

# INSPECTION REPORT

**POOLE GRAMMAR SCHOOL**  
POOLE

LEA area: Poole

Unique Reference Number: 113909

Headteacher: Mr A A J Clarke

Reporting inspector: Michael Buckley  
30517

Dates of inspection: 29 November-3 December 1999

Under OFSTED contract number: 708095

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

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## **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Type of school:	Grammar (Selective)
Type of control:	Foundation status
Age range of pupils:	12 to 18
Gender of pupils:	Boys
School address:	Gravel Hill Poole Dorset BH17 9JU
Telephone number:	01202 692132
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Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Dr H A Bell
Date of previous inspection:	11-15 March 1996

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members	Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Michael Buckley, Rgl		Attainment and progress Teaching Leadership and management Efficiency
Rona Orme, Lay Inspector		Attitudes, behaviour and personal development Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development Support, guidance and pupils' welfare Partnership with parents and the community.
Michael Clarke	Modern foreign languages	Equal opportunities
Peter Gilliat	Religious education	The curriculum and assessment
David Leonard	Science	
Brian Medhurst	Mathematics	
David Morris	Music	Resources
Roger Moyle	Physical education	Accommodation
Richard Patterson	Information and communications technology Design and technology	
William Robson	English	Special educational needs
Joyce Sanderson	History	Attendance
Janet Simms	Art	
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## MAIN FINDINGS

### What the school does well

- .The attainment of the great majority of pupils is well above the national average at the ends of Key Stages 3 and 4 and in the sixth form.
- .Curricular provision is very good across the school.
- .Teaching is consistently good and often very good or excellent. Teachers have very good knowledge and understanding of their subjects.
- .The school has a very good ethos and all staff are committed to raising standards still further.
- .The school is very well led and the senior staff and the governors provide good management.
- .Pupils' attitudes, behaviour and personal development are very good.
- .Relationships are very good between all members of the school's community and the school has a particularly friendly and welcoming atmosphere.
- .Very good provision for pupils' moral and social development.
- .The school is very efficiently run.
- .There is a very good range of extra-curricular activities and careers advice and guidance are very good.
- .The school has a very good partnership with parents and excellent links with the community which greatly enrich the experience of the pupils.

### Where the school has weaknesses

- I.The line-management responsibilities of the deputy headteachers in relation to the teaching departments are not clearly enough stated.
- II.Not all heads of department monitor teaching systematically.
- III.Pupils do not have full access to the range of computers and software for information and communications technology.
- IV.Despite the progress made since the last inspection, the school is not fully meeting the statutory requirements for information and communications technology or for daily collective worship.

**Poole Grammar School is a very good school with very many strengths and only a few comparatively minor weaknesses which it is addressing. The weaknesses will form the basis for the governors' action plan, a copy of which will be sent to the parents or guardians of all the pupils in the school.**

### How the school has improved since the last inspection

The very thorough follow-up to the last inspection ensured that all the key issues identified then have been addressed. The very high standards of attainment have been maintained or improved. The balance of time between subjects and the time allocated to them have been considerably improved and the mix of single and double periods has been suitably adjusted. There have been good improvements in the work of every department. A good variety of teaching styles is employed across all departments. Progress has been made in the school's provision for pupils with special educational needs and practice is now fully in line with the guidance in the Code of Practice. Some progress has been made in raising pupils' awareness of multi-cultural issues and there is a very detailed policy. Provision for

spiritual development is still not fully embedded in the teaching and learning across the curriculum. The lack of a daily act of collective worship was a key issue in the last inspection report and, although progress has been made, the present arrangements do not fully comply with requirements. In other respects, the very good standards reported at the last inspection have been maintained. The school is in a sound position to make further improvements. Once the role of the deputy headteachers has been consolidated, the very good quality of leadership, the consistently good teaching and the commitment of staff and governors should ensure that the present very high standards will be maintained or raised still further.

• **Standards in subjects**

The following table shows standards achieved by 14, 16 and 18 year olds in national tests, GCSE and A/AS-level examinations in 1998:

Performance in:	Compared with all schools	Compared with similar schools	<b>Key</b>	
Key Stage 3	A*	B	<i>very high</i>	A*
GCSE examinations	A*	A	<i>well above average</i>	A
			<i>above average</i>	B
			<i>average</i>	C
			<i>below average</i>	D
A/AS – levels	A*	n/a	<i>well below average</i>	E

Comparisons for 1999 are not yet fully available in the form necessary to complete the above chart. The chart shows that, in 1998, the attainment of fourteen year-olds in the national tests in English, mathematics and science was very high when compared with the national averages and above the average for schools with a similar proportion of pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals. Pupils' performance in the GCSE examinations was very high compared with national standards and well above the average for similar schools. The results of the A level examinations were very high compared with the national average. These very high standards were maintained in 1999 at the end of Key Stages 3 and 4 and in Year 13. Results in the National Curriculum tests were comparable with those in 1998, the percentage pass rate in the 1999 GCSE examinations was not quite as high as in the preceding year but there were more passes at grades A\* to B and the average A level points score was raised one whole level. Approximately three out of every four sixth form students go on to higher or further education. Fifty students have gained entry to Oxford or Cambridge colleges over the past six years.

• **Quality of teaching**

	Overall quality	Most effective in:	Least effective in:
Years 8-9	Good	Mathematics, physical education and religious education	Design and technology and information and communications technology
Years 10-11	Good	History, music and physical education	Geography, mathematics and science
Sixth form	Good	Geography, history and modern foreign	Art, business studies and mathematics

		languages	
English	Good		
Mathematics	Good		

Teaching in the school is consistently good and often very good or excellent. It was satisfactory or better in ninety-nine per cent of the 198 lessons observed during the inspection. It was good or better in eighty per cent and very good or excellent in twenty-seven per cent of lessons. Overall, there was very little difference between the teaching at Key Stages 3 and 4 and in the sixth form although it was marginally better on average in the sixth form than elsewhere in the school. Similarly, there was little difference between the quality of teaching in different subjects but it was more often very good or better in history, music, physical education and religious education than in the other subjects. Overall, teaching was very slightly less consistent in business studies, design and technology, information and communications technology and science. The most consistently good and very good teaching was in history, music and physical education at Key Stage 4 and in geography, history and modern foreign languages in the sixth form.

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

• **Other aspects of the school**

<b>Aspect</b>	<b>Comment</b>
Behaviour	Very good. Pupils respond well to their teachers and generally work hard. They are courteous and considerate. There have been very few fixed-period exclusions and no permanent ones.
Attendance	Good. Well above the national average for secondary schools although slightly below that for grammar schools.
Ethos*	Very good. Strong commitment to raising standards still further. Very good relationships and equality of opportunity.
Leadership and management	Good. Very good educational leadership by the headteacher, well supported by the senior management, and the governors carry out their functions very well.
Curriculum	Very good. Broad, balanced and relevant, particularly at Key Stage 4 and the sixth form. Very good equality of access.
Pupils with special educational needs	
Spiritual, moral, social & cultural development	Very good provision for moral and social development, good provision for cultural development and satisfactory provision for spiritual development.
Staffing, resources and accommodation	Good overall. Very good match of experience and qualifications to the demands of the curriculum and the needs of pupils. Good accommodation and resources.
Value for money	Good.

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

**The parents' views of the school**



What most parents like about the school	What some parents are not happy about
<p>V. The school enables pupils to attain a good standard of work.</p> <p>VI. Pupils are encouraged to be involved in more than just their daily lessons.</p> <p>VII. The school's positive values and attitudes.</p> <p>VIII. It is easy to approach the school with queries or problems.</p> <p>IX. There is a very good system of parents' meetings.</p> <p>X. High standards of behaviour.</p> <p>XI. Their children like school.</p> <p>XII. The quantity, frequency and relevance of homework are about right.</p> <p>XIII. Very good guidance on homework and good use of the homework diaries.</p>	<p>XIV. Parents are not encouraged to play an</p> <p>XV. Parents are not always given a clear</p> <p>XVI. Some parents were dissatisfied with</p> <p>XVII. A few parents would like more</p>

There were very many positive comments and only a very few negative ones. In most cases, the negative responses to the parents' questionnaire amounted to under two per cent of the 578 responses received. Inspectors concur with positive views held by the great majority of parents and found no evidence to indicate that the concerns expressed by a small minority significantly affected other pupils and their families. The quantity and quality of information provided to parents are very good. Homework is generally relevant, developmental and regular. Many parents are involved with the school in various ways.

#### • **KEY ISSUES FOR ACTION**

In order to maintain the present very high standards in all aspects of the school's life and to raise attainment still further, the school's senior management team and the governors need to:

XVIII. continue to work on two key issues identified by the last inspection by ensuring that the newly drawn-up policy for daily collective worship is consistently implemented and that the statutory requirements for teaching information and communications technology are fully met;

(See paragraphs 30, 31, 43, 50, 56, 136)

XIX. complete their plans for improving access to the range of computers and software for information and communications technology outside formal lessons;

(See paragraphs 44, 70, 134)

XX. set out clearly the line-management responsibilities of the deputy headteachers, particularly in relation to the work of the teaching departments;

(See paragraph 54)

XXI. ensure that all heads of department monitor teaching regularly and feed back their findings to the teachers concerned and to the senior management.

(See paragraph 54)

## · INTRODUCTION

### · Characteristics of the school

1. Poole Grammar School is a selective grammar school for boys aged between twelve and eighteen years, located just outside the town of Poole, on the coast of Dorset. It is broadly average in size, with 867 pupils on the roll, including 257 in the sixth form. The school gives priority to residents of Poole but its pupils come from almost forty different middle schools from as far away as Dorchester and Ringwood. Approximately twelve per cent of the sixth form is recruited from other schools. The catchment area is mainly urban in character but the socio-economic circumstances of much of the intake are favourable. Only two per cent of the pupils are known to be eligible for free school meals, which is very low compared with national figures. There are very few pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds and only five come from homes where English is not the first language. These figures are proportionate to the make-up of the population in the county. The school obtained grant-maintained status in 1994 and transferred to Foundation status on 1 September 1999.

2. Pupils are selected from the top sixteen per cent of the ability range. Entry to the sixth form is limited to those who have a minimum of five passes at grades A\* to C in the GCSE examinations and a reasonable chance of success in their chosen subjects at A level. Only forty-three pupils are on the school's register of special educational needs and only one has a statement identifying the nature of support needed from external agencies. These figures are well below national averages. The school is very successful in external examinations and fifty students have gained entry to Oxford or Cambridge over the past six years. There is considerable pressure on places and the number on roll is rising.

3. The school identifies its aims as follows:

XXII.to prepare students for a fulfilling adult life in a changing society;

XXIII.to promote and pursue excellence in a stimulating environment, helping all students to realise their full potential in academic, cultural, sporting, artistic and social development;

XXIV.to develop in students a sense of responsibility, self-discipline and respect, whilst, at the same time, nurturing increasing independence, enquiry and creativity;

XXV.to encourage respect for positive human achievement and an awareness of the contribution of individuals to the welfare and progress of mankind;

XXVI.to support students in their spiritual development including an appropriate respect and tolerance regarding religious and moral values of others;

XXVII.to provide care and support for young people as they mature into adults, building on a partnership with home;

XXVIII.to promote in students an understanding of interdependence in the school, local, national and world community;

XXIX.to nurture an interest in the life-long pursuit of learning.

4. The school's immediate targets are to:

XXX.maximise the opportunities under the new post-16 review;

XXXI.pursue attainment targets;

XXXII.retain high morale and commitment during the implementation of the new appraisal and salary structures;

XXXIII.develop productive relationships with the local education authority;

XXXIV.continue to develop the school-wide networking and training in information and

communications technology;

XXXV.direct the reduced finances as effectively as possible;

XXXVI.consider Technology College status.

5. Fresh attainment targets are set each year for individual pupils and for the school overall which focus on raising standards in the national tests and assessments, as well as in the GCSE and A level examinations.

## Key Indicators

### Attainment at Key Stage 3<sup>1</sup>

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

Year	Boys	Girls	Total
1999	146	0	146

National Curriculum Test Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Number of pupils at NC Level 5 or Above	Boys	145	146	146
	Girls	0	0	0
	Total	145	146	146
Percentage at NC Level 5 or above	School	99 (98)	100 (99)	100 (99)
	National	63 (65)	62 (60)	55 (56)
Percentage at NC Level 6 or above	School	97 (98)	100 (98)	88 (93)
	National	28 (35)	38 (36)	24 (27)

Teacher Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Number of pupils at NC Level 5 or Above	Boys	146	146	146
	Girls	0	0	0
	Total	146	146	146
Percentage at NC Level 5 or above	School	100 (100)	100 (100)	100 (99)
	National	64 (62)	64 (63)	60 (62)
Percentage at NC Level 6 or above	School	97 (95)	95 (99)	95 (76)
	National	31 (31)	37 (37)	29 (31)

### Attainment at Key Stage 4<sup>2</sup>

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

Year	Boys	Girls	Total
1999	145	0	145

GCSE Results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A* to G	1 or more grades A* to G
Number of pupils achieving standard specified	Boys	138	145	145
	Girls	0	0	0
	Total	138	145	145
Percentage achieving Standard specified	School	95 (97)	100 (100)	100 (100)
	National	48 (46)	88 (87)	94 (93)

1

Percentages in parentheses refer to the year before the latest reporting year

2

Percentages in parentheses refer to the year before the latest reporting year

### Attainment in the Sixth Form <sup>3</sup>

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 who were entered for

Year	Male	Female	Total
1999	130	0	130

GCE A/AS examination in the latest reporting year:

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	25.1	0	25.1 (24.1)	N/a	N/a	N/a
National	N/a	N/a	17.6 (17.6)	N/a	N/a	N/a

### Attendance

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

		%
Authorised Absence	School	6.0
	National comparative data	7.7
Unauthorised Absence	School	0.1
	National comparative data	0.6

### Exclusions

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

	Number
Fixed period	4
Permanent	0

### Quality of teaching

Percentage of teaching observed which is:

	%
Very good or better	27
Satisfactory or better	99
Less than satisfactory	1

**NB: 80 per cent of teaching was good or better**

3 Percentages in parentheses refer to the year before the latest reporting year

· **PART A: ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL**

· **EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS AT THE SCHOOL**

· **Attainment and progress**  
·

6. In the 1998 standard tests and assessments, the proportion of fourteen year-olds reaching the nationally expected levels and higher levels was very high, compared with the national averages, in English, mathematics and science. When compared with the results of schools with a similar intake of pupils, the test results were above the averages for English and science and in line with the average for mathematics. The proportion obtaining the highest levels was well above the average for English and in line with the averages for mathematics and science. Teachers' assessments reflected these results accurately in mathematics but they were a little below the test results in English and well below them in science. The school's average level scores were very high compared with the national averages in all three subjects and well above the average scores for similar schools in English and mathematics. The average score for science was in line with the average for similar schools.

