning resources to support the school's curriculum and by targeting resources to improve standards.
- implementing subject specific recommendations in different parts of this report.
(Paragraphs:2,5,14,17,18,38,39,41,80,82,96-99,110-112,122,127,131,139,150,151,158,159)

- **Raise standards in modern foreign languages by:**

- creating opportunities for pupils to practise informally and use the language for real purposes;
- developing assessment procedures so that they can be used to plan for the progress of groups of differing ability within teaching groups;
- reviewing schemes of work to include guidance on expected outcomes for all pupils;
- adapting teaching strategies to eliminate pupils' dependence upon written notes and prompts;
- reviewing the provision of second language in the light of take up at KS4 and standards achieved;

- continuing to share ideas and spread good practice by team planning and evaluation of teaching strategies.
(Paragraphs:18, 37, 179- 185)
- **Raise standards in information and communications technology (ICT) and ensure that the school meets statutory requirement for ICT for pupils in Years 10 and 11 by:**
 - ensuring that all pupils receive their curricular entitlement in information and communications technology;
 - monitoring pupils' information technology skills and ensuring effective applications across curriculum.
 - providing more computers to support subjects in Years 7-11.
(Paragraphs:17, 42, 45,46,60, 82,168-172)
- **Improve the effectiveness of the management by:**
 - developing further senior and middle managers' roles in monitoring more rigorously the quality of teaching and standards in their subjects;
 - setting subject-specific measurable targets to determine value added achievement between key stages;
 - ensuring consistent approaches to homework, marking and reporting to parents;
 - defining clear success criteria against which the improvement can be measured;
 - improving accountability by defining who does what and reviewing progress made by each team by the production of an annual report for the governing body.
(Paragraphs:72-,74,147,185)
- **In addition the following paragraphs refer to lesser weaknesses that the governors should include in their post-inspection action plan:**
 - monitor, evaluate and further promote the provision for the gifted and talented pupils;
 - increase the amount of technician support in science and design and technology;
 - review the time given to science and geography.
(Paragraphs:7,41,79,129, 157)

PUPILS WITH A PHYSICAL DISABILITY

84. The school has an inclusive ethos – staff and pupils have a positive attitude towards pupils with physical disabilities. Pupils are included in the majority of lessons and given support by their own Learning Support Assistant (LSA). Overall the progress made by pupils is satisfactory. The improvement made with this provision since the last inspection is satisfactory. The newly appointed SENCO has made some important changes.
85. Pupils with physical disabilities are very positive about the school and the help that they receive. They have good relationships with other pupils and work collaboratively with them, in subject lessons and in the Individual Learning Department. They concentrate hard and put in the extra work needed for them to keep pace with lessons. Teachers are very positive about including pupils in their lessons. They do not, however, have the expertise in the school yet to ensure that pupils with physical disabilities can access all subjects. For example, they are unaware of ways of ensuring that pupils are able to contribute their ideas and make decisions in practical lessons, such as music and design technology. LSAs need further training to raise their awareness of disability issues and ways of empowering and enabling pupils to be as independent as possible and to have full access to lessons and maximum social inclusion.
86. The curriculum overall for these pupils is satisfactory. Pupils are included in most lessons and they have time in the Individual Learning Department to consolidate their work. They take part in

most lessons, including practical subjects. The school has not, however, adapted equipment and additional resources to enable the pupils to have full access to many subjects. For example, they do not all have the opportunity to work with resistant materials in design and technology. Some pupils take part in physical education lessons, such as swimming, table tennis and using the multi-gym apparatus in the Recreation Centre. A few attend a Sports Club for pupils with physical disabilities after school. Not all pupils, however, are able to play games with their peers or undertake any sport. The physical education department is keen to develop this area and training is to be provided by the British Sports Association for the Disabled in the near future, to look at ways of extending physical education to all pupils with a disability. For the few pupils with more complex physical disabilities the school has sought advice from outside agencies. This includes simple alternative communication systems and switches for technology to support access to other practical subjects, such as music. Pupils take part in school productions, such as the recent performance of "Grease"

87. The leadership and management are satisfactory. The SENCO has implemented some good changes. For example the physiotherapy base has been moved and ensures that physical management takes place in a suitable area. There is a clear educational direction for an inclusive attitude towards pupils with a disability in the school. There is a lack of experience and expertise for the inclusion of pupils with a physical disability, particularly those with more complex needs. There is an intention to provide multi-disciplinary advice on physical access and adapted and specialist equipment for different subjects. This was mentioned as a need at the last inspection.
88. Staffing overall is satisfactory but the number of teachers and their expertise in working on inclusion with disabled pupils is unsatisfactory. Many LSAs have a City and Guilds qualification but have not had sufficient training to be aware of the most successful way to support these pupils in the classroom. Working with one pupil in most lessons has the potential to create over-dependency for some pupils. The additional facilities provided for additional needs, such as physiotherapy, are satisfactory. There is access to most areas of the school but pupils on occasions have to use different routes with their LSAs, from their friends, which can be a barrier to full inclusion in all aspects of the school. Resources are satisfactory. The pupils have access to computers within the Individual Learning Department and can use laptop computers in classes if they need them. They can also dictate to their LSAs if writing is difficult for them. The school does not own an adapted minibus and transport - for example, for subject visits out of school, is a difficulty and can mean that parents have to help out.
89. The headteacher and senior management and staff have a very positive and inclusive attitude towards pupils with physical disabilities and this is a very important foundation for the development of the provision for these pupils. The school is now aware of the need to seek expertise to convert this goodwill into practical solutions to enable the pupils to be more fully included in all areas of the curriculum.

SIXTH FORM

90. Inspectors' judgements on sixth form curriculum, the quality of teaching and standards achieved in subjects appear appropriately in different parts of the report.
91. Post -16 provision is good at Ernulf Community School. There is, for example, an open access policy to post -16 studies. Results across most subjects have been below national averages for a proportion of students gaining A -C grades but meets the average for those gaining A-E. Some subjects such as economics have recently been above average for the top grades. The GNVQ programme has produced good results for full awards and some have been gained at Merit and Distinction level. A satisfactory number of students in Year 13 gain their first choice of university or chosen career. The purpose built post -16 building is a good facility which students help to run. There is constant, structured academic and pastoral monitoring, with students being assigned to tutors who know them and their aspirations. There is a good extra-curricular programme to offer an enriched experience for 17 and 18 year olds. Most of the post-16 students are from the school; a small number of sixth formers is from local schools and a significant number of students is from Macao.

92. Reporting and profiling arrangements have improved considerably. Interim reporting with students' self-evaluation provide useful information to both students and parents. Formalised tests in most subjects introduced into Year 12 prepare students effectively for the public examinations and have a beneficial impact on students' improved attainment at A-level. Advanced Level Information System data and target setting, based on GCSE performances, have not yet been introduced systematically.
93. Post -16 students continue with their cultural activities and engage in fund-raising for charities. The 'CHAT' student support service run by sixth formers is a success. Students run a reading recovery programme for Years 7 and 8, and Year 13 students mentor Year 12 students. The numbers involved in the extensive AS/A, GNVQ programme are small. Some teaching groups and class sizes are not economical. The support the sixth form receives from parents, governors and the school is significant.
94. The head of sixth form provides good and effective leadership. Since the last report, the quality of sixth form provision has improved considerably. It provides good opportunities for students of all abilities to pursue their studies with a high level of encouragement and support. They have good accommodation in their own new block, including social areas.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	199
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	42

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
1.5	19	38	35.5	4	2	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y 7– Y 13	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	1085	
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	123	

Special educational needs	Y 7– Y 13	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	55	2
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	357	34

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	41

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	29
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	48

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	8.2
National comparative data	7.9

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.9
National comparative data	1.1

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	2000	99	69	168

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	40	57	50
	Girls	45	42	37
	Total	85	99	87
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	51 (29)	59 (57)	52 (36)
	National	63 (63)	65 (62)	59 (55)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	16 (6)	33 (26)	17 (10)
	National	28 (28)	42 (38)	30 (23)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	43	70	42
	Girls	47	50	28
	Total	90	120	70
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	54 (59)	71 (54)	42 (49)
	National			
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	16 (24)	20 (11)	19 (17)
	National			

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year	2000	85	71	156

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	23	70	81
	Girls	28	55	63
	Total	51	125	144
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	33 (40)	80 (90)	92 (94)
	National	47.4 (46.6)	90.6 (90.9)	95.6 (95.8)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	32 (38)
	National	38.4 (38)

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

Vocational qualifications		Number	% success rate
Number studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	51	54.9
	National		

Attainment at the end of the sixth form

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A-level or AS-level examinations	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	11	21	32

Average A/AS points score per candidate	For candidates entered for 2 or more A-levels or equivalent			For candidates entered for fewer than 2 A-levels or equivalent		
	Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
School	14.3 (23.1)	17.4 (16.3)	16.4 (19.2)	1.3 (2.9)	3.3 (3.6)	2.3 (3.2)
National	17.7 (17.7)	18.6 (18.1)	18.2 (17.9)	2.6 (2.7)	2.9 (2.8)	2.7 (2.8)

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

Vocational qualifications		Number	% success rate
Number in their final year of studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	0	
	National		82.5

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	2
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	3
Pakistani	1
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	32
White	1040
Any other minority ethnic group	7

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	1	0
White	58	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7– Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	62.5
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	17.3

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y7 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	51
Total aggregate hours worked per week	1372

Deployment of teachers: Y7– Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	76.3
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y13

Key Stage 2	
Key Stage 3	24.4
Key Stage 4	22.9

Financial information

Financial year	2000/01
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	£
Total income	3,070,948
Total expenditure	3,012,645
Expenditure per pupil	2776.63
Balance brought forward from previous year	-45,948
Balance carried forward to next year	12,355

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out

1085

Number of questionnaires returned

277

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	35	56	7	1	1
My child is making good progress in school.	41	51	5	1	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	19	55	15	1	9
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	16	56	20	4	3
The teaching is good.	22	67	6	0	5
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	26	50	20	4	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	51	43	5	0	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	51	44	4	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	25	47	23	0	5
The school is well led and managed.	30	60	4	1	5
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	30	56	9	1	4
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	23	53	12	2	10

