

INSPECTION REPORT

LOOE COMMUNITY SCHOOL

Sunrising, East Looe

LEA area: Cornwall

Unique reference number: 112062

Headteacher: Mrs Helga Turner

Reporting inspector: Mr D P Cosway
2734

Dates of inspection: 14 - 17 May 2001

Inspection number: 187608

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11 to 16 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Sunrising East Looe Cornwall
Postcode:	PL13 1NQ
Telephone number:	01503 262625
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Appropriate authority:	The local education authority
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs Kathryn Cobb
Date of previous inspection:	18 March 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
2734	Paul Cosway	Registered inspector		<p>What sort of school is it?</p> <p>How high are standards?</p> <p>a) the school's results and achievements.</p> <p>How well are pupils taught?</p> <p>How well is the school led and managed?</p> <p>What should the school do to improve further?</p>
9769	Margaret Morrissey	Lay inspector		<p>How high are standards?</p> <p>b) Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development.</p> <p>How well does the school care for its pupils?</p> <p>How well does the school work in partnership with parents?</p>
1709	Sandra Tweddell	Team inspector	English Key Stage 4	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
30911	John Barton	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	
22531	David Burbidge	Team inspector	Mathematics	
10391	Val du Plergny	Team inspector	Music	
8185	Peter Kendall	Team inspector	Art	
30427	Felicity Shuffle-Botham	Team inspector	Religious education Equal opportunities	
22985	Jacqueline Sparkes	Team inspector	Science	
8682	Trevor Martin	Team inspector	Design and technology Information and communication technology	
15372	Patricia Walker	Team inspector	History	
14573	Hugh Wareing	Team inspector	Geography	
18755	Roger Whittaker	Team inspector	Physical education	
11720	Philip Winch	Team inspector	Special educational needs	

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

The school is smaller than most secondary schools, having 589 pupils, almost equal numbers of boys and girls, aged between 11 and 16. It is a community school, taking pupils of all abilities. The school serves a wide area, including small coastal townships and isolated rural villages and hamlets. Many pupils travel relatively long distances to school. The intake is drawn from 12 primary schools, most some distance away. This is not an advantaged area. Unemployment in the area is high, employment tending to be seasonal. Few Year 11 pupils were in the school at the time of the inspection because they had begun their GCSE study leave.

Almost all the pupils are white. The proportion of pupils with Statements of Special Educational Needs is above average. On the register of special educational needs, there are 204 pupils. Of the 40 pupils with statements, half have specific learning difficulties, several have emotional or behavioural problems and there are small numbers with autism or speech impairment. Attainment on entry is slightly below average, overall.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a good school. Pupils achieve very well. Attainment in both the Year 9 National Curriculum tests and GCSE examinations has been consistently above average over the last three years and well above average in a number of subjects. The quality of teaching is good, overall, and as a result pupils learn well, developing good learning skills, learning to work independently and co-operatively. The leadership and management of the school are good, providing clear direction and monitoring the work of the school very effectively. Relationships in the school are very good. Teachers like and respect the pupils and these feelings are returned. The school has good links with the community and fulfils its role as a community school well. The school gives good value for money.

What the school does well

- Pupils achieve well and attain standards above average, overall. Attainment is particularly high in drama, mathematics, geography, design and technology, art and science.
- Pupils develop positive attitudes to school and they work hard, realising the importance of study. Their behaviour is good. These are significant factors in the academic progress they make.
- Relationships and pupils' personal development are very good; moral and social development are very good.
- Teaching is good, overall, with much that is very good and some excellent, and this leads to pupils developing good learning skills.
- The leadership gives clear direction for the development of the school, focused on the raising of attainment, and this has led to good improvement and a good capacity for future improvement.
- The school gives parents good information about their children's progress and has very positive links with the community.

What could be improved

- The numbers of pupils gaining A* to C grades in GCSE examinations needs to be more consistent. It is very good in some subjects but there are some weaknesses, especially in history.
- Although both boys and girls attain above average standards in national tests and GCSE examinations, boys are not achieving as well as girls, overall.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in April 1996. School improvement has been good since then. The Key Issues from the last report have been addressed and are no longer areas for concern. There has been very good progress in the development of systems for assessing pupils' progress. This is now a strength and is used very well to help pupils to learn more effectively in the core subjects but is less consistent elsewhere. The provision for religious education, art and music, which was unsatisfactory, is now meeting statutory requirements. Higher-attaining pupils are now identified and, in most subjects, are set appropriately challenging work. Levels of resourcing, criticised in the last report, are now satisfactory, overall. School planning has improved so that whole-school and departmental plans complement one another. The arrangements for registration are now satisfactory.

The good teaching and leadership in the school have been sustained, with an enhanced use of data to help to evaluate its performance. Pupils' attainment has improved at the end of both Year 9 and Year 11.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 16-year-olds based on average point scores in GCSE and equivalent examinations.

Performance in:	compared with				Key
	all schools			similar schools	
	1998	1999	2000	2000	
GCSE examinations	B	B	B	B	well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E

At the end of Year 9, attainment in the national tests has been consistently above average overall for the last three years, although average compared with similar schools. In the year 2000 tests, attainment was above the national average in English, mathematics and science. It was well above that in similar schools in mathematics and science and in line with the similar school average for English.

At the end of Year 11, the proportion of pupils who attained five or more GCSE grades in the A* - C range was above the national average and well above that in similar schools. The proportions who attained five or more passes at A* - G and who attained at least one GCSE pass at A* - G were well above the national average and that of similar schools. The overall performance at GCSE, measured by the pupils' average point score, was above the national average, as it has been for the past four years, and above that in similar schools. Girls attain better than boys at the end of Year 9 and in GCSE and the difference is slightly greater than the difference nationally. The most successful subjects in GCSE examinations in 2000 were drama, design and technology, combined science and mathematics. The subjects that attained below average results at GCSE were physics, where nevertheless 77.3 per cent of pupils attained A* - C grades, sports studies and history.