7. By all measures, the 1999 test and assessment results were once again very high compared with the national averages. When compared with the results of similar schools, the percentages obtaining the expected levels were very high in mathematics, well above the average in English and above the average in science. The proportions of pupils attaining the highest levels were well above averages for similar schools in English and mathematics but below the average in science. The average points scores were well above the averages for similar schools in English and mathematics and above the average in science. Teachers' assessments were once again very accurate in mathematics but less so in English and science. Since the last inspection, the school's performance in English has improved significantly and, despite some small fluctuations, the very good standards have been maintained in the other two subjects. Put in other terms, their average attainment in English, mathematics and science means that fourteen year-olds at Poole Grammar School are between three and four years ahead of the national average.

8. In 1999, teachers' assessments in other subjects show that, at the end of Key Stage 3, all pupils were performing at the nationally expected levels in art, design and technology, geography, history and modern foreign languages. Over ninety per cent of pupils were working at higher levels in design and technology, geography and history. Well over ninety per cent of all pupils reached the expected levels in the remaining subjects. These results are significantly better than those seen nationally.

9. In 1999, ninety-five per cent of pupils in Year 11 obtained five or more passes at A\* to C grades in the GCSE examinations. This is very high indeed compared with the national average although it is slightly lower than the school's corresponding percentages for the past four years. It is also below the average for similar schools. However, the average points score has improved over that period, indicating that the number of higher grades is increasing. In 1999, the average points score was very high compared with the national average and it was above the average for similar schools. In that year, the most successful subjects, with between ninety-eight and a

hundred per cent passes at grades A\* to C, were English, biology, chemistry, physics, art and design, drama, French and religious education. The least successful were double award science, English literature and music. However, comparisons between the pupils' performance in different subjects over several years show an inconsistent pattern. Results in English, drama, mathematics and the sciences are generally very good but they fluctuate in other subjects, although the pass rate at grades A\* to C seldom drops below eighty per cent in any subject. As with the Key Stage 3 results, these figures are very high when compared with the national figures.

10. In the 1999 A level examinations, students gained passes in twenty-four per cent of the subjects entered. The average points score rose by one whole point between 1998 and 1999. This reflects the emphasis placed by the school on obtaining higher grades and the percentage obtaining grades A and B has risen to about forty-four per cent. However, the highest scores nationally rose slightly more and so the school's results for 1999 are well above the national average as opposed to being very high in the previous year. Students obtained one hundred per cent passes in most of the twenty-three subjects examined but did less well in further mathematics, mathematics, biology, chemistry, computing, French and government and politics. These results repeat the comparative underperformance in mathematics, biology, computing and French in 1998. However, the percentage of passes has very rarely dropped below eighty per cent in any subject in the last four years.

11. Evidence gathered from observing lessons, scrutinising pupils' written work and talking to pupils shows that attainment in all subjects is consistently above the nationally expected levels at the end of Key Stages 3 and 4 and in Year 13. It is often well above these levels and sometimes very high indeed. The best attainment overall is in English, geography, modern foreign languages and science. Attainment in music, religious education, physical education and business studies is not quite as high as in other subjects. Attainment is exceptionally high in English at Key Stages 3 and 4, geography at Key Stage 3 and in the sixth form, mathematics and modern foreign languages at Key Stage 3 and history and science at Key Stage 4. In business studies, most students following the A level course are likely to pass the examination. Approximately three out of every four pupils stay on to enter the sixth form and three-quarters of sixth form students go on to higher or further education. Fifty students have gained entry to Oxford or Cambridge colleges over the past six years.

12. Progress is good or better in all year groups and in all subjects, except for business studies, where it is satisfactory. The best progress is made in English, mathematics, geography and modern foreign languages at Key Stage 3, art, design and technology and music at Key Stage 4 and geography, history, modern foreign languages and science in the sixth form. There are no significant differences between the attainment or progress of different groups of pupils and those pupils who have special educational needs make progress at the same rate as their peers. These pupils are now closely and effectively monitored by the special educational needs co-ordinator who ensures that extra support and counselling are provided if required. The high standards of literacy and numeracy and well developed skills in information and communications technology are widely and effectively used to support learning across all subjects of the curriculum.

13. In Year 9, pupils speak confidently in front of the class. They listen attentively to

the teacher and to each other and use standard English fluently. Many pupils read widely, standards of writing are very high and all pupils can write confidently in a variety of styles. The presentation of finished writing is usually very neat, with correct punctuation and spelling. In mathematics, nearly all pupils are confident when working with numbers and mental mathematical skills are well developed to cover algebra, data-handling and geometry. Pupils generally use correct mathematical terminology and often they give extended reasoned answers to questions, indicating a good depth of understanding. Calculators are used accurately and good investigative techniques are employed in using and applying mathematics. In science, pupils recognise patterns in the reactions of alkali metals with water and higher-attaining pupils can write chemical equations to represent these reactions. Attainment in lessons is a little lower than in the National Curriculum tests at the end of the key stage because pupils in Year 9 are still making up some lost ground resulting from their uneven previous experience before joining the school.

14. At the end of Key Stage 3, pupils' attainment in painting and drawing is often excellent. Their brush-work, their use of tone to create three-dimensional effects and their use of colour in drawings are often exceptional for their ages. In design and technology, pupils are able to apply the design process and work skilfully with a variety of tools and machines and they have a wide knowledge of materials. In geography, they can use and interpret maps accurately and plot statistical data and they have a good understanding of global problems. Pupils write extensively on historical themes and good research skills are fostered through the selective use of reference books, the Internet and video recordings. Pupils show high level skills in information and communications technology, adding formulae and formats to model tasks and designing documents that show a clear house-style based on well-designed formats. Speaking and listening skills are well developed in modern foreign languages. Year 9 pupils develop good motifs in the melodies they compose in music, have a good understanding of staff notation and play from it on keyboards. Most pupils understand the principles of attack and defence and use well-developed skills when playing games. They take pride in their performance and show good tactical and spatial awareness. Pupils have a good knowledge of religious traditions and can use technical vocabulary correctly.

15. By the end of Key Stage 4, most pupils speak confidently, and some can use language very precisely. They continue to read widely, with confidence and fluency, although some lower-attaining pupils struggle to respond to poetry because they cannot explain the effects of the language or the literary techniques used by the writer. Nearly all pupils make clear notes and structure essays well and many make excellent use of quotations. In mathematics, most pupils are confident with all aspects of mental mathematics, investigative techniques are used to advantage in GCSE coursework, hypotheses are proposed and tested and logical mathematical arguments are made to support findings. In science, pupils' attainment in lessons is very high, reflecting their attainment in GCSE examinations. They can describe the main features of the human circulatory system and many can give detailed explanations of the structure of the heart.

16. Pupils in Year 11 often show excellent observation and draughtsmanship whilst incorporating interesting elements from their imaginations. Their paintings, often in acrylics, demonstrate remarkable finesse and very good use of colour-blending and



mixing. There is some outstanding work in all four areas of design and technology. For example, pupils completed an electronic project that has gained recognition in the national education electronics press. They can design products that meet dietary needs, create striking products in metal and produce carefully coloured packaging for soft fruit. In geography, pupils can explain a range of physical and human processes and apply a range of geographical skills ably to fieldwork and to individual projects. In history, pupils consider possible reasons for the Japanese defeat in World War II and compare the progress of the war in the Pacific with that of the war in Europe. Skills in speaking and listening continue to be well developed in modern foreign languages. In music, pupils devise high-quality compositions, have very good playing competencies and use appropriate musical vocabulary. In physical education, Year 11 pupils understand about healthy living and most can effectively plan and execute tactics to beat an opponent. They have a thoughtful appreciation of moral and social issues and a good understanding of related religious perspectives in Christianity and Islam.

17. In the sixth form, students' attainment in English is not quite as high as examination results suggest but their critical essays are of a very high standard and most express their views fluently. In mathematics, most students can apply algebraic techniques to differentiation and integration or to the application of Newton's gravitational laws. However, most take insufficient responsibility for organising their work and rely too heavily upon their teachers. The higher-attaining students, whilst handling such topics as complex differential calculus, readily recognise the relationships that exist between different aspects of the course and they often challenge teachers to justify and explain concepts more fully to confirm their understanding. Students in Year 13 are working at well above the levels expected for their science courses. Attainment is lower in a few biology lessons because there is too much emphasis on taking notes and too little on assimilating the content, reflecting lower attainment in biology in A level examinations.

18. In art, students in the sixth form produce profound and evaluative historical studies and some high quality ceramic sculptures. Those studying design and technology design and make products, such as a water pump for a developing country, and their geographical skills and knowledge are developed to a high degree. In history, students read, note and understand a considerable body of texts, articles and sources. There is some outstanding work in information and communications technology, with students showing a high ability to programme in a Visual Basic computer language. Students' ability to hold discussions in the modern foreign language they are studying is often outstanding and, in music, they devise sophisticated compositions and sight-read some difficult choral works. Sixth form students display very good individual and team skills in inter-school matches and have a thorough understanding of tactics and rules. They develop their thinking on ethical and theological issues.

· **Attitudes, behaviour and personal development**

19. Pupils enjoy attending the school, as parents and the boys themselves report. One pupil in Year 8 said, "Every day at Poole Grammar is a new adventure." In nearly all lessons, pupils work with interest and enthusiasm. On the few occasions when this does not happen, it is generally because teachers do not present them with sufficiently challenging material. Pupils sustain concentration well, work independently when

required and are secure in their ability to improve. They ask for help confidently when they require it and they have a good rapport with their teachers. Work is usually well presented but some exercise books are scruffy. Pupils relish the many opportunities to become involved in a wide range of activities beyond their lessons. Their attitudes to school are very good.

20. Behaviour around the school and in classrooms is very good and almost all parents and pupils support this view. There have been no permanent exclusions and the rate of short temporary exclusions is very low. There is some pushing in the narrow corridors during lesson changes but it is good-natured. Relationships at all levels are very good. Pupils are courteous to teachers, visitors and to each other. It is not unusual for doors to be held open or for help to be offered. Pupils talk to visitors with confidence and maturity. No graffiti were seen during the inspection. Senior pupils are trusted to work on their own in physical education on occasions and they respond well to this trust. Pupils are happy to accept responsibility by representing their tutor group on the school council, organising events for charity, undertaking community service and serving as prefects.

21. The personal development of pupils is very good. They enjoy reflecting on spiritual and moral issues when they are given the opportunity. For example, Year 8 pupils appreciated recording their feelings about the first day of Advent in their diaries of reflection. They marshal their thoughts well and listen sensitively to the views of others. Pupils give good and tactful support to others with special educational needs. There is very little bullying in the school. By Year 13, students are mature and confident, without being over-bearing. They show excellent degrees of maturity and take on many responsibilities.

#### • **Attendance**

22. Attendance is good. It remains well above the average national figure but it is below the median for similar schools. There is very little unauthorised absence. Absence is mostly attributed to illnesses or to short family holidays in term time. Boys arrive punctually to lessons, though those travelling by school bus in the morning may sometimes arrive late. Attendance in the sixth form is about average but some students are lax about punctuality.

### **QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED**

#### • **Teaching**

23. Teaching in the school is consistently good and it is often very good or excellent. It was satisfactory or better in ninety-nine per cent of the 197 lessons observed during the inspection. It was good or better in eighty per cent and very good or excellent in twenty-seven per cent of lessons. Overall, there was very little difference between the teaching at Key Stages 3 and 4 and in the sixth form although it was marginally better on average in the sixth form than elsewhere in the school. Similarly, there was little difference between the quality of teaching in different subjects but it was more often very good or better in history, music, physical education and religious education than in the other subjects. Overall, teaching was very slightly less

consistent in business studies, design and technology, information and communications technology and science. The most consistently good and very good teaching was in history, music and physical education at Key Stage 4 and in geography, history and modern foreign languages in the sixth form.

24. The last inspection found that teaching was generally very good. However, the report recommended that better extension work for higher-attaining pupils and a better match of tasks to pupils' needs were needed for further improvement. It also recommended that the school needed to develop the skills and teaching styles of teachers so that they could carry out this work more effectively. The senior management took these recommendations very seriously, drew up a strategic plan and formed a working group. All staff were involved in this work and participated in an audit of teaching styles in the school, leading to the identification of some specific elements of successful teaching. These included the development of information and study skills, the encouragement of initiative and planning for pupils of all abilities. Training took place in multi-disciplinary groups and departments set themselves targets. One of the deputy headteachers took the lead in these developments and closely monitored teaching across several departments.

25. The result of this work has been a significant improvement in the quality of teaching and teachers are committed to raising standards. Teachers' knowledge and understanding of their subjects are very good at all levels in the school but particularly in the sixth form. In English, teachers have a secure knowledge of set texts, allowing them to provide valuable extra information about historical settings and influences on the writers being studied. In science, teachers use their very good knowledge of the subject to give clear explanations. For example, in a lesson in Year 9, the teacher passed on his own enthusiasm by describing the wonder of seeing a perfectly preserved prehistoric animal. Teachers provide particularly good cover of the Key Stage 3 programme in design and technology as they can all teach graphics and food technology. Teachers of information and communications technology are highly competent with the theoretical aspects of the subject and many are aware of the skills involved in teaching it effectively. At Key Stages 3 and 4, teachers usually make good use of their knowledge and expertise in foreign languages, speaking them for almost the whole of the lesson.

26. Teachers generally have high expectations of pupils. In English, they ask incisive questions to encourage pupils to infer meaning but also to refer constantly to the text. The teachers' suitably high expectations of attainment ensure that most pupils are presented with challenges that encourage progress at a good rate in the majority of mathematics lessons. In science, relationships between teachers and their pupils are usually very good, particularly in the sixth form. In geography, teachers have very high expectations of their pupils and support them well and, in physical education, their expectations are high with regard to levels of performance and behaviour, including attention to safety and to wearing the correct kit. In religious education, pupils are challenged to think through religious concepts and values. Higher-attaining pupils are now frequently set more challenging targets. For example, in one physics lesson, the teacher asked pupils to speculate what would happen if a fulcrum was moved to a different point on a bar. In physical education, lower-attaining pupils benefit from using

modified rules and equipment.