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

ENGLISH

95. The percentage of pupils attaining level 5 and higher and level 6 and higher in Key Stage 3 National Curriculum tests in 2000 was below the national average. Girls outperformed boys by a margin larger than that found nationally. This continues a trend visible since 1996, except for 1998. English results were also below average in comparison with similar schools. The trend in results since 1998 has been below the national trend. The proportion of pupils gaining GCSE grades A*-C in English in 2000 fell well below the national average, while the percentage of those gaining grades A*-G exceeded the national average. In 2000 more girls than boys gained grades A*-C by a margin much larger than the national and than in 1999. Both of these figures are also below respective national averages. The percentage of pupils gaining grades A*-C in English Literature in 2000 was also well below national averages, while the proportion of those gaining grades A*-G was above it. Girls did better than boys in English literature in 2000 by a margin much larger than the national average or than in 1999, both proportions being below the respective national averages. As in GCSE English, the rising trend since 1997 was reversed by the 2000 results. The school has evidence of the low prior levels of attainment of the 2000 cohort from its entry to the school in 1995. The percentage of pupils gaining grades A*-C in media studies in 2000 showed a substantial improvement from 1999. Girls' better results than boys' reversed the pattern of 1999. Pupils entered for A-level literature in 2000 achieved a higher proportion of grades A-E than that found nationally, as did the small entry of pupils achieving grades A-E in English language. Achievement at the highest grades in A-level English literature was well below the national averages, while the comparable figure for English language was well above. The trend of results in both subjects over the last three years has been above the national trend for grades A-E. Pupils entered for A-level media studies in the last two years achieved a pass grade, though the number entered in 2000 was very small.
96. Inspection findings are that standards of attainment at the end of Year 9 are below average. Pupils can speak accurately and participate well in group work. Contributions to whole-class work tend to be brief, and some are unwilling to participate orally, though they listen well. Pupils' use of subject-specific terminology improves slowly across through Years 7-9. They read aloud clearly and fluently, sometimes with expression, and usually convey meaning. Levels of recall and comprehension are satisfactory: the great majority grasps the main points of what they have read, though fewer are able to locate specific references. Pupils invariably take care over writing, which is usually grammatically competent. Weaknesses in spelling and punctuation are more obvious in Year 8 than in Years 7 and 9. A large proportion of written work is poorly organised and lacks interest and variety of expression. Word-processing and re-drafting frequently improves technical accuracy and the quality of presentation, but pupils' access to IT in school is severely limited. The small proportion of very good writing in each year is fluent and confident, using a wide range of vocabulary, and expresses original ideas in a relatively mature style. Girls' writing is overall of higher quality than that of boys, who make slow progress in writing across the key stage. The linguistic needs of pupils with English as an additional language, and of those with learning difficulties, are met effectively by in-class support. The former, when unsupported, find writing, and speaking in English a particular challenge.
97. Pupils' attainment by the end of Year 11 is below average, though work seen was often of about average quality. They usually speak clearly and competently, and some very good group discussions were observed - for example, in a Year 11 media studies lesson. Here pupils evaluated and modified their peers' ideas most constructively in order to reach a consensus. Pupils read aloud well, with understanding and interest, and demonstrate satisfactory comprehension levels. Their capacity to identify quotation and evidence develops satisfactorily. Written work is broadly in line with expectations. Some media studies coursework displays good research, analysis and organisation of material. The best work is intelligent and well structured; it contains perceptive responses to literature, uses language to create moods and effect well, or constructs cogent arguments. A large proportion of pieces in both years frequently suffer from lack of planning. Word-processing does not obviate the need for proofreading. For a significant

minority, the writing process inhibits communication of their ideas, and this is particularly true of pupils with English as an additional language, some of whose work in Year 11 was marked by uncertain syntax, lack of fluency and how to vary style. Girls' writing is generally better than boys' work. Higher attaining pupils make satisfactory progress at both key stages because they are provided with tasks matched appropriately to their levels of attainment. Those at Key Stage 4 with special educational needs also progress satisfactorily overall for the same reason.

98. The attainment of pupils in the sixth form by Year 13 and in lessons is about average. Oral skills are well developed, in that individuals listen attentively to peers and the teacher, and virtually all take part in small group or whole-class discussion. Year 13 pupils were able to reformulate information from an academic text on language in their own words. Pupils have satisfactory knowledge of the texts they have read and can identify themes. Year 12 pupils find close textual analysis harder than those in Year 13, but some in both years lack confidence as learners. Written work shows pupils' general competence across a broad range of tasks. While some Year 12 work shows writers finding the transition from GCSE to A-level difficult, over 50 per cent of work seen demonstrated their gains in knowledge and understanding. A small number of pupils improved their writing as a result of teachers' marking. The best pieces, whether in the language or literature course, showed good analytical skills, flair for creative writing and ability to handle ideas well and with sensitivity. Higher-attaining pupils are appropriately challenged by the tasks and targets set for them. Those with English as an additional language are generally given satisfactory support and encouragement, which enables them to work to their potential.
99. Rates of progress are satisfactory. In Years 7-9, pupils' positive attitude towards learning and the good quality of teaching they receive ensure that they make advances from low levels of prior attainment in Years 8 and 9. Their work at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form builds on this foundation as they gain in maturity.
100. Pupils with English as an additional language receive help from a number of curricular areas, but there is at present no consistent approach to support across the school. The English team has produced a draft policy, which could form the basis for a co-ordinated strategy, including collation of details of support strategies. It has also compiled a list of key words in Cantonese for use in classrooms at Key Stage 3, and concentrated EAL pupils in particular groups to give them greater chances of support from a LSA. Technical terms in business studies and economics are also being translated into Cantonese. These pupils receive specific help with language in religious education, English, physical education and design technology, but good practice is not widespread.
101. The quality of teaching at both key stages is good, and frequently possesses very good features. In Years 7-9, it was good or better in 60 per cent of lessons observed, and satisfactory in the remainder. The corresponding figures for Years 10 and 11 are 85 per cent and 15 per cent while 100 per cent was good at sixth form level. Teachers in all years are skilful and efficient managers of classroom activities, so that pupils are encouraged to involve themselves quickly in the work. Relationships in lessons are very positive, for teachers have worked hard to create a supportive learning atmosphere. A very good Year 7 lesson on a shared text exemplified many good qualities: planning of a variety of activities was efficient, so that pupils were well motivated and responded well; it provided for different levels of learning need. The teacher made effective use of a learning support assistant, extension activities were provided as appropriate, and pupils learned well through small group discussions and collaborative work matched to clear targets. Teachers give close attention to the teaching of reading and writing skills at both key stages, which helps many pupils with learning and expressing their ideas. Work is virtually always well suited to pupils' learning needs within mixed ability groups. Teachers' responses to, and marking of, pupils' work is always constructive. Comments on written work are detailed and contain targets for improvement alongside diagnostic and supportive remarks. Marking is regular and consistent, and pupils sometimes give evidence of responding to it. In a very few instances, marking is perfunctory in Years 7-9. In a Year 10 lesson on "Macbeth", the teacher's knowledge enabled her to react positively to pupils' ideas and to develop some of the details: maintaining a good balance between fact and inference enabled pupils to appreciate the difference. The whole lesson was conducted at a brisk pace and everyone was required to make a contribution, which ensured the involvement of all and made learning enjoyable. Lessons in all years provide appropriate levels of challenge for pupils, and at Key Stages 3 and 4 good use is made of practical and short-term activities, which

appeal, particularly to boys and to those with limited concentration. Teachers have clear objectives for lessons, even if they are not always shared with pupils. Their high expectations require pupils to work hard, and pupils respond with interest: by Year 11 many pupils are developing initiative and taking some responsibility for their work.

102. Rates of progress are good overall. In Years 7-9, pupils' positive attitude towards learning, and the good quality of teaching they receive ensure that they make advances from low levels of prior attainment in Years 8 and 9. Their work in Years 10 and 11 and in the sixth form builds on this foundation as they gain in maturity.
103. Leadership and management in English are very good. The team ethos is very clearly good and levels of collaboration and communication extremely well developed. Curricular planning and assessment practice are both good, and current developments will improve both still further. The team shares a commitment to achieving high standards and regularly evaluates its procedures and practice. It has made good progress since the previous inspection: all the positive aspects recorded then have been sustained and improved. Developments in the Year 7 curriculum, revisions of schemes of work and the increased use of assessment data have all been implemented. Given the levels of prior attainment of pupils, the department should now seek to strengthen curricular links with primary schools still further and to develop strategies to improve the quality of pupils' extended writing in Years 7-9. Pupils' overall attainment in Years 10 and 11 still needs improving. The team should implement learning strategies to assist pupils with English as an additional language. A very small proportion of marking in Years 7-9 needs raising to the high level of the majority, and teachers need to make more consistent use in lessons of stated learning objectives.

Literacy

104. Pupils develop literacy satisfactorily across the school. Their oral skills are appropriate for their ages and the recent whole-school emphasis on the development of listening skills has had beneficial results. Pupils' competence in reading is satisfactory, and their skills are generally sufficient to allow them full access to the curriculum. Their development of writing is inconsistent and varies with the importance that subjects give it. A school working party has produced a language and literacy policy and marking scheme. Subject teams have produced their own policies as a result of staff training workshops, but these are implemented inconsistently. Key words are displayed in many areas, but only in history, in GNVQ courses, English, religious education, music and special needs areas is literacy development given sustained attention. A summer literacy school was operated in 2000 and attended by 29 pupils, now in Year 7. Test results after a fortnight's activity indicated significant reading gains for over 70 per cent of them, and their progress is being recorded. The 'Success Maker' programme will be used to help raise literacy standards of pupils other than those identified as having learning difficulties.

DRAMA

105. In Years 7-11, drama is taught as a discrete subject, within the arts faculty. On the basis of a small number of lessons observed, pupils' standards of attainment are about average throughout the school. Pupils in Years 7-9 can read aloud carefully and accurately. From Year 7 they show good familiarity with basic drama skills such as posture, facial expression and they can combine these to create very expressive and concentrated freeze-frames. When evaluating work, they make sensible constructive comments about their own and others' work. In Years 10 and 11, pupils use dialogue, silence, timing and facial expression very effectively to construct character. Improvised dialogue is appropriate and occasionally quite sophisticated. In both years pupils demonstrate the successful application of learnt skills, and make at least satisfactory progress.
106. Pupils' attitudes towards work are very good in Years 7-9 and excellent in Years 10 and 11. In all years they find drama interesting and enjoyable. In Years 7 and 9 pupils settled quickly to work,

were enthusiastic about what they did and were fully involved in all the processes. Other pupils' attitude was characterised by very positive working relationships, and by pupils working quickly to produce interesting and well-observed improvisations.

107. Teaching and learning are good or better at both key stages. Teachers plan and manage their lessons very well. They set clear objectives for lessons, and have high expectations of work and behaviour. They are knowledgeable and skilful practitioners who motivate their pupils by their enthusiasm and energy. A very good Year 7 lesson on performance poetry showed how a disciplined start to a session concentrated minds and led to successful sustained group work across a range of activities. Pupils of all abilities, including those with special needs, worked with enthusiasm, energy and a good deal of enjoyment to develop both ideas and expression. They were also developing group responsibility for their work.
108. A skilled and enthusiastic teacher leads drama. The handbook is of good quality. There is plenty of extra-curricular drama, which includes large-scale, whole-school productions and a Year 7 drama club. To improve standards, the team should consider establishing a regular pattern of assessment in Years 7-9 and co-ordinate activities there with the requirements of GCSE in mind.

MATHEMATICS

109. Pupils' attainment at the end of Year 9 is below the national averages. In the National Curriculum tests, in 2000, the percentage of pupils reaching level 5 or above was below the national average and the percentage reaching level 6 or above was in line with it. When judged on average points scores, boys scored about the same as girls, but over the last few years girls have always performed better than boys. Results are average when compared with schools that have a similar percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals. Attainment as observed in lessons and work seen confirms the below average results obtained at the end of key stage tests and examinations. Pupils throughout the key stage show interest in learning mathematics and are keen to make progress. Pupils in Year 9 draw linear graphs by using tables of values. They understand the link between the coefficient of x and the gradient of a straight line and appreciate that it is wise to check their working by using three points on the straight line. Other high ability pupils in Year 9 display values of inequalities on number lines. Pupils show good understanding, and paired discussion, which is very well controlled by the teacher. Able pupils in the group are identified and extension work is considered for them. Pupils of average ability examined sequences of numbers, and moved on to determining the formula for the n th term of a sequence, having carefully calculated the differences between terms. Pupils of lower ability calculate the areas and perimeter of rectangles, triangles and more complex shapes. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported throughout the key stage. Other pupils study basic rules of mathematics, manipulate algebraic expressions, plot coordinates and form equivalent fractions.
110. Results in the GCSE examinations are well below national averages. The performance of pupils in mathematics is not as good as in most other subjects at the school, and girls' results are especially poor in this respect. The girls' performance in 2000, however, was the best ever for girls at this school. Attainment as observed in lessons and work seen was below average. Higher attaining pupils in Year 11 rearrange formulae; they understand the procedures and rules that need to be applied, and know how and why to operate certain operations. The correct use of mathematical language is well stressed by the teacher. Work for gifted and talented pupils is set by the teacher and worksheets have differentiated tasks specified on the worksheets for pupils studying at different entry levels for the GCSE. Other pupils understand how to calculate the mean of grouped data using a frequency table. Before completing their calculations, pupils make an estimate of what a sensible answer would be. Pupils studying at Intermediate Level know about rates of exchange and learn how to use conversion graphs, appreciating that the graphs can be used in two directions.
111. In the present Year 12, there are 17 students studying A-level mathematics but in the past five years, numbers have remained low. Of the 17, 11 students are bilingual. The group has a large spread of abilities. A-level results have been close to or just below the national average. Students in Year 12 understand how to use Pythagoras' Theorem to find the components of a vector and also use inverse trigonometrical functions to calculate angles. In one lesson, students displayed a

good grasp of compound probabilities, and their use of Venn diagrams helped them to solve problems. Algebraic skills of rearranging formulae are below average at this level, but students approach problems in an organised and mature manner. Integration, as the reverse process of differentiation, is well handled in Year 13, and students show good algebraic manipulation. The teacher stresses well the trigonometrical equivalencies that must be learnt to facilitate rapid solutions to problems.