The findings of the inspection reflect the 2000 results. Attainment is above the national average in almost every subject and, overall, pupils achieve well. There is significant variation from subject to subject. Attainment is particularly high for 16-year-olds in mathematics, science, drama, modern foreign languages and design and technology. There has been good improvement in physics. Attainment is still relatively low in history. The school has set an ambitious target of 60 per cent of pupils gaining five or more GCSE passes at grades between A* and C, and is on target to achieve close to this by the end of this academic year.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good; almost all pupils have very positive attitudes to the school.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good; few instances of poor behaviour were seen and the very good behaviour of the large majority of pupils helps to maintain a good learning ethos.
Personal development and relationships	Very good; pupils relate very well to teachers and to one another. They develop independence and learn to work well and co-operatively with others.
Attendance	Above average. Attendance levels are above the national average and the levels of unauthorised absence are below average.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Teaching is good, overall, across the school. Around five per cent of teaching observed was excellent; 27 per cent was very good; 50 per cent good and 19 per cent satisfactory. There was no unsatisfactory teaching seen. Teachers' knowledge of their subjects gives them the confidence to challenge and extend their pupils' learning, helping them to make good progress. Teachers plan lessons well, with a sequence of activities designed to interest pupils and to help them to attain the lesson objectives. Other key strengths are the good relationships and good discipline in the large majority of classrooms. As a result, pupils are motivated, concentrate hard and work well to meet their teachers' very high expectations of them. In the few lessons that are less effective, the pace of work is too slow.

Teaching in English and science is good to all year groups. In mathematics, teaching is very good overall. Teaching is strong in many other subjects, principally design and technology, art, geography and modern foreign languages. It is less strong, though satisfactory, in history. Across the school, the teaching of numeracy is satisfactory. Literacy teaching is satisfactory overall but is inconsistent. The teaching meets the needs of all pupils well, including those with special educational needs. There has been a focus in the school over the past year on meeting the needs of boys in order to raise their attainment and motivation and this needs to continue.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good: the curriculum is broad and reasonably well balanced and includes drama, personal social and health education. There is also the opportunity for higher attainers to take three separate sciences and be entered a year early for GCSE mathematics and biology, in order to begin more advanced study in Year 11. The extra-curricular programme provides good opportunities for pupils to broaden their education.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good: the school offers an inclusive education that meets the needs of all pupils well.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	There are no pupils at an early stage of acquiring English.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good: the provision for moral and social education is very good. The provision for cultural education is satisfactory, although there is not enough emphasis in the curriculum on preparing pupils for life in a multi-ethnic society. The provision for spiritual development is good.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very good: this is a very caring school, supporting pupils' personal development very well and providing very good provision for health, safety and all welfare needs.

The school works very well in partnership with parents to help them to support their children's learning. The quality of information about the progress that pupils are making and the sharing of targets with parents are areas of strength, although not all departments use assessment information well to show pupils how to improve their work. Parents value the school and all it offers. Statutory requirements for the curriculum are met, except for some aspects of information and communication technology.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
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Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good: very good leadership from the headteacher, supported by the senior managers, is setting high expectations and ensuring that the school has a very clear direction for future development.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good: governors are very involved in the work of the school and in monitoring the budget and the curriculum.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good: a wide range of data and sound review procedures ensure that the school is secure in its evaluation of its own performance and it is using the information well to guide the planning for future improvement.
The strategic use of resources	Good: the teachers are deployed well and they make good use of the accommodation. Resources are used effectively.

The levels of staffing, accommodation and learning resources are adequate, overall, with a good match of teachers to the needs of the timetable and sufficient resources for learning. Learning support assistants are particularly effective and are deployed well. There is a satisfactory ratio of computers to pupils in the school, although some departments find it difficult to gain access to computers and some further equipment is needed in information and communication technology. The management of the school is consultative and reflective. The leadership of subjects is generally strong. The school seeks best value in its use of all of its funding and resources.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<p>Of the parents who responded:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • around 90 per cent believe that their children like coming to school, that the school helps them to become mature and responsible and that the school expects them to work hard and achieve their best; • 87 per cent of parents agree that expectations are high, teaching is good and children make good progress; • 86 per cent agree that the school is managed well. 	<p>Of the parents who responded:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 22 per cent of the parents who responded believe that the school does not give pupils the right amount of work to do at home.

Almost all the parents who responded are generally pleased with their school. Some parents are concerned about the amount of homework set. However, opinion is divided on whether this is too much or too little. The inspection team found that the level of homework given is generally appropriate and that it supports pupils in their learning.