27. Teachers plan lessons well, ensuring that the requirements of the National Curriculum and external examination syllabi are satisfied. Teachers often provide useful worksheets in English to help pupils organise their ideas when responding to literature. In science, teachers often make very good use of original articles to test pupils' understanding. In the sixth form, chemistry teachers make very effective use of regular assignments that introduce students to a university style of working. In geography, the best teaching has clear aims shared with pupils, and detailed planning. Lessons are effectively presented in a structured, lively and challenging way. Teachers use visual aids skilfully and employ methods which meet the needs of pupils. In history, good questioning challenges pupils to think more deeply by stimulating their imaginations. Lessons at Key Stages 3 and 4 are conducted at a good pace and activities are varied appropriately. They are well suited to the pupils' needs and abilities and are effectively focused on developing the higher-level skills.

· 28. Teachers  
deploy a wide range of methods and resources to good effect during lessons. For example, in a Year 11 lesson in religious education, a brief extract from a video-recording presented a variety of attitudes to war, extending pupils' understanding and stimulating discussion very effectively. In modern foreign languages, support work on the board or with the overhead projector is clear, the pace of lessons is appropriate and lessons are carefully planned. Teachers of all subjects make very good use of the time available and they generally manage pupils very well. Day-to-day assessment is usually carried out thoroughly and effectively. For example, English teachers mark pupils' written work regularly and provide useful, supportive advice. In mathematics, generally good assessment procedures ensure that pupils' progress is well monitored and support for any apparent underachievement is soon provided. In modern foreign languages, the thorough, supportive marking of pupils' work has a positive effect on standards. Homework is set regularly, according to the school's policy, reinforcing the progress made in lessons. Teachers generally understand the nature of pupils' special educational needs. In the best lessons, they are also aware of the strategies that have been outlined on their individual education plans. For example, one teacher helped a pupil to concentrate by organising seating arrangements so that he was less distracted by the work of other pupils. However, some teachers are insufficiently aware of the details of these plans. A learning support assistant provides valuable, effective support for a pupil with visual impairment.

29. Despite the improvements in the range of teaching approaches, some lessons are still heavily directed by the teachers. For example, in English, some lessons consist mainly of teacher-led discussion and the teaching of mathematics in the sixth form provides insufficient opportunities for students to take responsibility for their own progress. In science, pupils are sometimes given too much information rather than being encouraged to find it out for themselves and, in physical education, there are sometimes too few opportunities for pupils to plan and evaluate their performance. Marking in science is inconsistent. Some teachers provide pupils with clear indications of the quality of their work and suggest targets to help them improve but others acknowledge pupils' work with little more than a tick. In art, there are inconsistencies in the content of what is taught, the use of homework, the assessment of work and in the

use of sketchbooks. In geography, teachers do not always make the best use of active question and answer sessions or use visual stimuli to consolidate and reinforce the main learning points. Some teachers experience difficulties in managing classes in Year 11, particularly those with restless and unsettling pupils. Teaching in business studies is not fully effective in raising standards to potential levels

· **The curriculum and assessment**

30. At Key Stage 3, the school is providing a broad and balanced curriculum which includes all the subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education. Physics, chemistry and biology are taught as three separate subjects and drama is included in the English curriculum. A second modern foreign language is introduced in Year 9 for all pupils and other subjects have correspondingly less time than they do in Year 8. In music, the reduction in time makes it difficult to meet the requirements of the National Curriculum. Information and communications technology is taught to all pupils as a separate subject but insufficient time is allocated and the statutory requirements are not fully met.

31. In most respects, the school makes very good provision for the curriculum at Key Stage 4. All pupils undertake full GCSE courses in English, mathematics, the three sciences, design and technology, a modern foreign language and religious education. Over the last four years, about seventy per cent of the year group have been entered for biology, chemistry and physics and the remainder have been entered for the double science certificate. About two thirds of the year group choose to take the examination in religious education. In addition, all pupils take physical education and two further GCSE courses chosen from geography, history, art, drama, music or a second foreign language. Provision for information and communications technology is unsatisfactory. It is not timetabled as a discrete subject and pupils' experience of the subject across the curriculum does not adequately meet all the statutory requirements.

32. The school offers a very good curriculum to students aged sixteen and over, with a choice of twenty courses at A level and a few A/S level courses. Students in Year 12 and 13 are taught together for geology, design and technology, music and religious studies and they follow a course on theatre studies provided jointly with Parkstone Grammar School for Girls. The introduction of new subjects, including media studies, psychology and sports studies, is being considered as part of the school's preparation for the new A level courses in September 2000. These measures will also help to counter the feelings of some students that the present range is a little traditional and limited. Students have a double period of general studies and a games afternoon each week and they all take courses in religious education as part of the general studies programme. They may opt to undertake community service instead of some modules of the general studies course.

33. Good planning by the teaching departments ensure that pupils build very effectively on previous work as they go through the school. The school has worked hard to promote curricular links with middle schools although this has proved difficult as pupils in Year 8 come from over forty different schools in the area. Most departments are able to adapt their programmes successfully to take account of pupils' different experiences when they start at the school. However, this is more difficult in science

and the department works on the assumption that all of the required programmes of study for Key Stage 3 need to be covered, even though many pupils will have done some of the work in Year 7, and this can cause difficulties with assessment. Good links with further and higher education institutions help to promote a smooth transition from school to college.

34. All pupils have very good access to the school's curriculum. Throughout the school, they are taught in mixed attainment groups, except at Key Stage 4, where they are placed in sets for mathematics. These arrangements for grouping pupils are effective and work is well planned to take account of the different levels of attainment within each class. All pupils, including those in the sixth form, have a fortnightly tutorial lesson which covers a good programme of personal, social and health education, including sex and drugs education. Some of the work in religious education on ethical and moral issues complements this tutorial programme. The school makes very good provision for careers education and guidance. Relevant topics are covered in the tutorial programme and all pupils undertake two weeks' work experience in Year 11. The careers library provides good resources to help with individual career planning and pupils have easy access to careers guidance at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form.

35. The curriculum is adapted to meet the requirements of pupils on the register of special educational needs. Pupils with social, emotional or behaviour difficulties are provided with valuable support through counselling sessions organised by the special educational needs co-ordinator and by a 'circle of friends' arrangement. This encourages groups of boys to support pupils in their class who have difficulties and to help the co-ordinator to counsel these pupils, when appropriate. For higher-attaining pupils, the 'da Vinci' project provides useful extra-curricular enrichment for a small number of pupils in Year 10. This is now being supplemented by the introduction of a 'Challenge' magazine, containing ideas provided by pupils and staff, which offers challenging extension activities for any pupils who wish to attempt them.

36. The formal curriculum is supplemented by a very good range of extra-curricular activities. Pupils have very good opportunities to take part in a variety of sports which are supported by about thirty members of staff. They can participate in music and drama, as well as joining a very broad range of out-of-school clubs. They are offered further opportunities to broaden their horizons through a good range of educational visits, including fieldwork, visits to theatres and galleries and trips abroad. As part of the school's 'activities week', at the end of the summer term, all the pupils in Year 10 take part in a residential camp at Swanage.

37. The school has addressed all the curricular issues raised in the last inspection. Pupils are now taught for twenty-five hours a week, instead of twenty-three hours twenty minutes, which has enabled the school to increase the time allocation for some subjects. The mix of single and double lessons is carefully planned and now meets the different requirements of individual subjects. Courses in religious education have been introduced into the general studies programme in the sixth form so that the statutory requirements for this subject are fully met.

38. Following a series of consultations within the school, a good comprehensive policy has been produced that provides a framework for an effective and manageable assessment, recording and reporting system. Both academic and pastoral members of

staff play a full part in monitoring pupils' progress and any pupil who is apparently underachieving receives appropriate support from subject specialists and tutors. Overall, the school operates good arrangements for assessing and recording progress and attainment and for using assessment information for curriculum development. The school satisfies the statutory requirements for assessment set out in the National Curriculum and the guidance concerning pupils on the school's register of special educational needs and the use of the National Record of Achievement.

39. The previous inspection criticised arrangements for the assessment of pupils with special educational needs as being unsystematic and lacking in rigour. Since then, procedures have improved. A register of special educational needs is now kept and procedures for the identification of those pupils and for monitoring their progress fit well with the school's overall procedures for assessment. A few pupils have individual education plans. They and their parents are aware of the targets set out in the plans and their progress is regularly reviewed by the co-ordinator for special educational needs who also provides teachers with useful advice about ways of helping these pupils.

40. Most teaching departments have adopted and developed the requirements set out in the school's assessment policy, the best examples of practice being found in geography and modern foreign languages. Even where practice is otherwise good, there are a few inconsistencies within and between departments, particularly with respect to written feedback to pupils in marking. In most departments, assessment procedures are at their best in the sixth form where, for example, written feedback is often constructively critical and informative about procedures to be adopted for future success. These very detailed procedures are co-ordinated by the head of year and any under-performance is rapidly picked up and help provided.

41. Appropriate methods, reflecting the distinctive requirements of different subjects, are used to assess pupils' performance and attainment. These are generally accurate and reliable, and provide summary and diagnostic information for monitoring and acknowledging pupils' progress. In all subjects, appropriate evidence of pupils' attainment is maintained through the written work in their books and folders and by collections of their artefacts and through the records of teachers' observations. Mainly good records are kept which provide adequate information about coverage of the curriculum and pupils' effort and attainment at regular intervals. The school's effective and well-managed system for compiling records of achievement continues to provide good opportunities for pupils to evaluate their academic progress and other aspects of their development, in consultation with their teachers.

42. The school makes detailed analyses of external and internal assessment data, such as Key Stage 2 test results, scores in cognitive ability tests and predictions for attainment at A level and it is beginning to use these effectively at senior management level to set targets for future success. However, not all departments are using such information to the best effect in reviewing the curriculum and their teaching strategies. Issues of concern highlighted in the last report have, in good part, been addressed but there is still room for improvement in a number of subjects by providing more frequent informative comments in marking and by involving pupils in assessing their own work.

## · **Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development**

43. The school has recently produced a good new policy for collective worship but there has been insufficient time for this to be fully adopted. All the assemblies seen contained clear and strong moral and social elements but they did not all include an act of worship. Arrangements are still not complete to ensure that all pupils are involved in an act of collective worship every day. There is good provision for spiritual development in religious education and science but this aspect remains underdeveloped in many subjects. Informal opportunities for discussion about spiritual themes are sometimes used well but planned provision is not usually identified in schemes of work or in short-term planning. Diaries of reflection, for use in tutorial time in Years 8 and 9, provide valuable opportunities for spiritual contemplation which are welcomed by the pupils. Overall, however, there has been insufficient progress in provision for spiritual development since the last inspection.

44. Provision for the moral development of pupils is very good. Many lessons, assemblies and tutorial sessions make imaginative contributions to moral education. For example, in history, the scheme of work specifically challenges the stereotyping of women. Pupils are given many opportunities to support charities and to consider the needs of other people. Some students in the sixth form choose to undertake service in the community. The attitudes and behaviour of all adults in the school underpin the very good relationships that exist at all levels in the school's community.

45. There are many opportunities for pupils' social development. They are encouraged to work collaboratively in many different groupings in lessons and the extensive extra-curricular programme enables boys to mix more widely both inside and outside the school. The sixth form dance club, held jointly with Parkstone Girls' Grammar School, is well-supported and enables students to gain a social skill. The wide programme of educational visits, residential trips and expeditions also contributes successfully to social development. Pupils are helped to exercise responsibility by serving as prefects and by organising inter-form competitions although they are not always allowed to make full use of computer facilities during the lunch-hour. The new sports leadership scheme enables senior pupils to coach others or to officiate at matches outside the school.

46. The school makes good provision for the cultural development of pupils. There are good exchanges with schools in France and Germany and pupils can undertake work experience in Europe. Cultural opportunities are good in religious education, history, general studies, art, music and modern foreign languages but there is insufficient coverage of non-European elements in music and art. The school has reviewed its provision for multi-cultural education and has a well constructed policy on this and some displays now show images of people from other ethnic heritages as role-models.

## · **Support, guidance and pupils' welfare**

47. The school continues to make very effective provision for the support, guidance and welfare of pupils, including those with special educational needs. There is very good monitoring of academic progress, personal development, behaviour and



attendance and this contributes to the high standards of attainment. The information collected is used well. For example, students who are thought to be underachieving at the end of Year 12 are mentored by staff to help them reach their true potential. Very good records are kept and the information is shared appropriately with pupils and parents.

48. Pupils are prepared well to make option choices for GCSE and A level examinations and the work experience programme is well-organised. Careers guidance is very good, particularly in the sixth form, where a variety of visiting speakers talk about different careers and there are many opportunities to visit universities. The school maintains good links with a range of support services for pupils on the register of special educational needs. One student in Year 13 with special educational needs had very high praise for the ways in which he has been supported over his years in the school, describing them as unobtrusive but highly effective. The school promotes good behaviour and discipline very well. Pupils and parents are satisfied that any incidents of bullying are dealt with swiftly and effectively. Pupils report that any sanctions are used fairly and with justification.

49. The school's arrangements for child protection are good and they meet statutory requirements. Generally, the health and safety of pupils are well catered for but a small number of minor concerns have been referred to the school. There is very good first aid cover and a well-equipped medical room. Pupils are offered a good range of healthy foods at break and lunch-time and the food is served with due regard to hygiene. There are clear procedures for ensuring safety on school visits.

#### **Partnership with parents and the community**

50. The school continues to promote a very effective partnership with parents and the community. The home-school agreement is clear and informative and the quality of information provided for parents is very good. Annual reports provide good judgements of what pupils can do in each subject, with useful indications of how to improve in all subjects except information and communications technology. Parents also value consultations with teachers and the snapshot half-termly assessments of pupils' effort and achievement in each subject. Homework diaries are used well to facilitate communication between the school and home. Parents of pupils with special educational needs are fully involved at every stage of assessment and in the regular reviews of individual education plans.

51. The school provides parents with a wide range of general information of high quality. The prospectus and annual report of the governing body are informative and meet statutory requirements. Regular newsletters, introductory booklets for each part of the school and the excellently produced school magazine all help to keep parents fully involved in the life of the school. Parents assist the work of the school well by ensuring that their boys attend regularly, wearing the correct uniform or following the sixth form dress code, by encouraging the completion of homework and the involvement in a wide range of after-school activities, and by supporting the thriving parent-staff association. A number also provide valuable links between the school and industry. The response of parents to the provision made by the school is extremely positive and less than two per cent expressed concern about any of the issues raised in

the questionnaire or at the parents' meeting.