112. Pupils pay good attention to teachers in lessons and make good progress. Standards seen in lessons were close to what are nationally expected. Pupils of average and below average ability have difficulty in recalling and applying mathematical concepts studied previously. Analysis of pupils' work shows good coverage of mathematical topics and satisfactory progression by pupils in their studies. When pupils have the same teacher for the whole of an academic year, they make good progress. Unfortunately, the department has had to survive many staffing changes recently and this has adversely affected pupils' learning. Some pupils are now being taught by their third teacher since September of last year. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress and are given sympathetic help by a large number of learning support assistants. Sometimes, the learning support assistants are involved in the planning of the lesson and, at the end of lessons, assessment and discussion of pupils' needs take place.
113. Teaching in mathematics throughout the school is good. The mathematics teachers are committed to enhancing pupils' learning and organise lessons which are effective and of interest to the pupils. In all lessons the teaching was satisfactory or better, and in about 68 per cent was good or very good. Teachers' knowledge and understanding of mathematics are very good, as is their teaching of basic skills. Very detailed planning is seen and teachers set high standards, to which pupils are expected to rise. In the best lessons, teachers support pupils' learning at a fast pace; on other occasions, pace is only satisfactory. Teachers interrupt lessons at appropriate times to clarify mathematical concepts and to check on pupils' understanding. They do not always check that all pupils are listening, as some pupils continue with their written work. Lessons are mainly traditional in nature, and no investigational work was observed during the week. Teachers control pupils well, and give caring and sympathetic assistance to pupils to help them understand their mathematics. Mathematical 'Key Words' are displayed in the classrooms and these are used well on occasions. Pupils respond well to instructions from their teachers, who build caring relationships with their classes.
114. Most lessons contain sensible reviews of previous work. The use of teaching resources is limited by a lack of funding, and information technology is not used systematically to enhance teaching and learning. Pupils' exercise books are reasonably completed across all abilities, although not enough stress is given to showing all the steps in a calculation. Marking is variable, though some very useful comments were seen. Long-term assessment is detailed and well planned. Homework is set to extend class work, but its use is inconsistent. Pupils use their planners to record homework but this system could be used more effectively with regular setting of tasks to be completed at home. Summaries of what has been learnt in a lesson are shared with pupils at the end of lessons in a few cases; this should become standard practice. Other lessons start, and sometimes finish, with practice in numeracy work; this is carried out in a creative manner and pupils show good interest in improving their skills.
115. Pupils' attitudes in mathematics lessons are good. They settle quickly, organise themselves under good direction from the teachers and look forward to their mathematics lessons. Overall, pupils show interest in their mathematical studies, respect their teachers and concentrate well, especially when the teaching is good or very good. Pupils understand the rules in mathematics lessons, and behave sensibly. They are generally committed to learning mathematics and their self-discipline is satisfactory.
116. Opportunities exist at lunchtimes for pupils to consult with mathematics teachers about work which has been missed or not completely understood. Revision weekends are being organised for girls and boys who are on the GCSE grade C/D borderline; these will include nine hours' intensive mathematics teaching and opportunities for social development. Further mathematics at A-level is taught after school on Tuesdays and Wednesdays. Challenge clubs for able mathematicians in

Years 7-9 are held at lunchtimes. Assessment is now much more structured, and planned schemes are in place to move pupils to appropriate sets. Correlation of learning takes place between parallel groups in Years 7-9. Pupils' knowledge of their own performance is satisfactory. Teachers keep accurate records of pupils' progress.

117. The team leader shows very strong leadership in practical matters concerning mathematics organisation, relationships with pupils, discipline and strategic planning. She leads by example in her own teaching. She must now move the focus of her efforts to wider issues in the department, concentrating on monitoring and evaluation of the overall quality of teaching, quality of learning, homework concerns and the standardisation of work within the department.
118. Unsatisfactory accommodation, insufficient resources and staffing difficulties have affected adversely pupils' attainment and progress. In order to make further progress and to raise pupils' attainment, the department needs to incorporate application of information and communication technology into its schemes of work, introduce a more rigid timetable for setting and marking of homework, and monitor and evaluate more rigorously the work of the department in all its areas

Numeracy

119. Pupils make satisfactory use of their numeracy skills in a number of subjects. Led by the mathematics team, the school makes good provision for numeracy across the curriculum. Many mathematics lessons begin with practise in numeracy skills; this provides a good stimulus to learning, ensures that the pupils are quickly involved in the lesson, provides an opportunity for competition in the speed of answering and develops the pupils' basic skills well. On other occasions, numeracy practise takes place at the end of lessons. The introduction of games such as Countdown encourages pupils to think about number; the department has creative ideas for introducing and confirming basic number skills. For example, teachers use secret numbers, codes, writing down cubic numbers and the revision of various concepts connected with metric measures. The mathematics department is building on work completed during the numeracy hour in primary schools, and pupils are becoming more interested and more confident in handling number problems. The introduction of 'warm-up' sessions has been well considered and pupils are stimulated by the approaches used. "Thinking Time" sessions have been introduced, and take place in extended tutor periods. Both numeracy and literacy skills are developed and collaborative efforts to complete tasks are at a high level. Logical thinking is also introduced as pupils complete gaps in number patterns, find anagrams, discover patterns in circular shapes, and complete grids of questions.
120. In English, A-level students completed an analysis of swear words, using a questionnaire to determine whether the use of bad language is more prevalent in men or women. A-level students in physics show good mathematical skills that contribute well to their attainment. In science, low numeracy skills prevent the majority of pupils in Years 10 and 11 from obtaining the highest marks in their coursework. In design and technology, pupils measure, mark out and cut materials; they weigh ingredients and measure liquids, and then perform costing exercises. Statistics are used as a tool; in geography in Years 7-9, standard weather graphs are used and surveys have taken place in Peterborough during urban development studies. Bar charts are used effectively to represent population growth in the 18th and 19th centuries in history studies. In the integrated humanities course personal research allows opportunities for the use of questionnaires in group work; pupils use statistics to formulate hypotheses and draw conclusions. In art, pupils measure letterforms for their design work; there is also measuring in observational studies where pupils judge shape and space. When completing rhythm work in music, pupils sub-divide time accurately. In physical education, pupils measure heart rates, pulses and distances; charts are produced and metric measures are used throughout. Pupils studying business education use statistics to produce economic forecasts and trends; at A-level, students manipulate economic data well. Pupils who have special educational needs use the 'Success Maker' integrated learning system to develop their skills.

SCIENCE

121. At the end of Year 9, in 2000, pupils' attainment in the National Curriculum tests was below the national average for both similar and all schools. In 2000 the percentage of pupils obtaining level 5 and above was 52 per cent in comparison with the national average of 59 per cent and at level 6 and above it was 17 per cent against 30 per cent nationally. Over the last three years average points scores show a slight upward trend, which is slightly higher than the national trend. In 2000, results in science were broadly similar to those in mathematics and English. Over the last three years there has been no significant difference in the performance of boys and girls, with both groups below the national average. Attainment at GCSE for pupils aged 15 or 16 is also below the national average. In 2000 the percentage of pupils obtaining A*-C grades from the double award course was 45 per cent which was close to the national figure of 48 per cent, whilst the average point score of 4.4 was identical to the national figure. Whilst these results appear to be close to the national average only about 70 per cent of Year 11 pupils were entered for this examination compared to a national average entry of about 80 per cent. The other pupils, who took either the single award examination or the Certificate of Achievement course failed to make much of a contribution to the percentage of A*-C grades. GCSE results over the last three years have remained fairly constant at below the national average for A*-C grades and in line with the national average for A*-G grades. Compared with pupils from similar schools the A*-C grades are average. There is no significant difference in the performance of boys and girls in the GCSE examinations. Science GCSE results are not significantly different from those for English and mathematics. Attainment from the three sciences at A-level is below the national average but the numbers taking these courses are too small for rigorous analysis. Results vary from year to year and from subject to subject. Generally, the percentage of students passing A-level physics is higher than that for either biology or chemistry.
122. Highest attaining Year 9 pupils show good understanding of previous work on food chains. They are able to work out which are producers, consumers, and top carnivores from a given pyramid of numbers. The majority of pupils below the top set have low levels of recall and understanding of previous work. Below expected levels of numeracy inhibit pupils' ability to interpret data successfully. Pupils' understanding of the principles of fair testing is satisfactory but at a very basic level. They can state that variables must be controlled but cannot explain properly what the implications are if variables are not controlled.
123. Highest attaining pupils in Year 11 have good knowledge and understanding of both electrical circuit problems and chemical reaction rates but at a relatively simple level. For example, pupils can state the factors that can alter the rate of a chemical reaction but find it very difficult to explain why. It is this inability to give detailed explanations which results in so few pupils obtaining the highest GCSE grades. Pupils' levels of recall and understanding are low for pupils below the top set. Their investigative skills are satisfactory but low numerical skills prevent the majority from obtaining the highest marks for their coursework.
124. Students in the sixth form taking 'A' Level physics have good practical skills. They are aware of the need to repeat measurements and can plan their experiments well to reduce timing errors. Knowledge and understanding of previous work for students taking any of the three sciences are in line with expectations.
125. Overall, the quality of teaching is satisfactory for pupils aged 11-16. For students in the sixth form the quality of teaching is good. Some pupils aged 11-16 experience good and sometimes very good teaching. However, other pupils experience unsatisfactory and sometimes poor teaching. When teaching is satisfactory or better teachers set high standards for discipline, which are achieved. They have very good subject knowledge and understanding. Expectations of pupils are appropriate, with most pupils fully challenged. Lessons are carefully planned, often using a range of resources and methods. In those lessons where teaching is less than satisfactory teachers fail to control pupils, have insufficient subject knowledge, and their organisational strategies are ineffective. Generally, teachers provide work suitable for different attaining pupils in the same group. This is particularly true for the lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs. The teachers do not provide work matched to the needs of the gifted and talented pupils. The quality of marking is satisfactory but generally, scientific supportive comments are not used sufficiently. There is inconsistency in quality of marking, which can be resolved by more rigorous monitoring by the team leader. The quality of reports to parents is satisfactory. However, teachers do not fully report the strengths and weaknesses of pupils in all the four attainment targets. The

use of homework to support pupils' learning is satisfactory. Sometimes teachers set research projects, which help to develop pupils' independent learning skills. However, too few textbooks restrict the range of homework assignments. Overall, the learning of pupils aged 11-16 is satisfactory. The learning of students in the sixth form is good. Results do not reflect this good learning because many students, with too low GCSE grades, are allowed to take their chosen A-level course. Pupils enter the school with below average attainment. Attainment of pupils at age 14 and age 15 or 16 is about what is expected. Evidence from lessons is variable. For example, a middle/lower attaining group of Year 9 pupils made very good progress when studying a theoretical topic. In this lesson the teacher's subject knowledge was secure, class control was fine, and she transmitted her enthusiasm for the subject to the pupils. In another lesson, with a different teacher, a similar attaining group of Year 9 pupils made unsatisfactory progress. The teacher's class control was weak, subject knowledge was insufficient, and the organisation for the practical was unsatisfactory. It is important for the head of department and the school to continue to provide support for the less successful teachers if standards are to rise. Pupils with special educational needs make as good progress as other lower attaining pupils. It is important for the teachers to identify the gifted and talented pupils of all ages, and then to provide them with the necessary stimulating and challenging work. Students in the sixth form make good progress whether planning an investigation into heat changes in chemistry, measuring the Vitamin C content in fruit juices in biology, or measuring the time period of a vibrating hacksaw blade in physics.