The inspection team agreed with the positive comments from parents. Pupils make good progress at the school and teachers have high expectations of them. The quality of teaching is good across the school and the latest initiatives in reporting to parents are ensuring that they are very well informed about the progress their children are making against the targets the school has set. The leadership and management of the school are areas of strength.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

Test and examination results

1. Pupils generally achieve very well at the school, entering with levels of attainment below the national average and leaving with above average results in the GCSE examinations. In many subjects, especially in geography, mathematics, design and technology, drama, art and science, their attainment is well above the national average and in these areas they make particularly good progress. Their attainment is above that in similar schools in both the GCSE examinations and the National Curriculum tests for 14-year-olds and has been for the last three years. Further, the proportion of pupils who attain five or more GCSE grades in the range A* to C was well above that in similar schools in 2000.
2. The attainment of pupils on entry to the school is below average, especially in literacy skills. In the cognitive ability test for verbal ability that all children in the area take, the mean score for Year 7 pupils at this school has been consistently below average. Few pupils attain marks above or well above average. For most of the year groups at present in the school, their numeracy (quantitative) test results have also been below average. Only their non-verbal reasoning scores have been average or above with any consistency. Based on the outcome of these tests, the school's population has a higher proportion of average and below average pupils than would be expected in a fully comprehensive system. Analysis of the results of the Year 6 National Curriculum test (SATs) results for pupils who have entered the school shows a similar picture: of the 119 pupils, only 62 per cent gained level 4 or above (the expected standard) in English and only 60 per cent in mathematics, both below the national average.
3. A measure of the good progress that pupils make is the improvement in their performance in national tests and GCSE examinations, compared with their attainment on entry. The school has been very successful at raising pupils' levels of attainment over a number of years. At the end of Year 9, as has been already indicated, attainment in the national tests has been consistently above average overall for the last three years, although average compared with similar schools. In the year 2000 tests, attainment was above the national average in English, mathematics and science and above that in similar schools.
4. Pupils sustain above average levels of attainment throughout Years 10 and 11. At the end of Year 11, the proportion of pupils who attained five or more GCSE passes at grades A* - C in 2000 was above the national average and well above that in similar schools. The proportions who attained five or more passes at A* - G and who attained at least one GCSE pass at A* - G were well above the national average and that of similar schools. The overall performance at GCSE, measured by the pupils' average point score, was above the national average, as it has been for the past four years, and above that in similar schools. It is not higher because the school has, until this year, followed a policy of entering pupils for one fewer GCSE examination than is the general rule. Girls attain better than boys at the end of Year 9 and in GCSE examinations and the difference is slightly greater than the difference nationally. The most successful subjects at GCSE in 2000 were biology and chemistry (in which 95.5 of pupils gained A* - C grades), drama (in which 90 per cent of candidates attained an A* to C grade), design and technology, combined science and mathematics. The subjects that performed least well relative to all others in the school were physics, English literature and history. In physics, however, this was the first year of entry for the single sciences. Although the high attaining pupils who took the course did not achieve as well in physics as they did in some of their other subjects, attainment was still high overall. Almost 78 per cent of them attained passes at grades between A* and C, although this was still below the national average of 86 per cent. In English literature, the proportion of candidates gaining A* to C grades was close to the national average, 59 per cent compared with 60.7 per cent nationally. The proportion of pupils who gained passes in the range A* to C in history was low, 46 per cent compared with almost 58 per cent across the country as a whole. Physical education (sports studies) was the other subject in which attainment was below the national average, although by a small margin.

5. There are too few travellers' children and pupils with English as an additional language at the school to make comparisons in attainment statistically valid. However, there were differences between the attainment of boys and that of girls in 2000. Taking the last four years' Year 9 test results, girls have performed slightly better than boys, compared with boys' and girls' results across the country as a whole. In the 2000 tests, girls did significantly better than girls nationally in English and boys did worse than boys nationally, based on average point scores. Both boys and girls attained more highly than their peers across the country in mathematics, but the difference between them was significant. Boys were just above average, girls were well above average, almost a year ahead of girls nationally. Boys and girls did equally well in science and were about a term ahead of the cohort nationally. At GCSE, girls attained significantly more A* and A grades than the boys did. Both boys and girls attained better than boys and girls nationally, but the girls' average point score was significantly higher than that of girls across the country as a whole, 45.6 against 41.0 nationally, whereas the boys were above, with 37.5 points as against 35.8 for boys across the country as a whole. There is a need to continue to work to improve boys' attainment. The evidence from the inspection is that higher-attaining boys are making good progress and that boys are likely to attain more A* and A grades in the GCSE examinations in 2001 than in 2000. Lower-attaining boys are not making such good progress. They are not as motivated as the vast majority of girls and their problems with literacy hold them back in some areas of the curriculum. They have difficulty in understanding and responding in writing to examination questions, for example.
6. The findings of the inspection are that there has been further improvement on levels of attainment shown by the 2000 results in the national tests and GCSE examinations. Attainment is above the national average in almost every subject and, overall, pupils achieve very well. There is some variation from subject to subject. Attainment is particularly high for 16-year-olds in mathematics, science, drama, modern foreign languages and design and technology. It is relatively low in history. The school has set an ambitious target of 60 per cent of pupils gaining five or more GCSE passes at grades between A* and C, and is on target to achieve close to this by the end of this academic year.

Attainment at the end of Year 9

7. Attainment is above average in mathematics, almost all pupils showing good numeracy skills. It is above average in English, most reading confidently and writing well in a range of styles. Speaking and listening are generally good but some pupils are poor listeners. Attainment is above average in science at the end of Year 9. Pupils have good knowledge of all the areas they have studied and good practical skills.
8. Across the rest of the curriculum, attainment is above average in many subjects. It is above average in art, where pupils are particularly adept at experimentation with media and colour; in French and German, where pupils have good speaking skills; and in design and technology. Attainment is average in music, information and communication technology, physical education, religious education, geography and history.