52. The school has excellent links with local business and industry which provide valuable enrichment of the curriculum. Pupils are encouraged to take part in a wide range of competitions, such as the annual Casterbridge business competition, to visit many places of work, such as a local water treatment works, in support of curriculum studies, and to undertake projects for local businesses. Arrangements for work experience in Year 11 are very good. Students in the sixth form are encouraged to perform community service and the developing sports leadership scheme enables boys to assist with sports in the community. The sixth form has good links with a very wide range of useful outside organisations. For example, those who are following the A level course in business studies make an annual visit to the European parliament.

## **THE MANAGEMENT AND EFFICIENCY OF THE SCHOOL**

### **Leadership and management**

53. The headteacher has been in post for ten years. His very good leadership has established a clear educational direction for the school and a very positive ethos in which high standards of attainment in all aspects of school life, good relationships and equality of opportunity are given high priority. These qualities are underpinned by firm, clear policies which are well understood and implemented across the school. The style of management is consultative but firm, with rigorous attention to detail. For example, the last inspection was followed up by a very close analysis of not only the key issues identified then but also all other observations which implied criticism of any kind. This led to a series of action plans which have all been implemented and the results have been carefully evaluated. The focus on teaching has encouraged a wider variety of teaching styles to be used across the school and the very detailed monitoring of the progress and attainment of individual pupils has moved from mere evaluation to prediction and target-setting. Each teaching department produces its own costed annual development plan although the usefulness of these is limited by the fact that some cover only one year at a time.

54. The senior management team was restructured at the start of the last academic year and it now consists of the headteacher and the three deputy headteachers. Each deputy headteacher is linked to a number of teaching departments and also has a pastoral role relating to one of the key stages or to the sixth form and a portfolio of school-wide responsibilities. Between them, the members of the senior management team monitor teaching, recording their observations and feeding them back to teachers. This process has enabled the emphasis on developing a variety of teaching styles to be maintained. Most departments are well managed by their heads of department, who provide very good leadership. They monitor planning but most monitor teaching less frequently. Departmental policies and other documentation are generally of high quality and heads of department ensure that expectations are high. The deputy headteachers carry out the great majority of their duties very effectively but it is not absolutely clear whether they are the line managers of their linked teaching departments and, consequently, they do not always intervene strongly enough if weaknesses develop. In two or three cases, where strong guidance has been needed, it has not been forthcoming. Examples include the need for a whole-school strategy for developing the curriculum for information and

communications technology and the need for team development in the art department.

55. The school's development planning is based on a thorough annual cycle of reviews, beginning with a review of the work of each department and the progress made towards annual targets. The headteacher then drafts the school's priorities and there follows a series of consultations ending with the presentation of the draft plan to the education committee of the governing body for their consideration. Eventually, after further discussion, the plan is presented to the full governing body. The progress made by the school towards its targets is regularly monitored by the senior management team, who meet regularly each week, and by the governors. The full governing body and each of its sub-committees meet twice a term. Minutes show that the meetings are generally well attended and that they are conducted in a very businesslike fashion. The governors are well informed and bring a wide range of personal and professional experience to their work. Members of the school's staff provide regular briefings to the governors on curricular matters and on other developments affecting the life of the school. Most governors are able to maintain close relationships with their link departments. The governing body takes its responsibility for the strategic management of the school very seriously and does not step back from serious debate or difficult decisions. For example, it has steered the school successfully through an extensive and costly programme of capital building works and negotiated the often difficult transitions to grant maintained status and, more recently, to Foundation status.

56. The school meets all statutory requirements fully and well except that it still does not provide a daily act of collective worship and the curriculum for information and communications technology does not cover all aspects of the National Curriculum's programme of study. The very thorough follow-up to the last inspection ensured that all the key issues identified then have been addressed. The very high standards of attainment have been maintained or improved. The balance of time between subjects and the time allocated to them have been considerably improved and the mix of single and double periods now reflects the needs of different subjects and offers better opportunities for progression. There have been good improvements in the work of every department, even though more work is needed in regard to the management of the art department and to the curriculum for information and communications technology.

57. Teachers now use a good variety of styles in their lessons. Progress has been made in the school's provision for pupils with special educational needs, particularly since the appointment of a co-ordinator, and practice is now fully in line with the guidance in the Code of Practice, although the policy needs to be completed. Some progress has been made in raising pupils' awareness of multi-cultural issues and there is a very detailed policy. Provision for spiritual development is still not fully embedded in the teaching and learning across the curriculum. The lack of a daily act of collective worship was a key issue in the last inspection report and, although progress has been made, the present arrangements do not fully comply with requirements. In other respects, the very good standards reported at the last inspection have been maintained. The school is in a sound position to make further improvements. Once the role of the deputy headteachers has been consolidated, the very good quality of leadership, the consistently good teaching and the commitment of staff and governors should ensure that the present very high standards will be maintained or raised still

further.

· **Staffing, accommodation and learning resources**

58. There are enough staff to meet the demands of the school's curriculum and, between them, they are well qualified to teach all the subjects of the National Curriculum, religious education and the courses offered for GCSE and A level examinations,. With recent changes in staffing, due mainly to promotion of staff to posts in other schools, there is now a good balance of experience and youth within the school. The uneven gender balance at management levels, identified at the previous inspection, still exists but there are more women now on the teaching staff. The careers education co-ordinator is experienced and administers a very effective careers and work experience programme. The co-ordinator for work with pupils who have special educational needs is a fairly recent appointment whose training needs have been identified by the school and professional development has been planned. The librarian is suitably qualified and provides very good support for many subjects but is not able to provide information and communications technology support to library users.

59. The number of support and administrative staff is high for a school of this size. The clerical and administrative staff work well as an effective part of the school's team and provide good support. Technical support has improved since the previous inspection in both information and communications technology and design and technology and this is now satisfactory. The quality of technical support is good in science and very good in design and technology.

60. A well-planned and effective programme operates for newly-qualified teachers on their appointment to the school. They work closely with their appointed mentor who provides regular fortnightly meetings and very helpful support. These one-to-one meetings give flexibility and allow for a tailor-made programme to be provided. Heads of department provide good advice, observe teaching and provide formal feedback. Since the previous inspection, arrangements have been made for newly-qualified teachers to observe experienced teachers in their own subjects and in other departments. They also participate in the local authority's induction scheme but find that it does not normally cover the particular circumstances of the school well. The school does not fully meet the government's recommendations on the reduction of teaching time but intends rectifying this for future years. These arrangements are working very well, aided by an effective informal support system. Newly appointed experienced staff are very well supported by their departments and by the school's management.

61. There are good links with the initial teacher-training institutions at Exeter University School of Education and Bath University. These partnerships have helped to train six student teachers of English, mathematics and science from Exeter University and two student teachers from Bath University train at the school each year in science and modern foreign languages. The school provides mentors for each subject who co-ordinate, monitor and evaluate the students' teaching and work closely with the teacher-training agencies.

62. Procedures for the appraisal of staff have been reviewed and refined since the last inspection. They now allow for a more effective process for raising standards of teaching and learning. The deputy headteacher who co-ordinates staff development has been trained in ways of assessing professional development and evaluating the training needs of staff. Targets set at appraisal sessions are made known to senior management to assist with development planning of whole-school issues. While the system generally works satisfactorily, there is unevenness in its implementation and there is a need for more rigorous monitoring. The school has a sound voluntary scheme of review and development for support staff which provides opportunities for development comparable to those offered to teachers.

63. The comprehensive staff development policy is based on the priorities in the school development plan and the departments' development plans and on individual needs. Funding for staff development is appropriately high and has been increased for the current year. All staff have six training days a year which this year have dealt with issues such as resources, careers education and work experience, the key issues and action plan from the last inspection and performance management. Training provided within most departments has been thorough and has helped the professional development of many staff. Senior management monitor the various programmes of staff development but the school is in the very early stages of evaluating the effect of training on teaching and learning. Support and administrative staff receive regular and increasing opportunities for professional development.

64. Overall, the standard of accommodation is good and meets the needs of teaching departments. Most subjects are taught in closely grouped rooms and benefit from the positive influence that this situation has on departmental organisation. In most curriculum areas, pupils' learning is improved by the provision of very good specialist accommodation. The best features include the drama studio, the music practice rooms, the geography wing, the library and the fitness suite. Some science laboratories need re-furbishing. Modern foreign languages are frequently taught in non-specialist rooms which lack the necessary visual and aural stimuli and resources. The main music room is unsuitable for keyboard work and the two computer areas are crowded. There is good material on display, particularly in classrooms and in the entrance hall, which encourages pupils and celebrates their achievements. Buildings are well-maintained and free from vandalism and graffiti. Government funding has enabled security to be improved.

65. Litter is not a problem. Cleaning, maintenance and improvements are efficiently managed and there is an effective programme for the refurbishment of teaching areas. Pupils move around the school in a very orderly manner and they behave sensibly when coping with any unavoidable congestion at peak movement times. The school has extensive and well-maintained indoor and outdoor sports facilities. There is a successful lettings policy and the school's facilities are used for a wide range of religious, musical and sporting activities. Access for the disabled is satisfactory with ramps, handrails and a modified toilet.

66. Improvement since the last inspection has been considerable. New building has included a classroom wing, two new physics laboratories, two purpose-built art rooms, a drama studio and three music practice rooms. These works have greatly improved circulation around the school as well as directly benefiting the teaching

departments concerned. Study areas, including the library, have also been increased and the geography, science and history departments have gained resource bases. Business studies is now in permanent accommodation. The laboratories built in the 1960s were given some basic refurbishment in 1998. The remaining double mobile was recently completely re-furnished as a materials workshop to provide extra flexibility for the teaching of technology. An additional computing area has been created in the library gallery. Heating is now adequate in all teaching areas. Teaching space in ten relatively small classrooms has been increased by the relocation of lockers. These considerable improvements make a significant contribution to the working environment, promoting good quality of learning and high standards of achievement.

67. Resources for English, drama, science, mathematics, art, music, religious education and physical education are good and they are adequate for modern foreign languages, design and technology and history. There is a satisfactory ratio of one computer to eight pupils, which is about the national average. However, some of the machines are old and there is insufficient provision for information and communications technology in science, geography and art. The library has a ratio of eleven books to one pupil, which is below the nationally recommended level but adequate to play a significant role in supporting learning. There is a poor stock of library books for physical education but the small number of books on science in the main library is supplemented by the library within the science department. Good use is made of resources beyond the school, such as art galleries and museums. Since the last inspection, the ratio of computers to pupils has improved considerably. There has been good progress in upgrading the library and there are now good libraries in the classrooms. Overall, learning resources provide good support for the school's curriculum.

· **The efficiency of the school**

68. Arrangements for financial planning are very good. They are firmly based on the educational priorities in the school's development plan and the development plans for each department. The headteacher reviews the progress made by all departments against the targets set for them and their budget allocations and fresh targets and a provisional budget are then agreed. The whole budget is built up in this way and then discussed with the senior management team. Once the likely allocation from the local education authority is identified, the school's provisional budget is discussed by the governors at a meeting of the finance committee. Whenever possible, a small contingency sum is built in, as well as reserves for educational equipment and for curriculum developments. The headteacher and the governing body plan the budget and monitor expenditure very carefully. For example, a calculated risk was taken to overspend the annual budget by using some of the school's reserves in order to continue upgrading the equipment for information and communications technology despite the loss of income brought about by the transfer to Foundation status. This overspend is being systematically reduced and current plans show that it will disappear in two years. Expenditure on the sixth form is costed in some detail. Current calculations show that the sixth form is very nearly self-sufficient and the small additional amount it costs the school is having no discernible effect on the quality of provision elsewhere.

69. Financial administration is also very good. The very efficient bursar monitors all income and expenditure against the agreed headings and totals. The heads of department are responsible for their own budgets but the bursar monitors their expenditure very closely and provides them with monthly statements. She also provides the headteacher and the finance committee with detailed statements showing running totals, balances and commitments so that they can monitor the school's overall expenditure. The bursar also monitors and processes all invoices, orders and payments. The necessary checks and balances are in place with appropriate restrictions on signatories for cheques. The school has retained the services of a 'responsible officer' who conducts regular and unannounced audits of aspects of the school's affairs and there is an annual audit of the school's accounts. The last audit, conducted in May 1999, did not identify any significant matters for improvement. The school also provides the local authority with a termly financial report and, if necessary, the bursar effects reconciliations to the accounts. The bursar's additional duties include managing all the non-teaching staff and the school's very well run catering service. With the help of a subsidy from the local authority, this service provides hot and cold meals and snacks at no additional cost to the school.

70. The school makes very good use of its teaching and support staff and deploys them efficiently. The small additional grant for work with pupils with special educational needs and income from the Standards Fund are well used. Funding for staff development is particularly well used. Additional funds have been used to create the post of co-ordinator for special educational needs. Resources are generally well used and accessible, although access to the full range of computers was restricted during the period of the inspection, partly because some of the planned accommodation had not been completed, and arrangements for using electronic keyboards are unsatisfactory. The day-to-day administration of the school is very effective and the headteacher's personal assistant and the administrative staff act as efficient and welcoming first points of contact for parents and visitors. The site supervisor and the grounds manager keep the school's buildings and grounds in excellent condition and the catering manager and her staff provide a very good service. Taking into account the costs per pupil, which are about average for similar schools, the very high standards attained academically and in a wide range of extra-curricular activities and sports, the good progress made and the high quality of the education offered, the school is providing good value for money.

- **PART B: CURRICULUM AREAS AND SUBJECTS**
- **ENGLISH, MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCE**
- **English**

71. At the end of Key Stage 3, attainment in English is very high in comparison with national averages. In 1999, the proportion of pupils reaching higher levels than nationally expected in National Curriculum tests was well above the average for similar schools. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 is also very high compared with national averages. In 1999, nearly all pupils obtained passes at grades A\* to C in the GCSE examinations and the proportion obtaining the highest grades of A\* and A was above the average for similar schools. Results in English literature are very high in comparison with national averages but, in 1999, they were below the average for similar schools. In the sixth form, attainment in the GCE A level examinations is very high in comparison with national averages and, in 1999, the proportion of students obtaining grades A or B was well above the average for similar schools.

72. Pupils' attainment in lessons towards the end of each key stage matches these results. In Year 9, pupils speak confidently in front of the class. They listen attentively to the teacher and to each other and use standard English fluently during class and group discussions. Many pupils read widely for pleasure and make good use of the extra books recently bought for the library. Their analysis of character is impressive, as was shown in their discussion of the relationship between characters in *Z for Zachariah*, in which they made precise reference to the text to suggest that Loomis was pretending to be weak to gain Anne's trust. Standards of writing are very high. Pupils use exercise books effectively to draft and re-draft their work. The presentation of finished writing is usually very neat, with correct punctuation and spelling. All pupils can write confidently in a range of styles. They can produce lengthy autobiographies, imaginative, descriptive narrative and, in one lesson, they adapted a chapter of their class reader into realistic play scripts, with detailed stage directions.