126. Pupils' attitudes to learning and to high academic achievement are at best only satisfactory. Even pupils in the highest sets work noisily and will easily engage in irrelevant chat if allowed. Generally pupils have low levels of concentration. Behaviour is mostly at least satisfactory, so that the majority of pupils have every opportunity to learn. However, in a significant number of lessons teachers fail to control inappropriate behaviour and the learning of others is affected. Pupils generally work well together when carrying out experiments. They mostly work safely but need to be made to wear safety glasses properly when required. When moving around the laboratory to collect materials and equipment, pupils act responsibly. During whole-class discussions pupils answer their teachers' questions mostly in a courteous manner and to the best of their ability. Sometimes pupils spoil otherwise useful contributions by calling out the answer, thus showing little respect for others. The less than positive attitudes and behaviour of some pupils disproportionately affect the standards of attainment seen in the department.
127. The department provides a Modular Double Award GCSE course, but the amount of teaching time allocated to this course is too little, which is one of the reasons why so few pupils achieve the highest GCSE grades. The scheme of work is unsatisfactory and merely gives a copy of the syllabus. It does not effectively support inexperienced teachers in their lesson preparation. The department does not make sufficient use of the regular feedback obtained from a modular approach to give pupils goals to improve to the next stage. Similarly, pupils are not given early enough feedback of the performance in coursework investigations so that they know what they have to do to improve in the next investigation. There is an imbalance in the first science qualification of staff, with too many biologists and not enough physicists. However, the way groups are rotated for the modular course could be improved so that pupils have more access to subject specialist teaching. The setting of groups for all pupils aged 11-16 should be more rigorous in order that teaching can be more closely matched to pupils' prior attainment. There is a good team spirit in the department and all staff are supportive of each other. The head of department provides sound leadership but there needs to be much more monitoring both at departmental level and by the senior management team. The following require improvement: schemes of work, marking, teaching, pupil groups and their rotations, and subject-specific target setting for all pupils. Many of the dedicated teachers have school responsibilities outside of the department. However, it will be necessary for them to find, or be given, that extra amount of time to bring about the developments referred to in this report. The department is well supported by an efficient technician team but the time allocated for technicians is unsatisfactory for the number of laboratories, courses, and teaching periods that have to be supported. There are some serious shortages of basic science equipment, and textbooks. The money made available annually is insufficient for a school of this size and will never address these shortages. The department does not make sufficient use of the good resources it has for the development of information technology. It is important to provide opportunities for all pupils to carry out data logging experiments.

128. The department has rectified some of the weaknesses identified in the last inspection but several are still outstanding. Pupils' understanding of their work is still fragmentary. There continues to be some less than satisfactory teaching. The needs of the most able are not fully met. Too few textbooks are still a problem. There is still not enough monitoring. Finally, and most importantly, the department has not improved the schemes of work. It is unacceptable that the school has not checked that this problem was solved.

ART AND DESIGN

129. Standards at the end of Year 9 are generally consistent with those expected of 14 year olds. In 2000, the majority of pupils were reported by the school to be meeting or exceeding expectations. Girls' performance was significantly better than that of boys. Pupils use their sketchbooks effectively to explore and develop visual ideas. All pupils can use a range of materials and techniques such as drawing, painting, printmaking, textile and ceramic work to communicate their ideas. By the end of Year 9, drawing skills of most pupils are developed to record accurately from observation and to make careful designs for their craftwork. The study of artists is used to help them to explore interesting ideas and approaches for their own work. Year 7 pupils use their study of cave painting from Lascaux and Australian aboriginal art to create designs for printmaking. Pupils make careful notes and use technical phrases accurately when they write and talk about their own and others' artwork. They make satisfactory use of numeracy skills when measuring and drawing letterforms for their design work.
130. The standards reached by 16 year olds in GCSE examinations at the end of Key stage 4 are below the national average. Over the last three years, with the exception of 1998, standards have continued to be well below or below the national average. In 2000, just over half the pupils entered for the examination at the school gained A* - C grades compared with the national average of just over two thirds of pupils. The number of pupils entered for the examination is well above the national average. The performance of girls at the school is much better than that of boys. The school is currently taking steps to raise standards and has been improving how GCSE art lessons are planned and taught.
131. The work seen in lessons was generally in line with national averages. Pupils produce preparatory studies that are presented to show how their ideas are created and developed. Pupils' work is of a higher standard when they show good technical control of materials and techniques. Year 10 pupils used careful techniques to produce intricate pastel and ink drawings based on natural and made forms in response to the theme 'tangled, twisted and knotted'. These were inspired by the study of Michael Brennand Wood's unusual but very lively paintings. When pupils' work is of a lower standard they use a narrow range of starting points, lack the technical skill to show how ideas can be developed and preparatory studies are incomplete. Standards achieved by pupils with special educational needs are generally consistent with their previous levels of attainment. The small number of A-level students entered for examination achieve good standards. Skilful ceramic, mixed media and research work is produced when students study art in museums such as the Fitzwilliam in Cambridge. GNVQ students entered for intermediate or advanced courses achieve a good standard and produce imaginative mixed media, textile and ceramic pieces as a part of their three-dimensional work.
132. Pupils' progress in Years 7-9 is satisfactory. Pupils make satisfactory or better progress when they know the steps needed to produce a successful piece of art and design work. Pupils' learning is also advanced when they study different artists to learn about visually exciting ideas. For example, Year 8 pupils produce accomplished batik pictures based on their study of the artist Hunderwasser. At Key Stage 4 pupils progress and attainment in lessons are not matched by their performance in examinations. Most pupils make satisfactory progress in individual lessons but their progress over time is slower. They are not developing the skills necessary for planning, organising and improving their artwork. For a significant minority of pupils in Year 11, progress over time is also slowed by a lack of effort or commitment. The achievement of pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory or better when learning is organised into small manageable steps. Progress in the sixth form is good when students are challenged to the limits of their artistic and technical ability.

133. In art, pupils' attitudes to learning are good. Attitudes are better in Years 7-9 and in the sixth form than in Year 11 at Key Stage 4. Most pupils are interested in the subject and are enthusiastic when given the opportunity to develop their art, craft and design skills. They listen to teachers carefully and use the advice they are given to improve the standard of their work. Most pupils work diligently and, with the exception of a small minority of boys, are capable of extended periods of concentration. Year 11 pupils become restless and lose concentration when their learning is not carefully structured. Most pupils and students behave well, are conscientious and keen to succeed.
134. Overall, teaching is satisfactory. In Years 7-9, it is mostly satisfactory and sometimes good. In the sixth form, teaching is good. In Years 10 and 11, with some recent improvements to planning and teaching, it is satisfactory, overall. Teachers use good subject knowledge to plan lessons to meet National Curriculum and examination requirements. Specific learning objectives are set and shared with pupils. Teachers know the subject strengths and weaknesses of their pupils and use this effectively to help pupils adapt and refine their work. Homework is set and marked regularly to support class work. Purposeful and well-organised practical activities sustain most pupils' interest in learning about art and design. In Years 7-9, pupils are motivated by practical demonstrations of printmaking, textile and ceramic work. In the sixth form, carefully structured courses help students to meet the demanding and exacting requirements of examination syllabuses. Across the school, attention is given to showing pupils and students of different ability how to structure and develop their approach to coursework projects but this method should be strengthened. Teachers encourage pupils to review the progress of their artwork but regular references should be made to National Curriculum levels or GCSE grades to remind them about standards in art. Teachers are missing opportunities to show pupils examples of high standards in art to raise the expectations of all pupils and to set greater challenges for more able ones.
135. The recently appointed team leader for art has begun to implement strategies to raise standards but this work is at an early stage and the full impact has yet to be seen. Specialist art teachers work very well together as a team and there is a shared commitment to raise the status of the subject. The analysis of results at Key Stages 3 and 4 and in the sixth form is at an early stage. To raise standards, information about pupils' progress and attainment should be used carefully to set targets for pupils. Systematic arrangements are in place to monitor and support pupils' progress. Management training planned for the subject leader does not yet include developing skills to monitor standards and to evaluate the impact and effectiveness of the subject. The school should review the use and impact of non-specialist teachers in Years 7-9 and the effects of reducing the art budget at a time when the number of pupils on roll are increasing.
136. In Years 7-9 and in the sixth form standards in art have been maintained since the last inspection. In Years 10 and 11 standards have fallen. Computers have now been installed in art rooms but there are still too few opportunities to use information and communication technology. In Years 10 and 11, targets for more able pupils are still not demanding enough. Overall, the department has made unsatisfactory progress since the last inspection.
137. In order to improve, the department should: set realistic but challenging targets for pupils at Key Stage 4; establish clear assessment procedures and arrangements for monitoring pupils' progress to support those who might not otherwise reach the standards expected of them and develop the management skills of the subject leader to monitor standards and to evaluate the impact and effectiveness of the subject.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

138. Standards attained by pupils at the end of Year 9, have improved steadily since the last inspection. The teacher assessments in 2000 show that pupils are achieving standards in line with the national average. However, the proportion of pupils who achieve standards above the national expectation is below the national average. The scrutiny of pupils' work during the inspection supports these findings. Only a small percentage of pupils achieve level 6 and none of them is achieving level 7 or 8. Although pupils' attainment is similar to the national average, it is only in

the aspects of the National Curriculum actually taught. Pupils do not have the opportunity to study electronics or computer aided design and manufacture. Their experience in systems and control is limited. Consequently, their attainment in these aspects of the subject is below the national expectation.

139. By the end of Year 9, pupils handle an appropriate range of materials and equipment safely and competently. They take care with the presentation of their written work and it is generally neatly presented and complete. The quality of their finished products is similar to that of students of the same age nationally. Drawing skills are competent; all pupils are able to produce drawings to scale in two and three dimensions. Pupils quickly acquire the ability to produce isometric drawings. Lower attaining pupils can use this technique to draw squares and rectangles, while the higher attaining pupils fully understand the principles involved and are able to produce complex drawings. All pupils quickly develop an understanding of the design process. They are able to produce design specifications and suggest alternative solutions. Lower attaining pupils can give their reasons for choosing their final design, while the highest attaining pupils are able to explain why they have rejected the alternatives. All pupils are able to follow a suggested structure to evaluate their final product, but very few evaluate throughout the making process, explaining and justifying why they have made any changes. Pupils learn to work together in pairs and teams, sharing and making best use of their combined skills and knowledge. A good example of this was observed in Food Technology, where pupils researched the foods of different countries and presented their findings to the rest of the class.
140. GCSE results in 2000 were close to the national average, in terms of the number of pupils achieving grades A*-C. However, the number of pupils achieving A*-B grades was below the national average. The results show a consistent improvement in attainment since the last inspection. The attainment of girls is higher than that of boys, but overall it is similar to the picture nationally.
141. The scrutiny of pupils' work during the inspection supports these findings. The lack of easy access to computers adversely affects the quality of the presentation of work of some pupils, particularly those who do not have their own computers. Pupils show that they understand the importance of carrying out research before deciding exactly what they are going to make. However, this research is generally at a basic level and the higher attaining pupils are unable to achieve their full potential in this aspect. Internet access is restricted, their questionnaires are too general and do not produce information which is useful to them when making judgements, and very few analyse their findings in any detail. Pupils' practical skills are well developed and they all pay attention to the quality of finish in their products. Pupils have sound drawing skills and use them to good effect in the planning stages of their coursework. Pupils understand the need to evaluate their work. Higher attaining pupils produce good analytical comments, but they are generally made at the end of their projects, when it is too late for them to improve the quality of the finished product. This prevents students achieving the highest grades. The lack of access to use computer aided designing and making facilities depresses the standards achieved in this subject.
142. Results at A-level have improved since the last inspection. For the last three years, all pupils studying the subject to this level have been successful in achieving A- E grades. The percentage attaining grades A-C has varied, but in 2000 it was in line with the national average. However, the number of pupils studying the subject to this level is very small, and as a result, the statistics are unreliable. The scrutiny of students' work in Year 13, shows that all are on target to pass the examination, although only a small number are currently likely to achieve A and B grades.
143. Pupils carry out extensive research and the quality of their work benefits from easy access to computers in the sixth form centre. However, due to a lack of facilities, pupils in Years 7-11 are not able to demonstrate proficiency in computer aided designing and making. All present their work attractively. The most able pupils write thoughtful and detailed evaluations of existing products before producing their final design specifications. They take care with their practical work and all seek the help they need to ensure a good quality of finish. The ability to evaluate their ongoing work is weak.
144. Pupils' attitudes towards the subject are generally satisfactory. The vast majority behave appropriately in lessons, listening carefully and showing a willingness to answer questions. A