Attainment at the end of Year 11

9. The finding of the inspection is that levels of attainment in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science reflect the results of the GCSE examinations in 2000, except that there has been some improvement in English. Attainment in English is average, with girls attaining well above average standards but a minority of boys are underachieving. In mathematics, attainment is well above average and pupils achieve very well in all areas of the subject. Science attainment is well above average, overall. Pupils have good investigative skills and a good understanding of scientific concepts. They apply their numeracy skills well in science.
10. Across the rest of the curriculum, attainment varies from above average to below. Attainment is lowest in history, where it is below average. Pupils are reaching average levels of attainment in religious education. The school is entering everyone for a short-course GCSE examination and, considering the ambitiously high levels of entry and the short time available to complete the course, pupils achieve reasonably well. Attainment is close to average in information and communication technology, although not all aspects are covered, and in music. There are no pupils taking a GCSE course in physical education this year and it was not possible to observe any Year 10 or 11 lessons during the inspection. Attainment is above average in art, where

individual expressive work is of high quality, drama, geography, in which the higher-attaining pupils achieve particularly well, modern foreign languages and design and technology.

Attainment of pupils with special educational needs

11. A few pupils are non-readers on entry to the school. Some pupils find it hard to retain the spellings they learn and number skills, such as using multiplication tables. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well at Looe School. They learn to read more confidently, to spell more accurately, to write more fluently and to improve the presentation of written work. The number of pupils achieving below Level 4 in the National Curriculum tests for 14-year-olds is well below the national average. The proportions achieving 5 A* to G or 1 A* to G grades in the GCSE examinations are well above the national average and the average for similar schools. This represents good achievement for pupils with learning difficulties.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

12. Pupils have good attitudes to work and to the whole life of school. The school's statement of values and beliefs, "to create and sustain a caring, learning school community of high quality where everyone is valued for who they are and what they may become", describes well both the very good relationships that exist between staff and pupils and also the good working ethos that permeates the school. The school establishes and builds on each individual pupil's unique talents and gives pupils the confidence to build on these and to raise their self-esteem.
13. Attendance is good and above the national average. A significant number of pupils achieve 100 per cent attendance each term and one boy in Year 11 had 100 per cent attendance for the whole time he has been in school from Year 7. Pupils are mostly punctual; the registration is very swift and leaves pupils very little time for error, despite which they are coping well with the change in time of the school day.
14. Pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school is good. They understand and observe the code of conduct expected when they are in the classroom. However, in a small number of lessons some pupils, mainly boys, were not prepared to listen to the teacher. On these occasions, school disciplinary procedures are used effectively and lessons are not interrupted. The rewards system of house points and certificates for good attendance are used well to promote positive attitudes. Pupils say they are proud to receive the acknowledgement of their efforts from staff.
15. Relationships are very good across the school and of high quality; this creates an environment of care and security where work and learning can progress. Pupils have compared the relationships they have with staff to those in other schools and say they are very fortunate to have teachers who give so freely of their time both before, during and after school to help them and, most importantly, treat them as their friends. They feel their school is a community school in every sense of the word; this was certainly confirmed during the inspection. No issues of bullying were observed and pupils and parents are confident that any issues of bullying will be dealt with swiftly and sensitively within a 'no blame' policy.
16. Pupils' personal development is very good. Pupils work well together in all subjects. Particularly good examples of this were seen in science practical lessons, where pupils worked sensibly together sharing equipment and discussing results, and in mathematics, using an algebraic equation card game played in pairs.
17. Through the good opportunities provided, all pupils make a significant contribution to the life of the school by taking considerable amounts of responsibility. They contribute to the daily routine of the school. The School Council is very democratic and, while being supported by staff, has worked independently to achieve a number of changes and improvements in the environment for pupils. The Green Team has a following of approximately 100 pupils who meet to discuss ways of improving the environment of the school and the local community. Pupils in Year 9 spend a day as office helpers. Year 10 pupils pair with Year 7 for a very successful buddy system, which the younger pupils feel gives them confidence and helps them settle into the school. In Year 11 almost all pupils are either prefects or monitors and alongside many other duties play an active role in supporting the good behaviour in the school. The school food committee provides an

unusual opportunity for discussions that help the cook to provide a menu both healthy and of the pupils' choice. One pupil is elected to sit on the sub-committee of the governing body to provide governors with first hand knowledge of pupils' views and this also happens on the Friends of the School Committee, where pupils, parents and teachers work together.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