73. By the end of Key Stage 4, most pupils speak confidently although some are reluctant to participate in class discussions. Discussion among pupils is nearly always in response to teachers' questions and is rarely spontaneous. However, their replies to teachers' questions show that they can use language very precisely. Pupils in Year 11, discussing Golding's *Lord of the Flies*, confidently described Piggy as, "...an outsider, a scapegoat but realistic and resourceful," while Jack was "arrogant and sadistic." Pupils continue to read widely at Key Stage 4. They read aloud confidently and fluently, using appropriate emphasis to interest their audience. They use their considerable background knowledge of writers to improve their understanding of what they read. All pupils read difficult texts with a high level of understanding. However, several lower-attaining pupils struggle to make a personal response to poetry because they cannot explain the effect of the language or the literary techniques used by the writer. Nearly all pupils make clear notes during lessons. They structure essays well and many make excellent use of quotations, integrating them into their writing to illustrate their views.

74. Sixth form students express their thoughts clearly. Most are prepared to clarify



their ideas through discussions in class although, as at Key Stage 4, some are reticent. In lessons, attainment was not quite as high as that in examinations because students were often doing the type of work which they found most difficult, such as making a personal response to previously unseen poetry. They found Carlos Williams' *'Children's Games'* and the poetry of R S Thomas difficult to analyse without a lot of guidance from the teacher. However, prepared critical essays are of a very high standard. Most students express their views fluently in thoughtful, mature writing and are rarely at a loss for the correct word. For example, their essays on Swift's *'Modest Proposal'* show an excellent understanding of the historical background and the confident integration of key quotations from the text.

75. Pupils enter the school with very high levels of attainment in English and these are maintained through each key stage. Progress in lessons is good at all key stages. The best progress often takes place when teachers organise a variety of activities and ask pupils to work and discuss in groups for part of the lesson. This ensures that all pupils participate. Occasionally, less confident pupils make slower progress because they do not contribute to whole-class discussions. Students in the sixth form make particularly good progress with the critical analysis of texts. Teachers follow the lesson plans outlined in the departmental handbook which emphasise this skill and pupils at Key Stage 4 would also benefit from such work. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress because teachers are aware of their difficulties although they are not always aware of the specific targets that have been set for these pupils.

76. At all key stages, pupils' progress is helped by their very positive attitudes. Relationships with teachers are based on mutual respect and pupils work very well collaboratively. They are courteous, concentrate well in lessons and hand in their homework on time.

77. Teaching is good at all key stages. In several of the lessons seen, it was very good and it was never less than satisfactory. Teachers' knowledge of set texts is very secure. This is particularly noticeable at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form, where they provide valuable extra information about the historical setting and influences on the writer. Teachers' control of pupils is almost effortless. In class discussions they have very high expectations of pupils, asking incisive questions to encourage them to infer meaning but also to refer constantly to the text. They often provide useful worksheets to help pupils organise their ideas when responding to literature. They mark pupils' written work regularly and provide useful, supportive advice. Teaching approaches and styles are now good and more varied than they were during the previous inspection. However, there is still insufficient opportunity for all pupils to participate in lessons when they consist mainly of teacher-led discussion. Although teachers usually explain their objectives at the start of lessons, they could help pupils further by summing up what has been learned at the end of the lesson. Homework is regularly set and developmental.

78. Teachers from the English department teach one lesson of drama at Key Stage 3 once a fortnight. Since the previous inspection, a scheme of work for drama has been written for Key Stage 3. Teachers do not follow this closely and still use these lessons as a valuable support for English studies. As a result, pupils have limited drama skills at the end of the key stage. In one lesson, small groups of pupils in Year 9

presented a poem of their choice to the rest of the class in the drama studio. They read their poems clearly and confidently and made good progress with speaking and listening but found it difficult to play a role with conviction.

79. Pupils at Key Stage 4 can choose to study drama for the GCSE examination. In 1999, thirteen pupils entered for this examination and all achieved passes at grades A\* to C, with most gaining a grade B or C. This represents good progress during Key Stage 4 as pupils' levels of attainment on entry to the course are not high because of their limited experience at Key Stage 3. This year, twice as many pupils have chosen to study drama in Year 11. One class of lower-attaining pupils in Year 11 was observed practising a presentation based on the *Lord of the Flies*. They were able to implement their own lighting plan and could evaluate their own work but their initial presentation was unsatisfactory as they performed with little conviction or concentration. In the sixth form, students follow the GCE A level course in theatre studies with girls from the nearby girls' grammar school. In 1999, all the students from the boys' school passed the course, with several gaining the highest grades. The school has built a new drama studio since the previous inspection and the subject is growing in popularity at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. However, the place of drama in the curriculum at Key Stage 3 remains uncertain.

80. Teachers often provide good opportunities for pupils to develop their literacy skills in all subjects and standards of literacy are very high. Pupils listen very attentively and speak confidently when answering teachers' questions. In geography, French, German and art, they are not always encouraged to engage in longer discussion but, when this occurs, they are fluent and articulate. In religious education, for example, pupils at Key Stage 4 made impressive, extended presentations to the whole class on topics such as the Hajj in Islam. Pupils are very good at extracting information from textbooks and other sources. Teachers of science, art, history and religious education especially encourage pupils to use original articles and sources for homework and research. Pupils experience little difficulty in understanding the wide range of texts they meet in all subjects. Their writing is generally accurate and neat when they enter the school in Year 8 and, by the end of Year 11, it is also detailed and analytical. Science provides opportunities for pupils to write at length about such matters as the possible origins of the universe in Year 8 and the conservation of fossil fuels in Year 9. In religious education, pupils at Key Stage 4 are able to evaluate different points of view when writing about conflicting attitudes to war. In art, pupils write analytical, critical studies. Overall, pupils' writing in all subjects is thoughtful, mature and extensive.

81. The English department is well led. Teachers work well together and are committed to high standards of achievement. Appropriate emphasis is placed on monitoring to ensure that all the requirements of the National Curriculum are met although there is still insufficient opportunity to study texts about different cultures. Teaching is monitored through classroom observations once a year but the effects of this could be improved by identifying a clear focus for observation. The department is developing procedures to involve pupils more in the assessment of their own work. This would be a useful addition to the department's effective procedures for monitoring pupils' attainment and progress. Since the last inspection, the English department has maintained the high levels of attainment, good progress and good teaching which were reported then.

### **Mathematics**

82. Attainment in mathematics at the end of Key Stage 3 is very high when compared with national averages. In 1999, all pupils reached higher levels than the one expected nationally in the National Curriculum tests and assessments, eighty-five per cent were two levels higher, twenty-three per cent were three levels higher and three per cent demonstrated exceptional performance. Such noteworthy success has been common over recent years. These results compare favourably with those for English in the school and are better than those achieved in science. They also place the school in the top ten per cent of schools of a similar nature and are well above the average for grammar schools.

83. Results in the GCSE examinations at the end of Key Stage 4 also are very high in comparison with the national averages, with between ninety-eight point six per cent and ninety four per cent of pupils achieving A\* to C grades over the last three years. These results are similar to those obtained in the school for English and science. The 1997 and 1998 results are above the average for grammar schools but the 1999 outcomes are below this average. Results achieved in the A level examinations compare less favourably with national averages, being roughly in line with the mean for all schools but below that for grammar schools. The percentage of students achieving grades A or B is below that expected from students with prior attainment such as that of pupils at the end of Key Stages 3 and 4. The department, which has the intention and the capacity to improve the situation, has recognised the problems of underachievement in Years 12 and 13 and is taking measures to address the current state of affairs.

84. By the time they are fourteen years old, most pupils are working at levels that indicate that their potential for success is being fully realised. Nearly all are confident when working with numbers and their mental mathematical skills are well developed to cover wider aspects of the programme of study, such as algebra, data-handling and geometry. Pupils generally use correct terminology when describing aspects of mathematics and often they give extended reasoned answers to questions, indicating a good depth of understanding, such as with the solution of quite complex simultaneous equations. All aspects of the programme of study are well developed and most pupils are confident when using their mathematical knowledge in new and more demanding circumstances. Calculators are used effectively and proficiently and there is not too much inappropriate use for calculations that should be performed mentally. Good investigative techniques are employed in using and applying mathematics, where many

pupils adopt systematic approaches and record accordingly.

85. By the end of Key Stage 4, most pupils are confident with all aspects of mental mathematics, including the rearrangement of complex formulae and trigonometric ratios. A very good range of previous work, covering all attainment targets, is often clearly understood and applied in new situations, such as curve sketching in algebra. Investigative techniques are used to advantage in GCSE coursework, hypotheses are proposed and tested and logical mathematical arguments are made to support findings. In Years 12 and 13, most students cope well with the new and more complex concepts presented in the A level courses and they apply a wide range of algebraic techniques to good effect in such topics as differentiation and integration or in the application of Newton's gravitational laws. However, few take sufficient responsibility for organising their work and they rely too heavily upon teachers for guidance. The highest-attaining students handle such topics as complex differential calculus and they readily recognise the relationships that exist between different aspects of the course. They often challenge teachers to justify and explain concepts more fully to confirm their understanding. Work is not always well organised and complete.

86. Aspects of mathematics are used to good effect in many other areas of the curriculum. For example, the use of mathematics is explicit in the schemes of work for geography, where graphs, statistical tools and grid references are employed. In science, too, such aspects as the solution of chemical equations and the calculation of acceleration are well handled by pupils and students. However, there is no school policy to ensure consistency of approach in teaching or using these various skills outside the mathematics department and this can lead to confusion and misunderstanding in younger pupils if not remedied.

87. A comparison of the test results in Year 9 and other evidence with information about pupils' previous attainment, such as their results in the national tests at the end of Key Stage 2, indicates that all pupils make very good progress at Key Stage 3. In most lessons observed, measurable gains were made in knowledge, skills or understanding. For example, pupils learned to change the subject of a formula by inverse operations and became familiar with the concept of infinite solutions to linear equations in two variables. Most pupils are working well to maintain this progress, both in lessons and over time. Many of them, too, seek further understanding through asking probing questions and challenging their teachers' suggestions.

88. Comparisons between the test and examination results at the ends of Key Stages 3 and 4 indicate that progress at Key Stage 4 is good. This is confirmed by the observation of lessons and inspection of pupils' work. The high level of results in the GCSE examinations reflects the teachers' expectations of most pupils and indicates significant gains in knowledge, understanding and skills over time. In most lessons, previous learning is well consolidated and, by using mathematical 'tools' in new and more complex situations, such as GCSE coursework, investigations or problems involving vectors, for example, pupils begin to appreciate mathematics as a whole rather than as a series of unconnected topics.

89. Progress made in the A level groups in the sixth form is satisfactory overall. Confidence to research, debate and defend opinions is gradually developed but there is room for improvement here for many students. Too many students are content with

the completion of the immediate task and do not seek further understanding. Most noticeable, however, is the progress made by the highest-attaining students who, in response to the most demanding challenges, work successfully and at a fast pace on such aspects as proof by induction or very demanding integration techniques.

90. In most lessons, pupils' attitudes are good. Most of them are attentive to teachers' exposition and eager to respond to questions. They are usually enthusiastic and conscientious, working well alone or collaboratively as required. At Key Stages 3 and 4, many pupils ask questions in order to extend their understanding, not merely to confirm operational procedures in lessons. In many lessons observed, pupils obviously enjoyed their mathematics and the level of excitement when 'discovering' a new fact was, at times, most noticeable and this often led to continued debate at the end of a lesson.

91. Teaching within the department is predominantly good and teachers have very good knowledge of the subject. This is the major contributory factor to the generally very successful outcomes achieved at Key Stages 3 and 4. Within a well-managed team of appropriately qualified and suitably deployed teachers, good planning ensures that requirements of the National Curriculum are satisfied and, in the majority of lessons, suitably high expectations of attainment ensure that most pupils are presented with challenges that encourage rapid progress. An appropriate range of teaching styles and activities is employed and generally good procedures for assessment ensure that pupils' progress is well monitored and support for any apparent underachievement is soon provided. These approaches are not adopted in Years 12 and 13 to make students more aware of the demands of the course, to help them to become more responsible for maintaining their own progress through hard work and to ensure future success in obtaining higher grades in their A level examinations. There is very good provision for pupils with special educational needs.

92. The department is well managed. All members of staff give freely their time to provide extra tuition for pupils entering national competitions, with generally successful outcomes, and for those attempting higher-level examinations. Likewise, support classes are provided for pupils who wish to take advantage of them and a wide range of extra-curricular mathematical activities is made available. All issues highlighted in the last inspection report have been successfully addressed.

## Science

93. In 1999, the results of National Curriculum tests in science at the end of Key Stage 3 were very high in comparison with the national average but broadly in line with the average for similar schools. The results were lower than in 1998, particularly the proportion of pupils achieving the higher levels. Over the last three years, the levels reached by pupils in science have been lower than in English and mathematics.

94. Results in the 1999 GCSE examinations were very high in comparison with the national average for the proportion of pupils gaining A\*-C grades but they were broadly in line with the average for similar schools. About a third of pupils take double-award science but the majority take separate biology, chemistry and physics. The overall proportion of pupils gaining A\* and A grades has increased over the last three years. Results in physics have been consistently good and, in 1999, a particularly high proportion of pupils gained the highest grades. Overall, results in science were similar to those in mathematics but lower than in English.

95. In the sixth form, A level results in chemistry and physics were in line with averages in selective schools in 1998. The proportion of students gaining a pass in physics increased in 1999 but results in chemistry were a little lower. Results in biology were well below averages for selective schools in both 1998 and 1999.

96. In lessons and in the written work seen during the inspection, pupils' attainment towards the end of Key Stage 3 is well above the national expectation. They recognise that there is a pattern in the reactions of alkali metals with water and higher-attaining pupils can write chemical equations to represent these reactions. Attainment in lessons is a little lower than in the National Curriculum tests at the end of the key stage. This is because pupils in Year 9 are still making up some lost ground resulting from their uneven previous experience in science before joining the school. This indicates that the proportion of pupils reaching higher levels in lessons and in the tests is too low because those capable of doing so are not identified and systematically encouraged across the whole science curriculum. At the end of Key Stage 4, pupils' attainment in lessons is very high, reflecting their attainment in the GCSE examinations. They can describe the main features of the human circulatory system and many can give detailed explanations of the structure of the heart.