significant minority of pupils lack motivation and, as a result, their behaviour can be challenging and their attitudes belligerent and uncompromising. Teachers handle such pupils well and their behaviour rarely has a negative impact on the work of others. In general, pupils of all ages and abilities enjoy practical work. They are willing to help each other and are co-operative when working in pairs and small groups. They show due concern for their own and others' safety. When given the opportunity, they show initiative and responsibility. However, too often, the teaching style is too prescriptive and students are passive rather than active learners. Generally, they listen and watch carefully, following instructions and achieving outcomes they are pleased with.

145. Overall, the quality of teaching is satisfactory. Teachers have an adequate understanding of the subject, although their knowledge of recent changes in the subject is limited. They teach practical skills competently, providing good demonstrations and clear explanations. Consequently, pupils quickly acquire competence in a range of practical skills. Opportunities to use ICT are currently being missed, particularly at Key Stage 3. Overall, the subject is not making a satisfactory contribution to the development of the pupils' ICT skills. Teachers are aware of the need to develop literacy skills in the students. They provide a display of key words and their meanings in each workshop. These are referred to frequently and students are expected to spell them correctly, use them in the right place and understand what they mean. Weighing ingredients, measuring, marking out and cutting materials and producing the results of their research graphically all contribute to the development of pupils' skills in numeracy. Teachers are generally well organised, although the lack of sufficient technician support means that pupils sometimes have to wait for teachers to cut materials for them during lessons. This wastes their time and means that other pupils have to wait for the help they need. Management of pupils is sound across the department and the challenging behaviour of some pupils is not allowed to have an impact on the attainment of others. Pupils' work is regularly marked and some of it contains thoughtful comments. However, pupils in Years 7-9 are not made aware of the levels they are achieving and consequently, they do not know what they need to do to improve. Learning support assistants have a positive affect on the learning of pupils with special educational needs. Teachers are not taking into account the needs of pupils of different levels of attainment in their classes. Consequently, lower and higher attaining pupils do not always make as much progress as they should. The range of teaching methods used is limited. Too often teachers stand back and supervise, rather than involve themselves with the pupils so they can provide advice which moves them on.
146. The management of the subject is weak. The scheme of work is vague and does not provide adequate support for teachers when they plan their lessons. It has not been updated to take into account the new National Curriculum requirements and does not ensure full coverage of the Programme of Study. An interesting range of activities is taught, but it is on an ad-hoc basis. The lack of monitoring means that there is repetition of work at the same level in different year groups and opportunities for students to make progress are missed. The departmental development plan lacks sufficient detail for it to be useful, and it fails to identify some of the most important priorities for development.
147. Since the last inspection, too little has been done by the team leader to eliminate the weaknesses noted then, although standards of attainment have been improved and are now in line with the national average at all key stages. However, the condition of the rooms is still shabby and it creates a poor impression. The scheme of work has still not been updated appropriately and the curricular weaknesses identified in the last report remain. Teachers still do not take individual needs into account when planning lessons and physically disabled students no longer have the opportunity to work with resistant materials.

HUMANITIES

148. In Years 7, 8 and 9 all pupils take a humanities course that consists of separate lessons in history, geography and religious education. Each of the three subjects is taught for 3 lessons every week in two different half terms during the school year. In Year 7 an additional lesson is taught in citizenship as part of humanities. All pupils in Years 10 and 11 follow an integrated humanities course that includes religious education. In addition pupils can choose to take GCSE history or geography or both or neither.

GEOGRAPHY

149. At the end of Year 9, standards of attainment in comparison with national expectations are well below average. Teacher assessments show that the percentages of pupils reaching level 5 and level 6 have been well below the national average for the last two years. The trend is one of improvement, however. Standards are below expectations at the end of Year 11. The proportion of pupils gaining GCSE results of grades A*-C has been below the national average for the past three years. However, the proportion gaining grades A*- G has been in line with the national average and in 2000 every student who was entered for the examination gained a pass grade. The majority of pupils met or exceeded their target grades based on past attainment, and results were above the school average. In 1998 there was a drop in the number of grades at A*- C but since then the trend has been one of improvement. The number of students entered for GCE A-level has been too low for meaningful statistical comparisons to be made but all students entered for the exam gained a pass grade in the C -E range. Girls have consistently performed better than boys in Years 7 - 9 but there has been no consistent difference between the grades of boys and girls at GCSE or A-level.
150. Standards of achievement in comparison with prior attainment are low in Years 7 - 9. Much of the pupils' work suffers from poor presentation and restricted writing skills, and there is little evidence of first-hand gathering and processing of data. There is some good quality work in some groups; for example, some of the Year 9 pupils learning about the world's rainforests were producing good written work, helped by writing frames and prompt sheets. However, this quality is inconsistent across the year groups.
151. In Years 10 and 11 standards of achievement are average. Pupils are beginning to develop the geographical skills of forming hypotheses and handling data. They can compare and contrast different places and have an understanding of the effects of people on the natural environment. Year 10 students have made good use of field studies to compare different types of residential development in nearby Peterborough, and Year 11 students have made an interesting study of the relocation of a company from London to St Neots. In the sixth form standards of achievement are high. Students have a high level of curiosity about the topics they are studying and they work hard; for example, one student spent two hours one evening preparing a class presentation about tectonic activity.
152. Pupils with special educational needs are making satisfactory progress where their in-class support is well directed but there are classes where their needs are not being met and then progress is poor. For example, in a Year 7 group studying atlas work these pupils had little or no grasp of the conceptual layout of Britain. The more able pupils are not being challenged by extended work tasks. The progress of pupils with English as a second language is satisfactory because of their hard work and concentration in class, but their understanding of the subject matter is limited by lack of fluency.
153. The majority of pupils have good attitudes to their work and behave well in class. However, there is a significant minority in Year 9 ready to disrupt lessons, and others who are quietly uninterested in the subject and need firm direction from their teachers in order to work.
154. The quality of teaching is satisfactory in Years 7 to 11 and very good in the sixth form and this is reflected in the quality of learning. In more than half the lessons teaching was good or very good. In two lessons it was unsatisfactory. The best lessons allowed pupils to take responsibility for their own learning through well-planned group work that drew pupils of all abilities into the activities. Particularly effective was a Year 9 lesson where the class was divided into editorial teams to research and produce a newspaper about the equatorial rainforest. In the unsatisfactory lessons, learning was restricted by unchallenging tasks and pupils' negative attitudes. There was weak teaching by some non-specialist teachers in Years 7-9. In a very good sixth form lesson students had to research an aspect of plate tectonics and then teach it to their peers. Lesson planning was generally strong and homework was always set as an integral part of the work scheme. Teachers' planning and provision of work for pupils with special educational needs, and for gifted and talented pupils, were weak in most lessons. There was some provision for the teaching of literacy and numeracy but many opportunities were missed to improve on these skills.

Owing to past lack of resources, ICT is not an integral part of the teaching strategies. However, good use was seen in one lesson and now that facilities are available plans are afoot to incorporate it into all the schemes of work.

155. The arrangement of the humanities curriculum for Years 7-9, together with the low percentage of time allocated, is having an adverse effect on the delivery of the more practical side of the National Curriculum in geography. Arrangements for assessment of pupils' work at the end of every teaching unit are good, overall, but scrutiny of past assessments for Years 7-9 suggests that the methods being used could be improved on in order to assess a wider range of skills and knowledge. Management and leadership of the department have been satisfactory, with good teamwork and good support for new and temporary members of staff. However, there has been inconsistent monitoring of teaching to make sure that all lessons are up to the standards of the best. A new management structure very recently set up will allow more concentration on the delivery of geography within the humanities faculty.
156. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. There is now more emphasis on map and atlas work in Year 7 and teaching is taking place in tutor groups in order to improve the pupils' ability to work together. In the sixth form there is now an emphasis on independent learning and the Year 12 and Year 13 pupils are taught separately. GCSE results have fallen since the last inspection but are now on a rising trend. Links with primary schools have not improved but there are plans for this area to receive attention under the new management structure.

HISTORY

157. Standards of attainment in history are below national expectations in the sixth form, at age 16 and at age 14. However, at all three stages, there have been increasingly good results. At Advanced level, where numbers in cohorts have been small, no pupils achieved grades A-C in 1998 and 1999. However, in 2000, two of the three students entered gained grades in this category. Similarly, standards at GCSE, which fell from 40 per cent gaining A*-C grades in 1997, to 38 per cent (1998) and 36 per cent (1999) rose to 47 per cent in 2000. This is particularly significant because this improved the school trend in 2000, where generally there was a dip in overall successes. At the age of 14, pupils achieved National Curriculum levels below national average with 52.9 per cent of girls and 32 per cent of boys achieving levels 5 and above.
158. During the week of inspection no classes in history in Years 7-9 were observed. A scrutiny of pupils' work and examination of their results show that by the age of 14, pupils attain standards which, though improving, are generally below national norms. There is also a marked discrepancy in the standards achieved by girls and boys, with girls achieving better than boys. In previous written work observed, pupils' attainment, though below national expectations, indicate that some good progress has been made. Their work shows that pupils' abilities to make chronological links and connections within and across periods are good. Pupils demonstrate increasing depth of knowledge in making comment about features of the period they are studying. For example, Year 9 pupils, in their study of the industrial revolution and its consequences can examine and describe changes in housing in Merthyr Tydfil between 1750 and 1900. Pupils can effectively judge the reliability and validity of evidence. However, pupils' overall attainment across time is affected by their low levels of literacy which affects such skills as writing well structured narrative and they are not yet using their knowledge critically to reach support and explain conclusions.
159. By the age of 16, the standards attained by pupils, though improving year by year, are still below national average. However, a pleasing feature is that standards of pupils' work in several lessons seen during the inspection were equal to the standards achieved in similar schools nationally. In these lessons, pupils were skillful at linking several facts together to make a comprehensive and cohesive historical picture. For example, Year 11 pupils, in their studies of the history of medicine, successfully link the role of government across periods of time from Rome (the removal of sewage) to British taxes on the gin industry and the impact of such acts on public health. Pupils' success in examinations is limited by their attendance pattern, particularly in Year 11, by their weak literacy and their lack of technique in organising and deploying sources to produce and express consistent and convincing explanations and therefore they attain below national expectations.