Teaching across the school

18. The quality of teaching in the school is good, overall with much very good and some excellent teaching. Around five per cent of teaching seen was excellent. Just over 27 per cent of teaching observed in the school was very good. Teaching was good in 50 per cent of lessons and satisfactory in 19 per cent. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed. Taking the school as a whole, teaching is good for all year groups.
19. There are many characteristics of teaching that are common to all teachers and help to explain the overall success of teaching in the school. For example, almost all teachers plan their lessons effectively to take account of the varied needs of different groups of pupils. The teachers share the aims of the lesson with the pupils, so that they understand what is expected of them. They learn better as a result, because they are not confused about the tasks they are set. The pupils generally have a good understanding of what they have to do and how to do it well. In a physical education lesson with Year 8 pupils, for example, the teacher wanted to improve the pupils' skills at playing rounders. She demonstrated well and explained clearly so that pupils had good examples on which to base their own efforts. Another feature of almost all lessons, also seen in this one, is the progressive development of the work so that pupils' learning or skills are built up in a series of small but interrelated steps. This was also evident, for example, in a Year 8 personal and social education lesson, in which the pupils' study of family life and the reasons for conflict within families had been skilfully developed from their own experience and work done in earlier lessons - of which they were reminded at the very start of the lesson.
20. Almost every lesson is marked by the good relationships that exist between teachers and pupils. This, along with the good class control that almost all teachers exhibit, ensures that no time is wasted, pupils work hard to satisfy the teacher as well as their own needs, and the learning ethos is both good and purposeful. Almost all lessons are planned well. There is an introduction, which makes clear to the pupils what they are to do and why, and a demonstration by the teacher is often followed by good questioning to ensure that everyone understands the task. Individual or small group work follows, leading to recapitulation at the end of what they have learned and achieved. This good balance of explanation and instruction, practical work and reinforcement of learning ensures that pupils are involved, interested and motivated. They sustain concentration and make at least sound progress as a result.
21. Where teaching is good, teachers are confident in their own understanding of their subject. The depth of their own knowledge and interest motivates the pupils and enables the teacher to set more challenging tasks, especially for the higher-attaining pupils. The work is planned so that it is appropriate to the needs of all in the class, with material that extends the higher attainers and tasks that are challenging to the lower attainers but not too difficult for them. As a result, all succeed and make progress at an appropriate rate. Questioning is used well, not only to test whether pupils understand but also to challenge the pupils to take ideas further, to think for themselves. The pace of learning is brisk, so that the pupils make good progress in the time available. In a good Year 10 lesson on electricity, there was a brisk pace with a quick, well-organised start to the practical session. The teacher had good knowledge of the subject and was able to give good, clear explanations that helped the pupils' understanding. The strong discipline and the pleasant rapport between the teacher and the pupils meant that the practical work was carried out efficiently and well. The pupils completed their experiments well before the end of the lesson, so that they had time to discuss and record their results, helping their understanding and retention. There are many other examples. In a music lesson to a Year 8 class, the teacher had planned well a sequence of activities that were designed to challenge and extend all the pupils. They were carefully grouped and their group work was supported and guided very well by the teacher, whose experience and subject knowledge meant that she could quickly analyse the strengths and weaknesses in their practical work and give appropriate advice that raised their attainment and increased their understanding. As a result, all pupils before the end of the

session had risen successfully to the challenge and had constructed and sustained a musical composition with a complex rhythmic structure. Good relationships and discipline ensured that they worked well, concentrated and played as an ensemble, aware of the needs of others.

22. In lessons that are very good or excellent, there is very efficient use of time. There is often, as in mathematics lessons, a starter activity to give pupils a task to complete as soon as they come through the door. This often consolidates previous learning, is a short revision task, and ensures that a very workman-like atmosphere is established from the very beginning of the lesson. The pace is very brisk throughout the lesson so that pupils work hard and make rapid progress. In a very good geography lesson, the teacher had a 'warm-up' task already prepared on the board for pupils to do as they came in. As the lesson developed, regular time checks were given so that the pupils knew that they had to keep up a rapid pace. The teacher encouraged the pupils to use the specialist vocabulary of the subject, improving their literacy skills. He used questioning well to extend their knowledge and to make them think. Further, realising that the girls were not contributing well to the question and answer session because the boys were dominating the exchanges, he began to target the girls to ensure that they got an equal chance to think and respond. A Year 10 English class was given a challenging task, to write an article in response to reading about 'green' issues. The teacher used a 'writing frame' so that all understood how to structure their writing appropriately. The pupils responded very well to the teacher's high expectations. Relationships were so good that they were all keen to contribute and to take part in discussion. As a result, they were responsive and interested, allowing the teacher to use her excellent subject knowledge to extend their knowledge. They made very good progress.
23. There was excellent teaching in a mathematics lesson to Year 7 pupils. The teacher's planning was excellent, as was his preparation. All the equipment the pupils needed was already set out as they entered, ensuring a brisk start. The support assistant had been given very good written instructions, so that she could make a full contribution. As a result she gave very good support to the pupils in the class, who would otherwise have found the activities too demanding. The teacher's sense of humour and very good class control ensured that the pupils worked very hard and concentrated throughout the session, making excellent progress a result. There was a very good range of teaching and learning activities, including small group tasks that the pupils had to complete competitively against the clock. They were highly motivated. They both learned well and had fun in the process! The teacher's expectations of them were very high and they responded very well indeed.
24. Where teaching is satisfactory, that is in about 19 per cent of lessons, many of the features of good teaching are present but the pace of work is slower so that less is achieved. The work is not always appropriate to all the pupils in the class, so that not all are challenged or extended. Relationships are usually good. The lessons have a good structure and are well prepared, with good use of resources. There are instances, however, when lessons are taught by teachers who have no qualification in the subject they are teaching. This happens because there are times when the school requires more teachers of, for example, English, than there are on the staff and teachers from other subject disciplines have to help. These lessons are never unsatisfactory but pupils are not always supported and challenged as effectively as they are when taught by subject specialists.
25. The teaching of numeracy is satisfactory across the school and as a result no pupils have problems with numeracy that affect their ability to achieve well in the subjects they study. Literacy is taught well in English. In some other subjects, especially geography, there is good concern from the teachers for the teaching of the vocabulary and literacy skills that pupils need to succeed in their studies but this is not consistent across the school. The good work being done in English is not reinforced consistently elsewhere and pupils' levels of literacy, especially in the case of lower-attaining boys, are suffering and affecting their levels of attainment.
26. The quality of teaching varies from subject to subject. Teaching is very good to all years in mathematics, where teachers have high expectations and plan their lessons very well. Their management of pupils and relationships is particularly good. Teaching in English and science is good to all year groups, well organised and well planned to ensure brisk, appropriate work so that pupils learn quickly. The teaching of art is very good to all classes, the teachers' very good subject expertise and love of the subject motivating pupils very well. Similarly in geography, the teachers' enthusiasm and the stimulating lessons they plan for pupils motivates them to succeed. Teaching is very good to all classes and the teachers are particularly skilful at interesting and

motivating boys of all abilities. Teaching is good to all year groups in design and technology, music and information and communication technology. It is satisfactory in physical education overall to classes in Years 7 to 9. Teaching is satisfactory in religious education to these year groups and good for Years 10 and 11, where the requirements of the examination give greater pace and rigour to the teaching. In history, teaching is good to Years 7 to 9 and only just satisfactory in Years 10 and 11, where pupils are not being challenged and extended enough to make good progress.