97. Pupils make good progress in their lessons and across both key stages. For example, they made good progress in understanding flow of electric current in Year 8 when they experimented with cathode ray oscilloscopes to trace the effects of placing different components in an electrical circuit. Pupils with special educational needs make similar progress to others. Pupils at both key stages handle laboratory equipment carefully and safely. They often think critically about the reliability of their experiments, spotting and attempting to explain anomalous results, but their planning is weak, particularly at Key Stage 3. Some good examples of extended writing were seen during the inspection, for example when pupils in Year 9 were suggesting ways of conserving fossil fuels. Pupils have good numerical skills, as demonstrated once more in Year 9, when they interpreted line graphs to show the relationship between numbers of predators and their prey. However, they have few opportunities to develop their skills in information and communications technology because there is insufficient equipment located in the department.

98. In the sixth form, students make good progress and their overall attainment during lessons in Year 13 is well above the expectation for their courses. Attainment is lower in a few biology lessons because there is too much emphasis on taking notes and too little on assimilating the content, explaining the lower attainment in biology in the A level examinations. The biology department is addressing this issue through an innovative Internet web site, which allows students access to factual information, leaving more lesson time to gain a thorough understanding of concepts.

99. With a few exceptions, pupils of all ages behave very well. They respond well to teachers' questions and are eager to demonstrate what they know. They work well in small groups, often sharing ideas and helping each other to overcome difficulties. A small minority of pupils at Key Stage 4 are slow to settle in a few lessons and this wastes time for all the pupils in the group.

100. Teaching is good across both key stages and in the sixth form. It was very good in over a quarter of the lessons seen, good in nearly half and satisfactory in all the rest. The most important feature is the teachers' very good knowledge of their subjects which they use well to give clear explanations. In Year 9, the teacher passed on to pupils his own enthusiasm for the subject by describing the wonder of seeing a perfectly preserved prehistoric animal. Teachers often make very good use of copies of original articles about scientific topics to stimulate interest and to test pupils' comprehension. In the sixth form, chemistry teachers make very effective use of regular assignments that introduce students to a university style of working. Relationships between teachers and their pupils are usually very good, particularly in the sixth form and pupils find their teachers purposeful yet approachable. A few lessons provide pupils with insufficient challenge. For example, in biology, pupils were given too much information rather than being encouraged to find it out for themselves. Marking is inconsistent. Some teachers provide pupils with clear indications of the quality of their work and set targets to help them improve but others acknowledge pupils' work with little more than a tick. Homework is used well, particularly in the sixth form.

101. The three science departments are soundly led but there is a lack of co-ordination of work at Key Stage 3. The wide variation in the experience of pupils entering the school in Year 8 has led to the three departments trying to cover the whole of the National Curriculum for Key Stage 3 in just two years. Although this coverage is provided, pupils' progress is not tracked across the whole science curriculum and some do not reach their full potential. All pupils at Key Stage 4 study science for almost a quarter of their total lesson time but this is too long for those taking double award science rather than the separate subjects. Assessment in the sixth form is very good. Teachers are well qualified and many make good use of their experience outside teaching by relating the content of lessons to pupils' own interests and experiences. They freely give up their time to give pupils extra help when it is needed and run a number of thriving extra-curricular clubs.

102. Management of the three subjects is satisfactory and the accommodation and resources are very good. Since the last inspection, the proportion of pupils gaining A\* and A grades in GCSE examinations has improved. Results in the National Curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 3 are lower, particularly for those pupils who should be

reaching the higher levels, because there has been too little emphasis on the relevant programme of study. In the sixth form, results in the A level examinations are broadly similar to those reported at the last inspection. The quality of teaching has improved, particularly the encouragement given to pupils to question and debate.



## · OTHER SUBJECTS OR COURSES

### · Art

103. In the 1999 GCSE examinations, one hundred per cent of pupils achieved passes at grades A\* to C. These results compare very favourably with the average for selective schools and more favourably still with the national average. The proportion of A\* and A grades was very high. Pupils attained similar results in 1998 and the pattern of high attainment in the GCSE examinations has been maintained since the last inspection. Results in the A level examinations have also been higher than average for selective schools in recent years and again in 1999.

104. At Key Stage 3, pupils' attainment is well above the national expectations for their ages and it is extremely high when compared with the levels expected from boys. In 1999, teachers' assessments of the work in Year 9 showed that all pupils were at the expected level and about forty per cent were exceeding that standard. In painting and drawing, attainment is often excellent. Pupils' brush-work, their use of tone to create three-dimensional effects and their use of colour in drawings are often exceptional for their ages. Pupils also create very imaginative ceramic sculptures, for example of human or animal heads, to a standard well above that expected by Year 9. Many pupils make very good use of their high academic skills to research for projects, producing some very good written and visual explorations.

105. At Key Stage 4, pupils study for the GCSE painting and drawing examination. Almost all work is two-dimensional but it shows very good development of already high levels of skill. Pupils' drawings often show excellent observation and draughtsmanship whilst incorporating interesting elements from their imaginations. Their paintings, often in acrylics, demonstrate remarkable finesse in mark-making and very good use of colour-blending and mixing. The range of attainment at Key Stage 4 reflects the standards indicated by recent examination results. Pupils' critical studies are very good, often deep and wide-ranging and showing explorations of a wide variety of artists' work. They use their many gallery visits extremely effectively to inform their research. These studies show a very interesting balance between written and visual investigations, commensurate with their high academic abilities. Similar characteristics are found in the sixth form, where students enter the painting and drawing examination at A level. Historical studies are often profound and evaluative, supporting a high level of technical and observational competence in two-dimensional work. During the inspection, Year 12 students were also making some high quality ceramic sculptures.

106. Pupils' progress in art is always good and often very good throughout the school. Skills in painting and drawing and in ceramics progress very well at all stages. Pupils' ability to research from observation, from books and from other sources develops well. Their attitudes to the subject make a strong contribution to their progress. In most lessons, they focus very purposefully and work hard. They are very conscientious and diligent in their experimentations, for example in achieving the appropriate brush-strokes or creating a suitable colour for a purpose. This determination is often a constituent factor in the excellence of some of their final pieces. Although many sketchbooks show this process extremely well, with excellent

drawings clearly demonstrating the progress being made, some sketchbooks are poor. The standard of work in these books is much weaker, often well below the standard of the final pieces. They often display standards of drawing which are below the expected level and do not illustrate the progress pupils are making. Pupils' attitudes to the subject and their behaviour are very good.

107. In all but one lesson, the teaching seen was satisfactory or better and, in the majority of lessons, it was good or very good. Both teachers have very good knowledge and understanding of the subject and of the examination requirements and use them to good effect. Painting and drawing skills are taught rigorously, leading to the very good standards described. The teaching of ceramics is also very good and teachers are very effective in imparting the skills needed to undertake critical studies. In the best lessons, a very challenging questioning style is well combined with excellent one-to-one tutorials about work in progress. Teachers are generally very skilful at maintaining an oversight of the whole class while they are working with individuals. However, in a few less successful lessons at Key Stage 4, opportunities are missed to share aspects of this individual coaching which would be useful for the whole class. The two teachers adopt differing approaches to work at Key Stage 3, where the subject is a statutory part of the National Curriculum, and pupils in different classes can have very different learning experiences as a result. The departmental handbook is poor and there are no meaningful common schemes of work.

108. This situation gives rise to inconsistencies in the content of what is taught, the use of homework, the assessment of work and in the use of sketchbooks. However, some practice is very good. The school has resolved some weaknesses identified in the last report through the provision of a new art block although there is still insufficient space for the sixth form. More seriously, however, the department has failed to respond to criticisms related to its management. The continuing lack of proper schemes of work means that coverage of the National Curriculum is still not ensured and the procedures for assessment are still inconsistently followed. The response of the department's management to these key matters has been unsatisfactory.

### **Design and technology**

109. In design and technology, the standard of attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is well above the nationally expected levels. In 1999, teachers' assessments showed that well over ninety per cent of pupils achieved the expected levels and over fifty per cent were working at higher levels. There has been a trend of improvement since the last inspection. Both designing and making are strengths. Pupils are able to apply the design process and work skilfully, using a variety of tools and machines, and they have a wide knowledge of materials. In food technology, pupils can quickly recall the nutritional value of different ingredients when designing a meal for teenagers. In electronics, they can discuss how to control the rate at which lights flash on a notepad by altering the size of the components. They can also use formal techniques, as they did in Year 8, where isometric drawing was used to show the sequence in which to make a coat hook.

110. At the end of Key Stage 4, the proportion of pupils who gain passes at A\* to C grades in the GCSE examinations is well above the national average for all schools.

This is the case for all four specialisms - food technology, work with resistant materials, graphic products and electronics and systems. There is also a clear trend of improvement since the last inspection in all four areas. These results are borne out by observation of lessons. There is some outstanding work in all four areas, such as an electronic project using some advanced programmable circuits that has gained recognition in the national education electronics press. In food technology, pupils apply their knowledge of ingredients to design products that meet dietary needs, showing a mature writing style in their folders. In resistant materials, some pupils are able to design products that show flair, such as a metal storage unit for compact discs, in contemporary styling and with lighting features. In graphics, pupils work to a high standard. Their work on a project to design packaging for soft fruit showed how carefully they reflect on the best choice of colour.

111. Attainment in the sixth form matches the national averages for A level examination results. The percentage of students gaining grades A\* to B and the average points score have been steady over the last three years although group sizes have been small. Current students again show standards comparable with national averages. They design and make products using sound research and analysis for projects, such as making a water pump for a developing country.

112. Progress across Key Stages 3 and 4 is very good, both in lessons and over time. Pupils arrive in Year 8 and gain skills working in a wide range of materials. Departmental planning ensures that there are high levels of graphic presentation in all areas of work. Focused units of work, such as an early induction course, and an evaluation unit in Year 9, help progress. The small number of pupils with special educational needs are helped by their teachers and make progress at the same rate as their peers. Progress in the sixth form is good. Students use a wide variety of sources for research. Their attitudes are good. They work safely in the workshops and the food room, showing respect for equipment and materials and they readily collaborate and help one other. For example, in an electronics lesson they readily assisted each other to solder small components and, in a lesson on food technology, they willingly gave each other advice about the best processes to use.

113. Teaching is good and sometimes very good. Teachers are able to provide very good cover of the Key Stage 3 programme, as they can all teach graphics and food technology, and they have a good knowledge and understanding of their specialist subjects. Teachers' planning and their expectations of pupils are particularly good at Key Stage 3. At Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form, the teachers have a very good command of the subject. They often act as facilitators, providing judicious advice and giving clear expositions at the beginning of lessons. Their management of time is good and lessons are generally well paced. Planning is very good and teachers keep their pupils on target. They work well together as a team, particularly at Key Stage 3, and they monitor progress well and provide good feedback to pupils.

114. In most respects, the curriculum is good and the requirements of the National Curriculum are well covered. However, there are no facilities for computer-assisted design and manufacture which particularly affects work in the sixth form. The school is aware of this shortcoming and plans to purchase the necessary equipment as soon as funds are available. Facilities for work in graphics are just adequate. The department is very well managed, documentation is good and the commitment to improvement has

contributed to the rise in standards of attainment since the last inspection. The appointment of a technician has made a significant impact on the organisation of resources and equipment, which is now very good.

### **Geography**

115. Most pupils attain levels that are significantly above national expectations by the ends of Key Stages 3 and 4. In 1999, teachers' assessments showed that all pupils had attained the expected level at the end of Key Stage 3 and over ninety per cent of them were working at higher levels. Recent results in the GCSE examinations have produced percentages of A\* to C grades that are substantially above the national averages. In 1999, ninety-six per cent of pupils achieved these grades and forty-nine per cent achieved A\* or A grades. Geography is popular and pupils usually perform close to the average in it when compared with their other subjects at the school. Results in the A level examinations have been very high compared with the national averages for similar schools. In 1999, all students passed the examination and fifty-four per cent obtained A\* to B grades. Examination results have shown a noticeable improvement since the previous inspection.

116. By the end of Key Stage 3, pupils have a very good grounding in geographical skills and vocabulary. They can use and interpret maps accurately and plot statistical data and they have a good understanding of global problems. They have gained confidence and competence in investigative work since the last inspection. By the end of Key Stage 4, pupils can explain a range of physical and human processes and apply a range of geographical skills ably to fieldwork and to individual projects, the best of which are of outstanding quality. In the sixth form, students organise themselves well and develop a very good grasp of geographical concepts. Standards of work are high and coverage of the subject is extensive but the general presentation of work in exercise books needs improvement as there is much rushed and incomplete work. Pupils gain useful knowledge and understanding of social and cultural issues through studies of Bangladesh, Egypt and Japan.

117. Most pupils make good progress by the end of Key Stage 3, owing to the high level of challenge, good pace and overall good teaching. These factors are strongly supported by the positive attitude shown by pupils and their ability to assimilate knowledge quickly. Progress is also good at Key Stage 4, reflecting the richness and breadth of the teaching provided, the high levels of ability and the very positive attitudes of the pupils who are intent on performing well as their GCSE examinations approach. However, a vociferous minority of pupils in Year 11 display lost motivation, have negative attitudes and produce little classwork, so limiting their own progress and that made by their classmates. Progress in the sixth form is impressive, with most students showing a high degree of enterprise and the ability to synthesise and analyse in depth. The highest attainers are well catered for and make very good progress at all key stages owing to improvements in the course since the previous inspection. These have included more individual research and open-ended assignments.

118. Pupils' attitudes to learning are generally positive. Most are attentive in class and work conscientiously, often with genuine interest and fulfilment. Behaviour is usually good and it is exemplary in the sixth form. With few exceptions, pupils develop

constructive relationships with their teachers and a real rapport is evident in the sixth form. They are capable and trustworthy workers when undertaking group investigations and they relate well to each other. However, although individual pupils often provide very good answers in class, there is rarely a response from the whole class. Little inter-active teaching or learning was seen during the inspection but one lesson in Year 12 was outstanding. Students showed well-developed skills in assessment and decision-making when considering ways of solving the coastal management problems at Hurst Spit. Those acting as representatives of the various interest groups produced impressive analyses of the situation and the level of their presentation and discussion was excellent.

119. Teaching is good overall at Key Stages 3 and 4 and very good teaching is a feature of the sixth form. Teachers are committed to high attainment and they are very supportive of their pupils. The best teaching has clear aims shared with pupils, and very carefully detailed planning. Lessons are effectively presented in a structured, interesting, lively and challenging way. They use visual aids skilfully and employ methods which meet the needs of pupils. However, they do not always make the best use of active question and answer sessions or use visual stimuli to consolidate and reinforce the main learning points. Some teachers experience difficulties in managing classes in Year 11, particularly those with restless and unsettling pupils, but practice in the sixth form is excellent.