160. In the sixth form, with cohorts which are very small, standards of students' work are below the national norms. Students are good at learning facts and can faithfully reproduce them in tests and essays. Students lack confidence when dealing with the complexities of analysis and evaluation when confronting them in tests and examinations and this leads to attainment falling below national norms.
161. Pupils' progress in each year from Year 7 to Year 11 is good. This is especially pleasing in the first three years, since many pupils enter the school with a low base line of skills and knowledge. By the end of this stage of their learning pupils have a good knowledge of the periods they are studying and they are effectively able to relate causation to effect. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 effectively build on the progress made in the first three years. In Years 10 and 11, learning through empathy is a strength of the subject. A Year 10 class, for example, in its study of the United States was clearly moved at the accounts of the suffering of the Plains Indians. Pupils with special educational needs make particularly good progress in Years 7- 11. In classes observed, the effective use of support personnel led to pupils' progress. The gifted and talented pupils are recognised by the department and in some lessons, such as a Year 10 lesson on Plains Indians, the differentiated materials included some specifically for the most able. Such practice needs to become even more commonplace.
162. Teaching is good throughout Years 10-13. No unsatisfactory lessons in history were observed. Teachers have good knowledge of the subject. Lessons are well planned and well prepared and lead to pupils' learning. A characteristic of history teaching is that the teachers' belief in the value of the subject is reflected in their enthusiasm for it. This is infectious and has a strong impact on pupils' learning. Teachers are particularly good at establishing good relationships, using humour often while always maintaining control of classes. Teachers are particularly adept at drawing out significant points from material. For example, in a Year 11 lesson on conditions in London in the eighteenth century, the teacher was able to take what appeared, at first, to be a simple cartoon (Hogarth's comparison of Gin Lane and Beer Street) and, by getting pupils to analyse it in depth, he enabled them to extrapolate a host of pertinent facts. The quality of his teaching led to pupils learning well since pupils were stimulated by the challenge and applied their best intellectual and creative efforts to fulfil the tasks he set. The quality of teaching makes a significant impact on pupils' learning, attainment and progress. When teaching is less effective, it is where the teachers are over prescriptive and where the pupils are thereby insufficiently encouraged to be independent learners.
163. The response of pupils is good. With the exception of a small but significant group of pupils of very low ability, pupils generally show application to their work. They respond diligently, settle quickly to task and sustain concentration. Their positive behaviour and response, which are often a direct result of good teaching and good classroom management, are important factors in their increased learning.
164. The department is led effectively and efficiently by the team leader, who is a very good role model for a department team committed to raising standards and to the encouragement of pupils to high achievement. In this she is well supported by her colleagues in the department. An example of their commitment is their willingness to run additional revision classes after school for GCSE pupils. Under the head of department's leadership the history team has produced informed and informative policies which are being implemented with success and which have an impact upon pupils' learning. However, she does not have the time to engage in classroom monitoring to guarantee the maintenance of standards.
165. There is a comprehensive assessment policy for the department which is based on sound principles and achievable outcomes. Targets are predicted for pupils against National Curriculum criteria and these increase the quality of the guidance of pupils' learning and attainment. However, the common marking scheme is not yet fully in place nor are the National Curriculum targets posted in pupils' notebooks or on the walls of the rooms. The teaching rooms have displays of pupils' work which act as an incentive and which create an atmosphere conducive to learning. There are too few computers and the training to use them is, as yet, unsatisfactory. Good use is

made of visits to supplement pupils' learning. These range from visits as diverse as Lincoln Castle (Year 7), Duxford War Museum (Year 9) and the Black Country Museum (Year 10). The department has good strategies for lower attaining pupils but planning for the gifted pupils is not so advanced.

166. Since the last report, the humanities carousel has been introduced. It has strengths and potential weaknesses and the faculty should monitor the successes of groups who are taught subjects by non-specialists. Teaching has improved and is now good and progress has been made in all key elements. To improve even further, the department should promote the literacy policy more vigorously, improve examination techniques, stretch the more able pupils and link teaching more clearly to learning.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

167. The school is in the process of implementing a major development plan for the subject, and has very recently appointed an information and communications technology subject leader. The positive impact of these changes has yet to extend beyond the sixth form to Years 7-11.
168. In the Year 2000 all sixth form students taking the GNVQ Advanced in information technology successfully completed the award, half of them gaining merits and distinctions. This result was a little better than the national average with students achieving well in relation to prior attainment. Students taking the Intermediate level were less successful: few completed the award.
169. Overall standards at the end of Year 9 are below the national average with some strength demonstrated by pupils in the taught programme being balanced by particular weaknesses in other aspects of knowledge and skills. For example, the higher attaining pupils in a Year 9 lesson had produced a linked website and had a good understanding of how data were stored and were developing animated graphics. The majority of pupils could use information and communications technology competently in presentations in which they combined text and simple graphics. In other aspects pupils were much less secure. For example, few pupils used spreadsheets with confidence and while the higher attaining pupils could use them to find things out and explore patterns and trends, most needed support to solve simple problems. Skills in using information and communications technology to measure and control events are absent and the lack of access to the Internet or CD-ROM means that pupils have less developed skills in researching and exchanging information.
170. In spite of the recent improvement in Years 7-9 taught programme, over the three years pupils have had too few opportunities to develop their knowledge and skills. As a result, most pupils achieve less well than they should. Pupils with special educational needs are an exception to this because of their greater access to information and communications technology facilities including the considerable use of computer aided learning programmes for literacy and numeracy.
171. With the exception of the minority of pupils taking vocational programmes, the school makes no provision for information and communications technology in Years 10 and 11. In some GCSE subjects, pupils are encouraged to make greater use of computers in coursework and a number do so, using them after school and at home. However, these opportunities are too few to ensure that pupils make sufficient gains in their knowledge and skills and standards at the end of Key Stage 4 continue to be below average.
172. Standards noticeably improve in the sixth form as a result of the very good access to information and communications technology and the range of courses provided. Students following the GNVQ Advanced level course in information technology demonstrate knowledge and skills in line with the national average. Year 13 students showed a secure understanding of systems analysis in a lesson and if at times their planning and evaluation were less strong in assignment work, this was balanced by good research and practical skills. The Year 12 students also showed good levels of skills in the assessed presentations on promotional design. Most students taking vocational courses in information technology are achieving well in relation to their predicted results. All sixth form students now take the key skill qualification and although working towards level 2, which is a little below that expected for Advanced level students, performances in the recent external test indicate that most can reach level 3 accreditation.

173. In recent years the school has had to rely on a significant teaching contribution from non-specialists and supply staff and this has affected teaching standards. However, at the time of the inspection specialist and full-time staff taught most of the Key Stage 3 and sixth form courses. Over three quarters of that teaching was good or better. In 20 per cent of lessons it was very good and occasionally excellent. Other teaching was never less than satisfactory though it tended to be less strong in terms of specialist knowledge and classroom management. However, in all lessons teachers were successful in generating interest and maintaining an orderly learning environment. On occasion, this was despite some challenging behaviour from some pupils with special educational needs. All staff planned their lessons thoroughly and provided an appropriate mix of whole-class teaching and supported practical work. Pupils in Years 7-9 also benefited from the informed help of an attached learning support assistant in lessons. Questioning was used well to build on pupils' understanding. This was evident, for example, in a lesson on animated graphics covering data storage and compression. The very good and excellent teaching showed strong specialist knowledge and a wider range of teaching methods. This was the case in sixth form lessons where students' research and presentation skills were improved, in the use, for example, of the Internet to retrieve project material on economic development, and by brainstorming ideas to develop project ideas.
174. Despite the good developments in the sixth form, the curriculum in Years 7-11 is unsatisfactory. The newly introduced taught programme reflects well the new National Curriculum Programme of Study, though lack of equipment is slowing its implementation. Cross-curricular use of information and communications technology is very limited though there are examples of good practice in vocational education, special educational needs, music and religious education. There are now plans for the use of information and communications technology in measurement, modelling and control and these are in the process of being implemented. This now ensures coverage of the Years 7-9 Programme of Study but the school accepts that it does not meet the National Curriculum requirement for Years 10 and 11.
175. The new subject leader has just introduced an appropriate assessment system for Years 7-9 but until it is established, the monitoring and assessment of pupils in Years 7-11 is unsatisfactory. Assessment practice in the sixth form is good, based as it is on the well-established procedures of the GNVQ courses.
176. The school has, until recently, experienced problems in financing information and communications technology development other than in the sixth form and special educational needs areas, funded from specific grants and donations. In recent months, the new subject leader has been effective in developing new schemes of work for Key Stage 3 and Vocational Advanced level, improving teaching standards and liaising with other subject areas. There is, however, still a lack of specialist teachers to enable the development of an information and communications technology team supported by a skilled technician. The modern sixth form and library network contrasts sharply with the non-networked and outdated facilities elsewhere in the school. These will continue to be unsatisfactory until the proposed new computer suites are in place.
177. The school now has a clear commitment to improve information and communications technology but has made insufficient progress since the last inspection in raising standards in Key Stages 3 and 4 through the provision of an appropriate curriculum supported by better staffing and resources.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

178. Standards achieved in French and German are low compared with national averages. In GCSE examinations the percentage of candidates achieving grades A*-C in French and German are poor compared with national averages. The percentage of candidates achieving A*-G grades are in line with national averages. Pupils achieve poor standards in modern languages compared with their performance in other subjects. In teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 pupils achieved standards below national averages for their age. In the sixth form standards achieved in German are very low and students encounter major difficulties in meeting the requirements of the A-level course. Average and higher attaining pupils do not achieve their potential in French and German.

179. Work seen during the inspection reflected examination results. Standards achieved in writing are below national averages; pupils write with a good degree of accuracy but there is little evidence of pupils writing independently of models or written notes. They fill in gaps, label and copy accurately and average and higher attaining pupils display understanding of patterns in the languages but they are not confident in applying these patterns for themselves without recourse to notes. The range and variety of written work are limited and pupils rarely use the language creatively. Pupils are hesitant in responding spontaneously to questions and in constructing sentences for themselves without guidance from their teacher. Standards achieved in German are higher than those in French but they are still low. Pupils' pronunciation in French is poor and this is because often their first encounter with new language is in the written form. Pupils have too little practice in speaking at the initial stages of each topic area and subsequently they are unduly dependent upon written notes. They take part in short dialogues, describing events in the present, past and future, and express simple opinions in both languages but too often these are prepared in writing in advance or require pupils to substitute words in set phrases to change meaning. Pupils are rarely given the opportunity to put their skills to the test in realistic situations or move away from a prepared script so that in these situations they are hesitant and lack confidence. As a result, by the end of Year 9 higher attaining pupils have difficulty in understanding basic vocabulary and structures in short texts and extracts of speech when left to their own devices. The range of structures and vocabulary with which pupils are familiar is limited at all stages of learning. Pupils fail to build effectively on previous learning or develop skills successfully in Key Stage 4 so that by the end of Year 11 pupils are not confident in their ability as linguists and in the sixth form students on A-level courses do not have sound enough foundations in using the languages to continue their studies successfully.
180. The quality of teaching was satisfactory or better in 14 lessons and this leads to satisfactory or better progress in those lessons. Two unsatisfactory and one poor lessons were observed in Years 7-11. Although in the majority of individual lessons pupils make satisfactory progress, over time pupils fail to build effectively on their learning and do not make appropriate progress in developing skills, consolidating knowledge and increasing in confidence and competence in using the languages independently.
181. Teachers have a good command of the languages they teach and use their knowledge well to conduct activities in the language being learned; the language used is usually well matched to the previous experience and capability of the pupils concerned and is effective in reinforcing learning and developing listening skills. In the sixth form the teachers' knowledge of their subject enables them to speak confidently about cultural and contemporary issues such as the artistic movements in Germany since the 18th century. However, in some lessons the use of the language is not always effective because teachers provide translations too readily, thus eliminating pupils' need to listen to the original and missing the opportunity to challenge higher attainers by asking them to interpret more complex or unfamiliar language for others.
182. In the more effective lessons pupils are given the opportunity to practise the new language informally in groups or pairs and to use the languages in realistic situations to gather and give information; for example, in a Year 9 German lesson pupils conducted a survey about likes, dislikes and preferences in food; they responded positively to the challenge, stayed in the language to complete the task and by the end of the lesson had increased in confidence in speaking and listening. Similarly in a Year 9 French lesson pupils responded with enthusiasm to the use of games to practise describing their frequency of practising leisure activities. They were using the new structures and phrases confidently by the end of the lesson. However, opportunities are missed to provide such activities in most lessons or are limited to rehearsal of prepared dialogues and lengthy, teacher-dominated activities decrease opportunities for pupils to use the language for themselves. In such situations pupils lose concentration and interest and sometimes become restless. French and German language assistants are used effectively in these circumstances to monitor and support pupils in speaking tasks. Teachers make good use of the overhead projector and visual cues to clarify meanings in the new language and enable pupils to identify and apply patterns in the languages. For example, in a Year 9 German lesson a very clear, well sequenced presentation enabled pupils to rapidly acquire and become confident in using the vocabulary and structures required to ask for and give directions. In these situations pupils are keen to contribute to oral work and listen attentively. However, pupils' first encounter with new

language is too often through the written form with insufficient oral practice; in French in particular this adversely affects pronunciation and encourages pupils' dependence on notes and glossaries, thus inhibiting them in speaking tasks.