27. Pupils with special educational needs are taught well. Learning support assistants are particularly well trained and carefully briefed so as to make a positive difference to the attainment of these pupils in lessons. Pupils with special educational needs are interested in their lessons and determined to succeed. They respond to the good teaching they receive with commitment and hard work.
28. In one-to-one and small group withdrawal sessions to help pupils improve basic skills, teaching is good, occasionally very good. The twenty-minute sessions are well planned, move at a brisk pace, and closely focus on the targets of the Individual Education Plans. Learning is rapid because teachers take a personal interest in pupils' welfare and relationships are very good. The teaching of special educational needs staff in sets for less able pupils is nearly always good and occasionally very good. Teachers have a good knowledge of how to help pupils with learning difficulties progress. They give very clear explanations and provide a variety of interesting tasks to maintain pupils' concentration. For example, in a very good Year 8 mathematics lesson, pupils revised multiplication tables through a race card game, which challenged pupils to answer questions within a set time. The teacher then set appropriate work on travel graphs, requiring number skills, and asked for answers to be written in complete sentences, thereby encouraging pupils to practise their literacy and numeracy skills. In a Year 10 English lesson, the teacher made very good use of group work when pupils composed scripts based on events in a play they had studied. The careful deployment of teaching assistants and the enthusiasm of most pupils led to good learning because pupils had to think hard about selecting language suited to each character. Teaching assistants make good contributions to pupils' learning in most lessons. They question pupils to assess understanding and to help pupils do better.

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

29. The curriculum is good, overall. For younger pupils, it is broad, covering the full range of National Curriculum subjects for adequate amounts of time. Drama is taught to all pupils for one lesson a week, as is personal and social education. Pupils have the opportunity to study two languages, French and German, in Years 8 and 9. The grouping arrangements ensure that the majority of pupils receive work that is appropriate for them.
30. The curriculum for older pupils is satisfactory and has some good features. All pupils study a basic curriculum that includes English, mathematics and science, and they have a free option choice from other subjects. They can choose to take either three single sciences (biology as an early entry) or a course in combined sciences, one or two languages and, if they are talented in mathematics, can take the subject a year early and then study statistics and other advanced mathematics courses in Year 11. This practice is under constant review. Many subjects offer a Certificate of Achievement course for those pupils who would find GCSE difficult. The senior management team is aware of the need to monitor which pupils take this option in order to ensure that the course is appropriate for them. The school is investigating 'twilight' courses in order to broaden the choice further. Senior members of staff are aware of the need to ensure that these courses are accessible to all. Dance has been taken as an after school class this year but with a very small number of pupils. There are now GNVQ courses in Years 10 and 11 and another is being offered in September in Leisure and Tourism. The areas for improvement in the last inspection regarding time for art, music and religious education have been successfully tackled. Most subjects comply with legal requirements but there is insufficient use of control technology in ICT.
31. The curriculum is well planned by most departments, most of which offer subject guidance to ensure that pupils progress in their learning. There is good access to the curriculum for all pupils.

32. Extra-curricular provision is good and enhances the provision for the pupils. It includes opportunities to take part in competitive and other games and a range of sporting activities. There are annual productions by the drama department aided by the music and art departments. Pupils have the opportunity to visit theatres and other places of interest as part of their studies. A wide range of extra-curricular activities is offered by the music department.
33. A Springboard club is run for pupils who are targeted as in need of additional help in their skills of literacy and numeracy. This club is well attended. The school has also run two summer schools for literacy and numeracy for pupils who have not reached average standards when they leave the primary school. Evidence for its success was observed in the Year 7 lower-attaining English and mathematics classes, which build on the work started in the summer school. The school has consulted each department about how staff approach literacy and has produced a policy that outlines a consistent school approach. Similarly, a policy for numeracy has been written. Currently, departments are inconsistent in their teaching of literacy and numeracy but this is being tackled in September 2001, when the policies will be formalised.
34. Provision for personal, social and health education is good. It covers drugs and sex education, smoking and anti-bullying and older pupils learn about managing money. It is taught by a specialist team of teachers, who draw on external support when it is felt necessary. The programme was recently revised and the time that is given has changed. Years 7 and 8 still have a full lesson but in Year 9 the subject has 40 minutes and is linked with science. In Years 10 and 11, it is timetabled across the years with religious education. The programme is comprehensive and is monitored by the co-ordinator.
35. Careers guidance is good. It starts in Year 9 and there is a planned programme for the following three years. It is enhanced by a range of visiting speakers from, for example, the fire and police services, the Health Authority, the Royal Marines and the prison service. Pupils in Year 10 undertake a week of work experience and those in Year 11 receive advice about careers through personal interviews with specialist staff and presentations by local colleges. All pupils use a computer program to help them find a suitable career and this is repeated at the beginning of Year 11. Year 9 are introduced to business through an imaginative programme which involves the support of many local businesses. During the inspection, the first part of this initiative took place when pupils were put into companies. Ten representatives from business took Year 9 pupils through an exercise in which in a morning they had to produce and market ideas for a successor to a popular toy. The high expectations engendered by the business people ensured that pupils gained much from this exercise, particularly in their personal development and becoming aware of the workplace. There was an atmosphere of hard work, creativity and, at times, desperation!
36. Relationships with the community and with partner institutions are very good. This was apparent in the above activity and in the links the school has with local colleges. These are used to enhance the curriculum. There are links with the local police, industry, banks, magistrates and churches. The Green Team is a group in school that is concerned with protecting the environment and has very good links with the community.
37. There have been good improvements in the curriculum since the last inspection. Homework is now more consistent, higher-attaining pupils achieve highly in more subjects and the curriculum is balanced.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