120. Curricular planning for geography is very good throughout the school and it provides very good breadth, balance and continuity. Very effective fieldwork is undertaken at all key stages but there are no fieldwork studies of landform or of an environment outside the local area studied at Key Stage 3. Since the last inspection, considerable progress has been made in linking information and communications technology to curricular themes but there is no coherent programme of skills to ensure progression across all key stages. The marking of pupils' work has improved since the last inspection but it is still not consistently developmental and the good practice that does occur is not effectively disseminated across the department. Pupils' performance is very carefully assessed but they are little involved in the evaluation of their work or in personal target-setting, except in the sixth form, where there is very good practice.

121. The department is very well led and competently managed and there is a good team spirit. Policies and practices are very well documented and there is some imaginative curriculum development linked to assessment. However, procedures for monitoring and evaluating teaching and learning and the work of the department are not systematically followed and the department's development plan is not fully costed. Resources are generally good but access to computers and printers is limited and, consequently, information and communications technology is not always adequately integrated into the work in geography. The four new specialist teaching bases and the sixth form seminar room and resource base have very significantly improved the accommodation, which is of very good quality overall.

## • **History**

122. The proportion of A\* to C grades which pupils obtained in the 1999 GCSE examinations was well above the national average and in line with the results of other

selective schools. The proportion of A\* and A grades is very high and it is above the average for similar schools. The level of attainment in history is in line with that in other subjects in the school. The results of the 1999 A level examinations were also well above the national average and the proportion of A and B grades was above that in similar schools. All students entered for the examinations gained at least a pass in both of the last two years.

123. Observation of lessons and the teachers' assessments indicate that attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is well above the expected level. In 1999, teachers' assessments showed that all pupils had reached the expected levels by the end of the key stage and over ninety per cent were working at higher levels. Pupils build up very solid knowledge and understanding. All their historical skills are well developed and they are confident in handling a wide range of sources and assessing their relevance and reliability. Pupils write extensively on historical themes, giving detailed explanations to support often sophisticated arguments. Historical terms are used widely and accurately. Good research skills are fostered through the selective use of reference books, the Internet and video recordings.

124. Knowledge and understanding increase substantially through Key Stage 4 and, by the end of Year 11, attainment in lessons is well above average. Pupils question why events happened as they did. For example, they consider possible reasons for the Japanese defeat in World War II and decide which were the most important factors. Building on their knowledge and understanding of a range of evidence, they are able to compare the progress of the war in the Pacific with that of the war in Europe. Higher-attaining pupils begin to develop an overview of the twentieth century and understand possible connections and comparisons. Their written work continues to be very good in its detail, the development of ideas and the use of specialist vocabulary.

125. In the sixth form, attainment is well above expected levels. Students read, note and understand a considerable body of texts, articles and sources and almost all absorb it thoroughly. Higher-attaining students can evaluate evidence and reach conclusions in their essays while maintaining the necessary balance of judgement. However, about half find it difficult to reach this standard consistently.

126. Progress by the end of Key Stage 3 is very good. Pupils can research topics confidently, choose what is relevant, and provide effective explanations, both orally and in writing. Similar progress continues at Key Stage 4. Pupils have the depth of knowledge to consider various interpretations and argue them rationally. Several factors contribute to this progress across both key stages. In Year 8, teachers quickly assess the capability of the pupils and set an appropriate pace. Pupils' personal motivation is kept high by the quality of the challenge provided by their teachers. In the sixth form, progress is good and students benefit from the study skills element which develops note-taking, essay-writing and independent reading, enabling them better to understand complex materials and ideas. Pupils with special educational needs progress very well throughout the school.

127. In almost all lessons, pupils are engaged and participate very fully. At Key Stage 3, they appreciate the opportunities to work together, to organise their own research and thus develop independent learning skills. Similarly, at Key Stage 4, pupils debate topics, such as the costs and benefits of Stalin's rule, with gusto and

knowledge. Sixth form students are articulate and confident and most have developed good habits of study. The atmosphere in the department is generally purposeful but enlivened by humour and the mutual respect between pupils and teachers is evident.

128. The quality of teaching was good in most lessons seen and it was always satisfactory or better. In about one third of lessons, teaching was very good or excellent. Teachers' knowledge of history is generally very good and they use it effectively. For example, their questions challenge pupils to think more deeply by stimulating their imaginations. Expectations of attainment are usually very high but realistic. At Key Stages 3 and 4, lessons are conducted at a good pace and activities are varied appropriately. They are very well planned, well suited to pupils' needs and abilities and effectively focused on developing the higher-level skills. In lessons where research is undertaken, pupils make excellent use of resources in their classroom, the library and the computer room. Teachers know all their pupils well and this enables them to manage their classes very well and to ensure that those with special educational needs are well supported. The most effective lessons are those which are meticulously planned. Typically, they begin with detailed and challenging objectives which are carefully matched to activities and resources.

129. The schemes of work, particularly at Key Stage 3, ensure very good coverage of the National Curriculum and the syllabi for external examinations. They are well suited to pupils' abilities, offering a deeper exploration of some topics than is customary. The procedures for assessment are excellent. At Key Stage 3, National Curriculum levels are effectively used to track progress and, at Key Stage 4, pupils judge and set their own targets. Teachers link these targets to assessments and predictions made by the school so that progress is constantly monitored. Homework is very well used. The head of department provides strong leadership. He is committed to raising standards and promotes good teamwork. The ability of the teachers to assemble and write suitable materials is fully exploited and the department is aware of the need to develop information and communications technology still further. Accommodation is now very good. Since the last inspection, standards at the end of both key stages and at A level have improved. The proportion of very good teaching has increased and the revision of other practices, such as schemes of work, has been considered and almost all carried out.

#### · **Information and communications technology**

130. In 1999, teachers' assessments show that the proportion of pupils reaching the expected level at the end of Key Stage 3 is above the national average but slightly below the average for selective schools. Inspection evidence bears out these results. Pupils show high level skills in adding formulae and formats which they can use to model tasks. When using Logo programming language, they can rapidly devise efficient procedures and include procedural variables to alter the angles and sizes of shapes on the screen. One group using word-processing, desk-top publishing and presentation software to design documents for a school prospectus depended too much on pre-designed clipart and made few attempts to integrate work from other packages. Nevertheless, many pupils can design documents that show a clear house-style based on well-designed formats. Pupils use their skills in information and communications technology to design circuits in design and technology, using

appropriate software and they show a good understanding of how to control devices. Shortcomings at Key Stage 3 include limited knowledge of how to use data-logging packages to sense, analyse and record data. Pupils cannot readily discuss the social and ethical problems of using this technology in society or reflect on their use of computers in the community outside school.

131. The standard of attainment at the end of Key Stage 4, based on the limited evidence available in the school, is in line with national averages for all schools but below the average for selective schools. No short or long GCSE courses are taught at Key Stage 4, so the development of pupils' knowledge and understanding depends on work done in other subjects, and this varies, depending on individuals' timetables. Pupils gain some knowledge of advanced features through subjects such as electronics and graphics, where they successfully design and draw products, using computer-aided software. In music, they develop a good knowledge of software to sequence and script their work. In modern foreign languages, pupils benefit from using material from satellite communications and they search the Internet in their chosen language. In geography and mathematics, pupils understand how to model compound interest and drainage patterns. Shortcomings again include the use of data logging in science and geography. Pupils use information and communications technology to present their work but this is often done on computers at home. This work does not show an adequate knowledge of how to integrate a wide range of sources or show much discrimination in the choice of style.

132. The standard of attainment in A level computing is in line with national averages in terms of both the percentage of students gaining A or B grades and their overall average points score. Attainment has improved over the last few years. There is some outstanding work, with students showing a high ability to programme in a Visual Basic computer language. Structure diagrams are well designed and 'pseudo-codes' are efficiently written with clear documentation. Present students show a high standard of understanding of the needs of users and respond well to problems identified in discussion with their clients, who include local companies, their friends and families and the school itself. However, they are less rigorous in appraising their work and in their relationships with clients.

133. Progress across Key Stage 3 is good, with specialist teaching being provided in Years 8 and 9. The comparatively narrow coverage of the National Curriculum and lack of adequate timetabling prevent progress from being better. In a lesson on spreadsheets, the teacher conducted a sharply focused review of skills and then pupils went on to key in formulae and replicate working through a sequence of graded tasks. Progress across Key Stage 4 is satisfactory but it varies considerably from group to group. Pupils with special educational needs make progress at the same rate as their peers. The best progress is where teachers' plans allow pupils to use software with increasing rigour. Progress in the sixth form is good, owing to good planning, the setting of high-level tasks and good tracking of individuals' attainments.

134. Pupils' attitudes at all three key stages are good. They enjoy working with computers and they are enthusiastic users in lessons and at lunchtimes. The A level computing course is an increasingly popular option, as is the short general studies programming course. Many pupils express disappointment that recently installed modern computers adjacent to the library are not accessible outside lesson times.



Other pupils would prefer more teaching at Key Stage 4 to enable them to appreciate newer features, such as the Internet, and learn how to integrate work from a variety of packages. Although a few pupils assist with running computer clubs and developing the school's web-site, this is not widespread. The school has provided all pupils with their own e-mail address and controlled access to the Internet. Although this access has been occasionally abused, staff are concerned that everyone should make responsible use of the facility.

135. No specialist teaching was observed at Key Stage 4 but the standard of teaching is good at Key Stage 3 and in the sixth form. Teachers are highly competent with the theoretical aspects of the subject and many are aware of the skills involved in teaching it effectively although the use of small screens to demonstrate to large classes was a shortcoming in two lessons. Teachers manage pupils well and set high expectations, especially in the sixth form. Their planning and organisation are good but day-to-day assessment at Key Stage 3 is unsatisfactory, although it is very good in the sixth form. They offer sensitive and sensible advice, enabling students to advance their project work but they seldom set homework.

136. The school fails to meet the statutory requirement to provide all pupils with sufficient coverage of the National Curriculum at Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4. Pupils follow a limited range of the programmes of study in the National Curriculum. At Key Stage 3, there is a shortage of time to cover the whole programme of study and, at Key Stage 4, the recent audit of cross-curricular provision reveals that not all pupils cover all the requisite elements of the programme of study. Curricular provision in the sixth form is good. The school is still not providing reports on attainment and progress in this subject for pupils at Key Stages 3 and 4 and arrangements for assessment are poor although this was an issue raised in the last inspection.

137. The new hardware provision and extension of the network now provide adequate resourcing for the school's present curriculum provision but there is little data-logging equipment for use in science or geography. The older network used for design and technology is in need of upgrading so that it is compatible with the whole school network. Some accommodation is unsuitable and two rooms are poorly designed. Shortcomings in the strategic management of the subject include the breach of statutory orders, the lack of reporting and inadequate strategic support and monitoring at both key stages. Despite these criticisms, management at departmental level is satisfactory overall. There have been important improvements since the last inspection, including the appointment of a technician, the allocation of timetabled lessons to the subject at Key Stage 3 and a major investment in new equipment.

## • **Modern foreign languages**

138. At all key stages, attainment is always well above national averages and usually considerably above them. In 1999, teachers' assessments showed that all pupils had reached the nationally expected level at the end of Key Stage 3 and that over sixty per cent were working at higher levels. The results in the GCSE examinations have been well above the national figures for the past four years, with the percentage pass rates being consistently in the high nineties for French and improving to ninety-five per cent in 1999 in German. At A level, the pass rate for French has varied between eighty-five per cent in 1998 and ninety-four per cent in 1996, with a slight improvement in 1999 over the previous year's results. In German, all the students sitting the examination over the past four years have passed. In both subjects, the majority of passes in GCSE and A level examinations have been at grades A and B and this trend is improving.

139. Pupils of all ages listen verywell. The teachers' consistent use of the foreign language and the frequent use of taped material ensure that pupils develop an early ability to understand the spoken word at or near the speed of normal speech. Speaking skills are good and, in the sixth form, students' ability to hold discussions in the foreign language is often outstanding. Standards of reading are satisfactory and, although books are seldom used for independent reading, authentic contemporary texts are competently handled. Writing is very well developed from Key Stage 3. Pupils write at increasing length and with growing accuracy on a wide range of topics and in a variety of styles. The best writing is of a very high quality, with pupils able to express their thoughts and ideas clearly and cogently. They have an extensive vocabulary and very good knowledge of grammar and of the way language is constructed.

140. At both key stages and in the sixth form, progress is generally good. At Key Stage 3, it is often very good, at Key Stage 4, it is mostly satisfactory and, in the sixth form, it is often excellent. Similar features prevail across the school. The assimilation of new language and ideas is satisfactory and the consequent application of this learning is confident and generally very competent. With some pupils at Key Stage 4, such progress occurs slowly. At Key Stage 3 and in the sixth form, pupils' behaviour and attitudes are always good and often very good or excellent. At Key Stage 4, pupils' response is always satisfactory and nearly always good. At Key Stage 3, pupils are very keen and interested in the subject and willingly participate in lessons. They greatly enjoy using the foreign language, accepting it as normal. They often take much pride with their written work. At Key Stage 4, although they may volunteer less, most pupils display the same positive attitudes. They want to do well and readily engage in real communication in French or German. However, there are a few others who are inattentive, talkative and fidgety. In the sixth form, while some students are occasionally passive, the great majority demonstrate considerable maturity and self-motivation. These qualities, and the students' well-focused application to their work, often combine to create an atmosphere of intellectual vibrancy.

141. The teaching of modern foreign languages is consistently good. At Key Stage 3 and in the sixth form, it is usually good and occasionally very good or excellent. At Key Stage 4, teaching is generally good and sometimes very good. Teachers' basic

techniques are good and their knowledge of the subject is first rate. At Key Stages 3 and 4, teachers usually make good use of the foreign language, speaking it for almost the whole time. Support work on the board or with the overhead projector is clear, the pace of lessons is appropriate and lessons are carefully planned. When teachers place pupils in pairs, they work very effectively and, in the best lessons, they not only practice previously learned material but also use the dialogue with their partners as an integral part of the learning process itself. Some teachers use English when it is not necessary and, occasionally, unacceptable behaviour is tolerated or teaching loses pace and risks becoming dull. In the sixth form, teachers give full flow to their teaching skills, challenging students with their appropriately high expectations. At its best, teaching at this level provides the stimulus for students to develop their linguistic skills to the full.