183. In most lessons teaching objectives are clear and shared with pupils. Progress is reviewed at the end. This is effective in consolidating learning and in motivating pupils. In the more effective lessons teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve; pupils rise to the challenge they are set and are concerned to do well. Pupils' progress is too slow when lesson planning has not taken sufficient account of the needs of groups of differing ability so that either tasks are too difficult or too easy. Control and management of pupils are usually good and pupils display respect for their teachers and behave well. However, a significant number of pupils in Key Stage 4 have negative attitudes towards their learning, are slow to begin tasks and have little confidence in themselves as competent linguists.
184. All pupils are able to study both French and German from Year 9 but since the take up of the second language in Year 10 is low the department should consider the efficiency of this provision. Pupils with special educational needs who have been withdrawn from French or German encounter considerable difficulties when they rejoin the class and this practice should be reviewed. Assessment procedures are satisfactory in tracking pupils' achievement but the use of assessment is not sufficiently developed to plan for pupils' progress in lessons or inform them about how they are to improve. Classrooms are small and restrict the range of learning activities provided and the use of a common area as a teaching room is inappropriate and inhibits speaking and listening activities. Progress since the last report is unsatisfactory; standards have declined steadily and are now poor, the monitoring and evaluation of teaching have increased consistency in teaching styles but have not had a significant impact upon standards achieved. Development planning does not adequately address issues raised in the last report and is not sufficiently focused on raising standards in the subject. Schemes of work have been re-written but lack detail as to how pupils are to develop skills or how the needs of groups of differing ability are to be addressed. The team leader for modern foreign languages is aware of the difficulties and needs of the department but is in need of help and guidance in managing change. Teachers are beginning to work well as a team and are committed to raising standards and developing effective teaching strategies, so that the department has a good capacity to improve.

MUSIC

185. GCSE results in 2000 were below the national averages for the proportion of pupils gaining both A*-C grades and average points scores; however GCSE results over the last five years have been consistently above the national average, although numbers have been small. A-level entries have been consistently very small, and there were no candidates in 2000. Attainment of the current Year 11 group is above the national average in work seen; the Year 10 group is four times the size of previous entries with more than 40 pupils in the group. Attainment is at the national average in years 7-9; it is above the national average in Years 10 and 11 and sixth form level. Year 7 pupils are already developing skills in listening, musical awareness, playing skills and the link between sound and symbol in graphic notation; Year 8 pupils are making complex melodic and rhythmic patterns and using sequences, although they are not yet using heard clues to indicate chord changes in performance; year 9 pupils are playing in groups with style and sensitivity, and often with vitality. In a Year 10 class two groups – one of four woodwind players and the other with three singers – were rapidly building an effective ensemble performance. A Year 12 girl was composing a very effective pastiche over a ground bass.
186. Extra-curricular work is a strength of the school, with a wide range of different opportunities for pupils; more than 150 pupils take part, and the Gospel Choir and Saxophone Ensemble are both of very good quality. More than 60 pupils receive instrumental tuition, which is well subsidised by the school in such a way as to maximise access for all pupils. Pupils with special needs attain well – often attaining as well as other pupils. The music curriculum is fully accessible to all pupils.

Extension work is given to abler pupils, and the abler musicians take full advantage of instrumental tuition and extra-curricular opportunities.

187. Teaching is good in Years 7-9 and very good in Years 10 and 11 and the sixth form. The same is also true of learning. The teaching is characterised by good quality planning and preparation linked to clear targets, which are set and shared with pupils. Relationships are very good – often excellent - and teachers know pupils very well; organisation is calm and efficient – making pupils feel secure and confident in their music making. As a result, there is an excellent working ethos in lessons, and pupils are willing to take appropriate risks in their creative and procreative work. Teacher feedback is focused on the refinement and development of both the work in progress and the targets for the pupils concerned. Pupils are learning by participating actively in practical activities. The enthusiasm, passion and commitment of the teacher are well communicated, and pupils respond with equal enthusiasm. The clear sequence of skill development is a very positive influence on pupils' learning. In one exciting Year 9 lesson the teacher used whole-class performance very effectively to help pupils develop their skills in individual and ensemble terms.
188. Pupils' response is very good in Years 7-9, and excellent at both Key Stage 4 and 6th form levels. There is a positive and open attitude in lessons, and pupils are able to concentrate deeply in spite of an often-overcrowded sound environment. Pupils accept individual and mutual responsibility in groups and classes; occasionally teachers' need to control behaviour dictates some aspects of lesson content and method. However, generally behaviour is very good, and hard work is linked to a sense of fun. Pupils are both listening and hearing.
189. There is a broad and well-balanced music curriculum, which is still undergoing further development. A system is already in place to provide assessment of attainment at the end of Year 9. The curriculum contains appropriate multi-cultural elements, but scope for further development, as in the Year 7 polyrhythms topic which could be linked to a study of African music. Very good examples of information technology in music were seen in all year groups, but lack of resources for that area and for music-specific technology prevent extension of such opportunities. More chromatic tuned percussion instruments are needed to give full access to the Key Stage 3 curriculum. The curriculum is fully accessible to all, from those with special needs to the musically talented. Leadership in music is very effective, and based on the communication of enthusiasm and passion; for example, after less than a term following the appointment of the teacher in charge, numbers opting for Key Stage 4 music increased fourfold to well over 40.
190. The weaknesses in music noted at the last inspection have been almost entirely rectified, and teaching, resources and accommodation are now strengths. More work remains to be done concerning vocal work in Years 7-9 curriculum, although it forms an effective part of the extra-curricular programme.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

191. Standards of attainment for physical education on entry to the school at age 11 are below average. Teacher assessments of pupils at the age of 14 show average performance from the majority of pupils. In Year 9 pupils are consistently provided with challenging tasks. The standard of work rises to above average for both boys and girls. Exercises are demanding and innovative. Evidence from observations shows that many pupils at age 11 and 12 are clear on what they have to do to improve their physical fitness and many can display good skills to attain that fitness and health. Pupils with special needs attain these improvements.
192. GCSE results recently have approached the national average for pupils gaining the A* to C grades and are consistently above for the proportion gaining grades A* - G. The percentages gaining one of the top grades has varied but has never been close to the national average until last year. The physical education staff are effective at challenging and supporting all levels of ability to enable them to attain GCSE certification. Pupils from the age of 11 to 16 make sound progress and their physical skill level is generally in line with their capability and, by the age of 16, with national expectations. The overall progress of pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory. They can develop passing and receiving skills through a variety of different passing practices and modified games. These learners are well supported and appropriate exercises are used to

challenge and develop their performance. Pupils with some physical disadvantage do not have equal access to physical education as others.

193. There is no current co-ordinated approach to developing physical education in the sixth form. From next year there will be an AS level for physical education. The fostering of health-related fitness amongst 17 and 18 year olds is largely confined to sessions on a Wednesday afternoon. Students are competent in a variety of sports and related activities. These students enhance their attainment and progress. Teachers give sixth formers professional encouragement and this is effective in developing standards.
194. Progress is discernible from age 11-16 with the development of a positive self body image and the maintenance of a good physical condition on the part of most pupils/students. Learners are improving their co-ordination and body management together with their aesthetic appreciation of movement to enable expression through non-verbal communication. By age 14 most pupils are aware of the health and fitness implications of exercise and they appreciate the benefits of an active and healthy lifestyle. By the age of 16 many are aware of what is acceptable social and moral behaviour, especially with regard to sportsmanship, self-control, co-operation and respect. By the age of 18 students who take part in the provided activities are gaining in terms of health-related fitness.
195. The quality of teaching at both key stages is good and pupils' learning is correspondingly good in lessons. In good lessons at the start of a lesson teachers give a recap of the previous lesson. A basic outline of the exercises pupils would be asked to carry out followed. During the lesson the teacher explained that pupils must focus on the key skills of fitness and approach exercise with a positive attitude. In one satisfactory lesson this last point was under-played. In the good sessions all pupils were given the same opportunity to learn during the lesson and this extended to those with a special educational need. In the less effective session the discipline for learning was not followed openly nor were appropriate records kept of those who lacked commitment. The difference between the good lessons and the satisfactory lesson was the positive encouragement given to pupils who listened to try harder. The teachers welcome the unexpected outcomes of the lesson and recognise that participation by pupils is the key to long-term effective teaching and learning. The teachers take every opportunity to build up the personal relationship with pupils. No pupil is excluded from participating or enjoying his or her games and exercises. However, physically disadvantaged pupils are currently not directly involved in physical education.
196. Teachers check for the completion of each exercise, monitor the quality of effort, demonstrate to pupils that the teacher cared about their progress by giving positive encouragement and set targets for future improvement. Physical education is effectively teaching pupils to control their body movements through co-ordination, agility and balance. To help learners achieve lifetime fitness teachers impart cognitive as well as behavioural skills. An extensive extra-curricular programme supports fitness and health. Lunchtime activities are well supported and enjoyed. There are both inter-school competitions and recreational clubs. A variety of activities is available, from trampoline to Tetsudo or Maui Thai boxing.
197. Pupils are given the ability to solve their fitness problems independently. In order to do this at age 14 and 16 they have the knowledge and skills to evaluate the different parts of fitness. Progressively they learn how to exercise appropriately and safely. Learners at all levels of ability become aware of the problems caused by lack of exercise. With the assimilation of knowledge and skills pupils become involved in a variety of exercise. Special needs pupils are fully involved in physical work, enjoy their exercises and make satisfactory progress. Boys and girls make equal progress when fully committed to their tasks.
198. Health-related fitness is a five-year course fully integrated into the physical education programme. Appropriately practical, it also involves experiential learning embracing muscular energy, fitness, and body composition and cardio-respiratory fitness. It is a successful programme, raising standards of physical well-being.
199. Physical education is well led and the subject development plan is good. Since the last inspection there has been good progress. Formative assessment is a part of the learning programme. There are performance criteria for 11,12,13 and 14 year olds. Progress is measured

against these statements and good records are held of all pupils' progress. To improve physical education more opportunities need to be provided for physically handicapped pupils.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