38. The school makes good provision for the spiritual development of the pupils. Most pupils attend three assemblies each week that provide opportunities for reflection, and a 'Thought for the week' is provided as a stimulus for discussion and reflection within the tutor group. The quality of these events varies, however, and is dependent upon the commitment of the tutor. Very good provision for spiritual development was observed during the 'singing assembly' when pupils were led to reflect upon how much they had to be grateful for and to consider the needs of people across the world. Opportunities for pupils to reflect on the knowledge they gain at school are found in several subjects; in particular, in art, music, drama and in geography, where music is used to enable pupils to empathise with the places that they study. In religious education, pupils have good opportunities to reflect through meditation and are encouraged to empathise with others and to express their feelings through poetry. Opportunities are generally unplanned, however, and as a

result there is little consistency in provision for different pupils. The visit by pupils to the war cemeteries in Flanders gave added poignancy to the Remembrance Day observance at the school and provided very good provision for spiritual development. The school has good links with Christian groups, who provide valuable support in some assemblies and lessons.

39. The school makes very good provision for the moral development of its pupils. The school has a clear code of conduct and a system of rewards and sanctions, understood by all. The behaviour policy has been recently reviewed by teachers, governors and pupils. The school is developing a behavioural support group to assist pupils who are in danger of developing negative responses to education. The personal, social, and health education course includes modules on responsibility, bullying and the abuse of drugs, and these are supported by visitors from the police, magistrates' court and prison service. Pupils are encouraged to consider their environment and a high proportion of the school participates in the activities of the 'Green Team'. In many areas of the curriculum, such as geography, science, personal, social and health education (P.S.H.E.) and religious education, pupils consider moral and ethical issues. The visit to a conference at Buckfast Abbey to consider ethics and religion was well received. In English and drama, pupils explore themes of responsibility and citizenship. Pupils are encouraged to raise funds for worthy causes and encouraged to develop a sense of responsibility for those less fortunate than themselves.
40. The school is a warm and caring environment. The provision for the social development of pupils is very good. Pupils are involved in the organisation of the school, from the reception duties of Year 9 to the large number of prefects in Year 11. Pupils sit on a number of committees with members of staff, making decisions affecting school meals, the personal, social and health education course and the local environment, and take an active part in the running of the school bank, shop and library. The 'Buddy' programme enables Year 10 pupils to support younger pupils and a small group of pupils are to be trained as peer councillors. The school nurse is available for pupils to consult. In religious education and personal, social and health education, pupils have the opportunity to consider the implications of relationships and the problems that can arise when interacting with others. The school provides a wide range of sporting activities and clubs, and music and drama performances involve a large proportion of the pupils.
41. The school provides satisfactory provision for the cultural development of pupils. The school has a long tradition of Cornish music and in religious education pupils explore the wide variety of Cornish traditions. Visits are made to art galleries and plays and in school pupils are encouraged to develop their artistic and musical skills. Various theatre companies visit the school to promote social issues such as dyslexia awareness, and pupils work with artists at the Eden project, Arts in Trust and at the Tate Gallery in St Ives. Opportunities to explore the cultures of other countries and so appreciate the multicultural nature of Britain are good at a whole-school level but more limited in individual subject areas. Within music and art, pupils explore examples of world music and aboriginal and North American art. In English, pupils are made aware of Britain as a multicultural society. In textiles and food technology, pupils explore examples from outside the western traditions. However, the opportunities for pupils to experience other ethnic traditions as part of whole-school activities, such as assemblies, are planned well. Good examples are the visit of the African Theatre Company, who held a cultural workshop at the school, and the performance of a Hindu meditation by a member of the Hindu community.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

42. The school provides a very good standard of health, safety and care for pupils' welfare and personal development within a happy environment. It has placed appropriate emphasis on providing an establishment where pupils are well known to all members of the school staff, giving pupils confidence to work, learn and progress. The school has just been awarded Healthy School status, giving it national recognition for the work it is doing in this area.
43. Induction to the school begins for primary school pupils in Year 6 and continues with a full programme when pupils enter at Year 7. This ensures that pupils and their parents are confident in their new school. All receive good academic support, enhanced by the opportunity of a personal interview with their teacher once each term. They use this opportunity to discuss targets and general progress. This is greatly appreciated by both pupils and their parents. It

helps parents by keeping them aware of pupils' progress and of where improvement is needed and it helps pupils by giving them confidence in their learning.