142. The department is ably led by an experienced head of department. Planning for the curriculum is good at both key stages and in the sixth form, as are the arrangements for assessment. The thorough, supportive marking of pupils' work has a positive effect on standards. Pupils' cultural development is enriched by the exchanges and work experience arranged in France and Germany. The frequent double periods of seventy-five minutes are too long for some pupils at Key Stages 3 and 4. A considerable amount of teaching takes place in non-specialist rooms which do not provide the visual support and the cultural ambience which are important for effective teaching and learning in modern foreign languages. There has been clear improvement on all the points raised in the previous inspection. None of the teaching is undemanding, the results of the GCSE examinations have improved and pupils use the foreign language frequently in class.

#### • **Music**

143. In 1998, the two candidates entered obtained passes in A level music. This was too few for meaningful comparison with national figures. In 1999, half of the candidates entered obtained passes at grades A or B and all passed with grades up to E. No national statistics are yet available for comparison. However, the 1999 results are markedly better than those of the previous year. One student obtained a pass at A/S level in 1999. All candidates obtained passes with grades in the range of A\* to C in the GCSE examinations in 1998, which was well above the national average for all maintained selective secondary schools. The 1999 performances were not as good, with only three-quarters of candidates attaining A\* to C grades. However, all candidates passed within the range A\* to G. No national figures are yet available for comparison.

144. In 1999, teachers' assessments at the end of Key Stage 3 show a very high proportion of pupils attaining at or beyond the nationally expected level and some ten per cent demonstrating exceptional performance. Attainment at the end of the key stage is above average. In lessons, Year 9 pupils know and understand repetition, variation, transposition, and inversion and can use these ideas to develop good motifs in the melodies they compose. They have a good understanding of staff notation and can play from it on keyboards. Pupils respond to different styles of music and use musical vocabulary appropriately.

145. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 is well above the nationally expected level. In lessons, Year 11 students devise high-quality compositions, using a good range of techniques, and make good use of computers to develop ideas. They have very good playing competencies which they demonstrate individually and in ensembles.

They are familiar with a broad range of styles and use appropriate musical vocabulary in discussing their work and that of others. Attainment in the sixth form is well above the expected level. Students show advanced capability in performance and they devise sophisticated compositions of considerable length and variety in up to eight parts. They show well-developed aural awareness and can sight-read some difficult works in three parts, such as the 'Agnus Dei' section of Byrd's three-part mass.

146. Attainment in the last inspection was described as 'nearly always good'. Since then, despite a dip in the percentage of pupils achieving grades A\* to C in the 1999 GCSE examinations, high standards have been maintained and attainment overall has improved. Just over a fifth of all pupils receive additional lessons in singing and on a wide range of instruments, including all the common orchestral instruments, particularly percussion, and the piano and guitar. Many attain high standards in external examinations, including those run by the Associated Board. A third of students gain further good musical experiences in the numerous extra-curricular groups run by the staff.

147. The progress of all pupils, including those with special educational needs, is good at Key Stage 3 and very good at Key Stage 4. For example, pupils in Year 8 make good progress developing melodies with crotchet and quaver rhythms. Pupils in Year 10 made very good gains in their knowledge of Renaissance music and ensemble playing through rehearsing and performing Susato's 'La Maurisque' as a classroom ensemble. Progress in the sixth form is also very good. Students' sense of pitch and time is well developed by writing from the dictation of choral works, such as the 'Sanctus' from a mass by Byrd. There is little difference between the progress made by different groups of pupils and those with special educational needs make good progress. This generally very good level of progress has been maintained since the last inspection.

148. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good in all age groups and music provides them with good opportunities for personal development. Their interest is evident in the good support they show for extra-curricular musical activities and for instrumental lessons and in the number of enrolments for examination courses. In lessons, they sustain concentration exceptionally well and show good capacity for individual study. Students behave well and are invariably courteous.

149. The quality of teaching is good at Key Stage 3 and very good at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. Teaching was also good in the instrumental lessons observed. Teachers' knowledge and understanding of the subject and their musical skills are very good. Their planning is very good but the organisation of lessons is hampered by the layout of the main music room which is not suitable for keyboard work with classes. There is no suitable furniture on which to place the keyboards and there is a hazardous tangle of electrical leads caused by the limited number of power points. Valuable time is lost setting up the equipment in these difficult conditions. It is only because of the very good behaviour mentioned above that accidents seldom occur. In other respects, resources, such as computers, are very well used. Teachers make very good use of

the time available, they have very high expectations and they manage pupils well. The recently appointed head of music gives clear leadership to the work of the department and the documentation and curriculum planning are good. However, the limited time available for music at Key Stage 3 imposes severe limitations on what can be achieved.

The extensive programme of instrumental tuition is well organised and makes a significant contribution to raising standards by providing pupils with opportunities for performance and composition at higher levels. Staff show a strong sense of commitment which is demonstrated by the busy extra-curricular programme and the public performances which the programme supports.

#### · **Physical education**

150. At the moment, no pupils are entered for external examinations in physical education. However, next year, students will be able to study for the A level examination in sports science. Attainment towards the end of Key Stage 3 is above nationally expected levels. Pupils plan work and judge performance effectively. Opportunities are provided for independent learning in most lessons. Most pupils understand the principles of attack and defence and use well-developed skills when playing games. They take pride in their performance and show good tactical and spatial awareness. Higher-attaining pupils in a Year 9 basketball lesson showed good technique in outmanoeuvring opponents by using a variety of passes, some of which they successfully disguised. They demonstrated good dribbling skills and they were successful with a high percentage of shots. Well-planned and knowledgeable specialist teaching contributes significantly to good standards of attainment. Lower-attaining pupils often do better than expected because teaching methods are adapted to meet their needs. They perform basic skills satisfactorily, have a useful understanding of rules and can judge performance. Their main weakness is in maintaining their skill levels when under pressure in the course of a game.

151. Attainment towards the end of Key Stage 4 is above national expectations. Pupils have a good understanding of what constitutes a healthy lifestyle and their learning is reinforced by the use of the school's superbly equipped fitness suite. Most pupils can effectively plan and execute tactics to beat an opponent. Their willingness to make critical comments on their own performance and to make appropriate adjustments ensures improvement. Lower-attaining pupils have problems in developing basic skills and tactics into more complex ones when actually involved in a game. Higher-attaining pupils have a detailed knowledge of the physiological benefits of purposeful exercise. They can organise team tactics and show excellent levels of individual skills. Attainment in the sixth form is above the nationally expected level. Students display very good individual and team skills in inter-school matches. They have a thorough understanding of tactics and rules. Decision-making under pressure does not always result in the correct choice of option but, overall, they use their playing and tactical skills successfully. They can plan individual fitness schedules specifically for their own sporting requirements.

152. Pupils make good progress across the attainment range at both key stages and in the sixth form. As pupils move through the school, they refine techniques and improve their understanding of tactics, rules and safety. Their knowledge of issues relating to health and fitness increases, aided by a well-planned programme and

excellent facilities. They develop their ability to plan and judge performance through the many opportunities that exist for independent learning. Their improvement is considerably aided by well-planned progressions and challenging teaching. For example, in a Year 8 basketball lesson, the teacher's target-setting for the development of accuracy and speed in passing resulted in improvement across all attainment levels.

Lower-attaining pupils often make progress beyond expectations in individual skills and fitness work but they make less progress in applying their skills during games. Higher-attaining pupils develop good tactical awareness, particularly of how to use space to exploit their opponents' strengths and weaknesses. Pupils' attitudes to learning were good in all lessons observed and a high proportion want to improve. They listen well, confidently attempt new skills and willingly pass judgements on performance. They co-operate well and maintain very good relationships with teachers.

153. The quality of teaching at Key Stage 3 is good. At Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form, teaching is very good. Teachers have very secure knowledge of their subject. Their management and control of pupils are very good and their expectations are very high with regard to levels of performance and behaviour, including attention to safety and to wearing the correct kit. Lessons are well planned and most provide opportunities for independent learning. However, in a few, teaching is less effective because lessons are too heavily directed and insufficient opportunities are given for pupils to evaluate and plan performance. In a Year 10 volleyball lesson, pupils of all attainment levels made good progress owing to well-planned teaching. The warm-ups were led by the pupils. Higher-attaining pupils were set more challenging targets and lower-attaining pupils benefited from using a lower net and modified rules. Extension work is often provided for the higher attainers. However, non-participants in lessons are not adequately involved in oral or written evaluative work.

154. Statutory requirements for planning the National Curriculum are met. A broad and balanced programme is offered at both key stages and physical education is compulsory in the sixth form. Arrangements for assessment are good. The subject is effectively led and managed. A dedicated team of well-qualified specialists provides excellent support and other teachers make a significant contribution in games. Short-term planning is very good but teachers' medium and longer-term plans lack sufficient detail. The work of the department is effectively underpinned by an appropriate range of policies, including one for health and safety. The quality of pupils' learning is enriched by the excellent sports fields and good indoor facilities. The facilities for cricket and tennis are outstanding. A very high percentage of all pupils participate in a wide range of extra-curricular sport provided by the teachers of physical education with the help of an exceptionally high number of other staff. Teams and individuals from the school compete successfully at area, county and, occasionally, national levels. In these ways, the subject makes a considerable contribution to pupils' social and moral development.

155. Since the last inspection, opportunities for independent learning have considerably improved. Teaching styles are now more varied and the individual needs of pupils are better catered for.

· **Religious education**

156. All pupils follow a GCSE-based course at Key Stage 4 and, in recent years, about two-thirds of the year group have chosen to enter for the GCSE examination. Between 1996 and 1998, the percentage of candidates obtaining A\* to C grades ranged from eighty per cent to eighty-six per cent, which was well above national averages and broadly in line with results at similar schools. In 1999, the results improved with almost all candidates gaining A\* to C grades and nearly twenty per cent achieving an A\* grade. In the sixth form, the number of students taking A level has varied but the group has tended to be small. The percentage of candidates obtaining A or B grades has usually been above national averages and all students have obtained a pass grade in the subject.

157. Pupils' attainment towards the end of Key Stage 3 is well above the level set out in the locally agreed syllabus. Pupils are good at thinking through and discussing questions of meaning and value. For example, Year 8 pupils produced thoughtful and mature written work based on Thomas Aquinas' arguments for the existence of God. Pupils have a good knowledge of religious traditions and can use technical vocabulary correctly. They are fluent and articulate when describing a situation or explaining a point of view. Written work is accurate and well presented.

158. Pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 is well above both the national average for pupils following GCSE courses and the expectations in the locally agreed syllabus. Pupils have a thoughtful appreciation of moral and social issues and a good understanding of related religious perspectives in Christianity and Islam. They produce relevant evidence and persuasive oral and written arguments to support and evaluate different points of view. In the sixth form, the attainment of students in the A level examination is above the national average. They are effectively mastering the content of the course and are successfully developing their thinking on ethical and theological issues. All sixth-form students take a course in religious studies within the school's general studies programme.

159. Pupils make good progress at Key Stage 3. Their understanding of religious concepts and traditions increases and their skills in explaining and evaluating religious and moral issues develop and improve. Most pupils make good progress at Key Stage 4. Their analytical and research skills improve over the two years as well as their understanding of ethical issues and related religious perspectives. Students also make good progress at A level. Attitudes to religious education in the school are good. Pupils are generally well motivated and particularly enjoy work based on discussions. They collaborate well when working in pairs or in groups and relationships in the classroom are positive and constructive. Behaviour in lessons is always good.

160. The overall quality of teaching is good. It is never less than satisfactory and sometimes very good. Teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve, especially in thinking through religious concepts and values. They use their knowledge of the subject well to explain new work and to respond to pupils' questions and ideas. Teachers deploy a wide range of methods and resources to good effect during lessons. For example, in a Year 11 lesson, a brief extract from a video-recording presented a variety of attitudes to war, extending understanding and stimulating discussion very effectively. Planning is usually thorough and detailed although lessons sometimes lack overall direction because objectives have not been clearly enough identified and explained to pupils.

161. The new head of department is providing effective leadership. For example, the scheme of work has already been thoroughly reviewed to ensure that it fully implements the new locally agreed syllabus. Since the last inspection, the time allocation at Key Stage 3 has been increased and religious education is now provided for all students in the sixth form. The quality of teaching has also improved. The tasks given to pupils are more varied and good opportunities are created for oral work although these developments are not consistently implemented across the department.



· **PART C: INSPECTION DATA**

· **SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE**

162. Thirteen inspectors spent a total of forty-nine days inspecting homework of the school. They made observations of 197 lessons or parts of lessons over a total of 139.75 hours. They scrutinised a complete sample of the work of about fifty pupils, much of it going back over four terms, and spoke to many more about their work, their views of the school and the education it provided. Discussions were held with members of the teaching staff, members of the non-teaching staff and governors. All school policies, registers and teachers' plans and records were examined, as were governing body minutes and reports to parents. A meeting attended by seventy-five parents was held to receive their views about the work of the school and 578 families returned questionnaires on the same subject.

• **DATA AND INDICATORS**

• **Pupil data**

	Number of pupils on roll (full-time equivalent)	Number of pupils with statements of SEN	Number of pupils on school's register of SEN	Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals
Y8 – Y13	867	1	43	17

• **Teachers and classes**

• **Qualified teachers (Y8 – Y13)**

Total number of qualified teachers (full-time equivalent):	52.1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher:	16.6

• **Education support staff (Y8 – Y13)**

Total number of education support staff:	7
Total aggregate hours worked each week:	229

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes:	75.9
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Average teaching group size:	KS3	26
	KS4	23

• **Financial data**

Financial year:	1998/99
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	£
Total Income	2,330,097.00
Total Expenditure	2,338,318.00
Expenditure per pupil	2,715.82
Balance brought forward from previous year	204,066.00
Balance carried forward to next year	195,845.00

## PARENTAL SURVEY

Number of questionnaires sent out:	800
Number of questionnaires returned:	578

Responses (percentage of answers in each category):

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I feel the school encourages parents to play an active part in the life of the school	22	64	10	4	0
I would find it easy to approach the school with questions or problems to do with my child(ren)	34	58	6	2	0
The school handles complaints from parents well	17	46	34	2	1
The school gives me a clear understanding of what is taught	26	56	13	5	0
The school keeps me well informed about my child(ren)'s progress	39	50	11	0	0
The school enables my child(ren) to achieve a good standard of work	58	38	3	1	0
The school encourages children to get involved in more than just their daily lessons	38	49	11	2	0
I am satisfied with the work that my child(ren) is/are expected to do at home	33	49	6	2	0
The school's values and attitudes have a positive effect on my child(ren)	43	46	9	2	0
The school achieves high standards of good behaviour	43	48	8	1	0
My child(ren) like(s) school	40	48	8	3	1