200. Standards are at a level expected by the Locally Agreed Syllabus of pupils at age 14 and achievement is satisfactory. Pupils' knowledge and understanding of different faiths are strong features of their attainment although their knowledge and understanding of some of the six faiths studied is stronger than others. They display a detailed knowledge of the principal beliefs of Islam and they make good use of specialist vocabulary in explaining and describing these beliefs. In their study of Christianity they re-tell the parable of the Prodigal Son in their own words. They select information from the Bible and other sources to produce a "birth certificate" for Jesus and a "police file" on King Herod. Higher attainers write detailed and dramatic accounts of Jesus' entry into Jerusalem on a donkey. Pupils with special educational needs write about the consequences of either working hard or not working hard in school in the form of a parable. Pupils for whom English is an additional language look at case studies of the incomes of Muslim families to calculate the amount of alms they should give to fulfil the requirements of their faith. Pupils display good research skills in preparing for a quiz on Islam and in completing personal research assignments on different faiths. They use empathy to write eyewitness accounts of a Hindu wedding and to explain the difficulties faced by a Muslim growing up in Britain. Skills in reflecting and responding in oral work are variable and depend upon the effectiveness of teaching methods.
201. Standards are also in line with the expectations of the Locally Agreed Syllabus at age 16. Religious education is taught to all pupils as part of an integrated humanities course. Achievement is again satisfactory. Pupils display good knowledge and understanding of a variety of social and moral issues, although their ability to apply and extend their knowledge of different faiths to different social and moral issues is a weaker area of their attainment. In personal research assignments they consider the arguments for and against abortion, euthanasia and capital punishment, including religious perspectives. They identify the variety of family types found in modern Britain. They discuss the principles of respect and loyalty found in Biblical quotations on family life and consider their relevance to family life today. In their study of crime and punishment pupils set out in order of priority the different aims of punishment in society. They consider the moral arguments for different forms of punishment and decide upon appropriate punishments from case studies. Skills of reflection and responding in oral work are again variable and depend upon the effectiveness of teaching strategies. Pupils display good research skills and make good progress in developing the skills used in Years 7, 8 and 9. All pupils, including pupils with special educational needs, make good progress in applying information technology to investigations in the form of project work. Higher attainers incorporate a very wide range of material into personal research assignments and display good evaluation skills in reaching conclusions.
202. Standards meet the expectations of the agreed syllabus for pupils age 18. Religious education is taught to all students as part of the complementary studies course. Achievement is satisfactory. Students display confidence in both oral and written work in defining and applying concepts of morality to human life both past and present. They look at video footage of human rights abuses around the world and consider the morality of violence within and outside warfare. They consider the norms for behaviour derived from religious ideas.
203. Pupils' and students' attitudes and behaviour are good. In Years 7, 8 and 9, pupils' interest in the subject is good. They are keen to learn more and pose their own questions when new topics are introduced. A striking characteristic of pupils' positive attitudes is the respectful manner in which pupils discuss the beliefs of different faiths. They work well together, for example, as members of a quiz team in answering questions about Islam. These positive attitudes are also evident in Years 10 and 11, with pupils displaying initiative in research activities to find information from a variety of sources to include in project work on moral issues. Students in Years 12 and 13 are keen to debate and discuss different attitudes concerning a variety of moral issues.
204. The teaching of pupils in Years 7, 8, and 9 is good. In the most effective teaching good use is made of pupils' responses in the recall of previous work during discussion to consolidate

understanding. Teachers' secure knowledge of topics enables pupils' responses to be used and developed to further their understanding. Their secure knowledge enables lesson introductions on the beliefs of a particular faith to include comparisons and contrasts with faiths previously studied so that pupils are given confidence in understanding new work. Good planning results in a wide ranging coverage of different faiths to enable pupils to achieve depth in their knowledge and understanding. Resources are well matched to different levels of attainment to enable all pupils to work productively. In some lessons teaching is less effective when discussion of religious belief is restricted and when there is an over-concentration on pupils answering basic questions from textbooks, including those which are undemanding. Timetabling arrangements reduce the quality of pupils' learning when teaching is unevenly divided between two staff so that knowledge of pupils is limited by frequency of contact.

205. The teaching of pupils in Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory. In the most effective teaching, resources are well used as a focus for class discussion and other activities. The identification of family types from pictures stimulated much discussion and enabled pupils to reflect on and respond to moral dilemmas relating to definitions of "family." Support staff were very effective and took an active part in the discussion. In one lesson example teaching was less effective when the emphasis in the teaching on the links between Christian belief and family life was not well matched to pupils' activities, which limited the consolidation of their understanding. Teaching is also effective when pupils are fully engaged in class discussion to enable them to develop skills in reflecting on difficult moral issues in society. Teaching is less effective when it dominates such discussion and when the treatment of topics lacks depth. In a lesson on the aims of punishment there was too broad a coverage of the topic, with missed opportunities to examine issues in depth - for example, the Christian view of punishment. A particular strength of the teaching is in the development of research and investigation skills. Planning is good and builds on skills developed in Years 7, 8 and 9. As a consequence of the teaching pupils are confident in using information technology skills in research assignments and they display a good understanding of research methods in project work by testing a hypothesis through investigation and reaching a conclusion.
206. The teaching of students in Years 12 and 13 is good. Time and resources are well used. In one lesson there was a challenging discussion of human rights well illustrated by textbook references and video footage. The teacher's secure knowledge and a well-managed discussion enabled students to consolidate their understanding of the concept of human rights and acquire a good understanding of human rights abuses around the world.
207. Management of the subject is good. Resources are well managed so that staff are well informed of the range of materials available to support individual topics. Resources enhance learning with a wide range available to match different levels of attainment. Planning is good, especially for Years 7, 8 and 9, where there are detailed schemes of work that offer good support to non-specialist staff. Assessment procedures are very effective, with the use of level descriptions to assess attainment and with assessment results being used to identify strengths and weaknesses in attainment. Curricular planning is very active with new units being developed throughout the age range to enhance further the requirements of the Locally Agreed Syllabus. Some teaching rooms are too small which causes difficulty for wheelchair access and for staff to circulate and assess pupils' work during lessons.
208. Since the last inspection the need to share good practice amongst staff has been met through the development of resources and detailed schemes of work. The need to develop links with primary schools has also been met though a curriculum audit to provide information on the curriculum taught in primary schools.

VOCATIONAL COURSES

209. The standard reached on the GNVQ Foundation Business course by 14 to 16 year olds is above average. There have been 100 per cent pass rates recorded. This is the percentage of students achieving a qualification wholly or in part. Since 1996 though based on smaller numbers the pass

or merit results have been in line with or better than those achieved in similar schools. The post - 16 students taking either the Intermediate or Advanced level Business courses have performed creditably well gaining in some years since 1996 pass, merit or distinction results. In July 2000 the best ever results were recorded with five pass, six merit and four distinctions at the Advanced level. These are close to the national average in terms of standards.

210. The GNVQs in Information Communication Technology, Leisure and Tourism and Health and Social Care, again based on small numbers, have been above average. Six full awards in 2000 at Advanced level were gained in Information Communication Technology, three in Health and Social Care and one in Leisure and Tourism. These results compare favourably with those recorded in other similar schools. The 2000 vocational results at Intermediate level are equally good, particularly the five full awards in Leisure and Tourism and the six in Health and Social Care.
211. The Economics 'A' level results since 1996 have improved in the proportion of pupils gaining grades A - C. Over the last four years 100 per cent of candidates have gained A-E grades. Though based on a small entry number the A to C grades have moved from 25 per cent 75 per cent. In the last two years the results have been well above the national average.
212. Key skills in all GNVQ areas are helping students to improve their learning and performance. Communication, number and information communication technology fit naturally and are relevant to learners' needs. Special needs pupils at both Foundation and Intermediate level need these key skills. They are well taught and help these pupils to make satisfactory progress.
213. There are clear links between the good standard of teaching observed in economics and business and in other GNVQ areas and the progress that students are able to make. Classrooms have a positive learning culture - students learn and teachers are allowed to teach to the best of their ability. When the opportunity arose the good teaching often moved away from the planned approach in both economics and business studies and in other GNVQ subject areas. Teachers used recent events on which to base a lesson because of their topicality. Being able to use these unexpected events was a strength of the teaching quality observed. Examples were observed in Leisure and Tourism, Leisure and Recreation, Art and Design and Health and Social Care.
214. Teaching in vocational subjects is always satisfactory and often good. Teachers have high expectations of work and behaviour. They set appropriate targets for pupils, providing well-designed worksheets and stimulus material such as photographs that promote rapid learning. They use questioning well to elicit intelligent responses although some students lack the confidence to participate. Homework is set regularly and marking is usually completed on time. It provides clear indications of how pupils can improve. Teachers' assessments for GNVQ are double-checked by school staff and also by visiting assessors from the examining boards. Business studies teachers on the GCSE course make particularly good use of end of term tests to extend the depth of Y11 coursework and help revision for the final examination. The effective teacher ensures that most students know what is expected of them. Practical aspects of vocational courses are underpinned by good and effective teaching. The Leisure and Recreation GNVQ, for example, emphasises the important contribution the sports industry makes to fitness. Leisure and Tourism engages students on marketing tourist destinations and Health and Social Care shows students the legal framework concerned with discrimination. At the end of an effective lesson the teacher summarised the main points and attempted to explain how the lesson fitted into the 'big picture'. These summaries are particularly helpful in engaging low attaining pupils in the learning process.
215. In the good lessons teachers think carefully how the information given to students would be received. Good use is made of bullet points, bubble charts and simple artwork, which motivate students of all abilities. These methods are especially beneficial to the lower attainers. All subject areas in the GNVQ portfolio stimulate students to contribute ideas and to develop their research ability. Learners are well taught to be expressive and to record accurately their observations. The work experience provided for GNVQ students is a valuable part of the raising of standards of knowledge and practical applications of the theory taught.
216. The satisfactory lesson in each area of GNVQ provision gave adequate coverage of the relevant topic. The teacher demonstrated an understanding of the material but placed less emphasis on

the application of knowledge, though overall the lesson achieved its objectives and what it lacked in some areas it compensated for in others.

217. Economics and Business are by their nature problem-solving subjects. Students of all levels of attainment are encouraged to suggest solutions to business challenges. From age 16 to 18 as students become more familiar with the subject being investigated the maturity of argument put forward to support the suggested solution becomes greater. The use of assignment work also encourages students to take responsibility for a significant part of their own learning. All students undertake both practical and theoretical research and this is of great importance in their gaining success.
218. The weakest part of the key skills work amongst students is communication. Given the volume of jargon that makes up economics and business, more effort is needed to reinforce understanding of key terms through glossary and question and answer sessions. Numeracy is well used in all the GNVQ subjects. Certain topics such as break-even analysis and calculation of profit and loss accounts provide good opportunities to use mathematical skills. Statistical analysis is also used in terms of field research to generate business ideas and work on the various types of graphical analysis that are used to communicate such results. The other GNVQ areas experience similar problems with the use of communication skills, particularly the use of English. Computer and number work is of a higher standard.
219. The teaching of economics is good. Students are made aware that economics has a significant impact on all aspects of behaviour. The teachers endeavoured to encourage the acquisition of a mathematical appreciation in their measurement of economic activity. The major strength of economics teaching is the teachers' knowledge and clear exposition.
220. Students are intimately concerned with industrial and commercial activity. This intimacy enriches their understanding of economic activities such as accounting, marketing and international trade. Students visit local firms and go abroad on research visits to such places as Disneyland, Paris. Students are made aware of the rewards and demands of employment. Students are also made aware of the criteria being used to assess their work and of their performance in relation to the criteria for assessment. Students are encouraged to write accurately. This is necessary as the ability to spell, punctuate and use the rules of grammar accurately is variable. Girls are better than boys at writing explanatory notes. They are also more skilled at making an appraisal of the worth of evidence in the light of its truth and value and then considering possible objectives. The whole GNVQ programme and the Economics 'A' level course are well managed. Administrative and day-to-day control are efficient and effective.
221. There has been progress since the last inspection, though in 1996 a specialist did not look at GNVQ. There has been an improvement in the use of books, documents and a wider range of texts are available. Students' enquiry skills are better due to targeted support and effective teaching. The greater use of computation, data processing and retrieval has enhanced technological skills. Students are now encouraged to show more independence, self-reliance and initiative. However, there is no base room for the development of Years 10 and 11 GNVQ studies. This limits the amount of pupils' work that can be displayed. To improve the provision of vocational education a base room is required and the library stock needs to be increased.