44. Procedures for monitoring and supporting pupils' pastoral care are very good. Pupils feel confident, valued and cared for: all can identify a person they would turn to for help and support. The school nurse is always available for pupils' medical needs and good use is made of the medical room. Members of staff have very good systems to share information on pupils' needs, all very well co-ordinated by the pastoral deputy head. This provides a very effective level of personal and academic support.
45. Child protection procedures are very good. There is a clear policy that is well known to all members of staff. The designated officer has good working relationship with all relevant support agencies and overall this provides good protection for all pupils.
46. Health and safety provision is good, well used by all staff and monitored by the health and safety governor and subsequently the full governing body. The school policy is comprehensive and provides a good basis for consistent safety provision across the school.
47. Risk assessment is up to date and all equipment is well maintained with recorded checks. In physical education risk assessment still needs to be developed fully in all lessons on and off site. During the inspection no health and safety concerns were noted to be a danger to pupils. There are clear notices to support procedures for fire evacuation and fire drills are taken regularly and logged. First aid provision is very good, training is up to date, current first aid certificates are held and there is a school nurse and a first aid officer. All serious accidents and head injuries are reported and recorded. The school promotes healthy and safe living through a programme for personal, social and health education, and across the curriculum. The school has good relationships with a range of outside agencies and works successfully with them to secure pupils' welfare.
48. Procedures for monitoring behaviour are very good and well known to pupils and parents. Procedures for ensuring that oppressive behaviour is eliminated are also very good and effectively used. Teachers give much praise for good work and for good behaviour, following consistently the school policy. Pupils respond well to the rewards system and show real pride when they are praised and given house points. Information on the school policy is provided in the school prospectus and, through pupils' planners, all pupils sign an anti-bullying certificate each year, which supports the school's work to maintain a good standard of behaviour. The school's open door policy encourages parents to play a full part in pupils' welfare both at home and in the school.
49. Procedures for monitoring and improving attendance and punctuality are good and are closely adhered to. Registers are correctly completed both morning and afternoon. The school has worked hard to reinforce the procedures, continues to give occasional reminders in school letters and asks parents not to take extended holidays. There were eight fixed-term exclusions last year, which is an improvement from the previous year.

Assessment

50. The school has come a long way in its development of assessment procedures since the last inspection. The procedures for monitoring academic performance and personal development are now very good and are beginning to make positive contributions to the standards pupils are reaching.
51. Assessment information can be used over time to track progress, providing parents with detailed termly information about their child's current levels of work in each subject, and to raise concerns where necessary.
52. Assessment information is also used to set targets for subject departments to aim for in formal tests and examinations in Year 9 and Year 11. The amount of information available is building up, so it is becoming an increasingly useful tool for measuring performance and progress over time. For example, it will soon be possible to make comparisons between attainment on entry to the school and attainment at GCSE, to determine how well pupils have achieved over their five years in the school, in relation to their individual abilities. Subject departments are increasingly able to

use assessment information to provide pupils with appropriate work and to guide them towards ways to improve their levels or grades. Tutors can use assessment information to monitor and review progress with individuals in their tutor groups.

53. Although the new policy and procedures are now in place, subject departments still vary in their readiness to take full advantage of the information becoming available. For example, in mathematics, English and science, the process for making assessments of pupils' work, for handling assessment information and using it to raise standards is fully realised. In these subjects assessment of pupils' work is closely linked to National Curriculum levels and learning objectives and assessment criteria are clearly understood by pupils, enabling them to know what they need to do to improve. In some other subjects assessment lacks this coherence and clarity. This means that assessment cannot be used so effectively in these areas of the curriculum.
54. Assessment procedures are good for pupils with special educational needs. National Curriculum test results for 11-year-olds, together with other information from primary schools, is used well to prepare work for Year 7 pupils with learning difficulties. A variety of tests in the early stages of Year 7 is used to assess pupils' needs and the co-ordinator provides clear Individual Education Plans. The use of such plans by subject teachers is patchy, though very good use was made of targets in planning mathematics lessons. Assessment results are studied before reviewing Individual Education Plans. The school links well with outside agencies to provide further support for its pupils.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

55. Parents' views of the school are very positive. They are pleased with the progress pupils make and the standards of attainment achieved. Parents feel they are well informed and that it is an open school with a listening head. Since the last inspection they feel there have been improvements in the environment and in staffing and teaching. Parents feel well informed on pupils' progress and believe home-school diaries are a useful communication between home and school. The overall consensus is that parents are pleased with the school.
56. The quality and quantity of information provided for parents are good. Through a range of methods, including the school prospectus, school policies, consultation evenings, termly assessment sheets and full end of year reports, there is clear communication between home and school. All new parents have an opportunity to speak to the headteacher and to view the school prior to the pupils' entry to Year 7. The parents' evenings are well attended and these give parents a good opportunity to discuss pupils' progress and keep in regular contact with teachers. This is further enabled through pupils' planners, which record homework, targets and areas for pupils' improvement in subjects. They are used well by parents and teachers to maintain a continuing dialogue. Regular letters are informative, covering social events and curricular information. Parents say the school is welcoming and is always willing to listen to them. The governors' annual report to parents gives good information and meets legal requirements. The school prospectus is well presented with necessary and useful information for parents and pupils; this too complies with legal requirements.
57. Parents make a positive impact on the school both as individuals and through the Friends of the School Association. They provide a uniform shop and give very good support for after school activities, both by help they give in the activities and by providing the transport that enables many events to take place. Home-School Agreements have been well received by parents and are being used well to strengthen the partnership between home and school.
58. The *Friends of Looe Community School* are good fund-raisers and also provide many opportunities for pupils, teachers and the community to come together for recreation and fun. They work hard with teachers, pupils and the community to provide good social and fund-raising events. A recent new venture of an 'Indoor Sports Evening' succeeded in bringing pupils, parents, teachers and the community together in school for a very exciting and healthy evening. In the last three years the Friends have raised money for at least eight different curriculum departments, for the gardens, for a sound system and two laser printers. Overall, they make a very useful contribution to school resources that has enhanced their children's learning.
59. Parents are very satisfied with the school's provision for pupils with special educational needs and have full confidence in the co-ordinator. A recently introduced paired reading scheme involves

parents in helping pupils at home, and an informative leaflet on assisting with reading is available. The co-ordinator organises a 'Beat Dyslexia' programme, in which parents meet every six weeks to discuss how best to help pupils with dyslexia. This is helping to raise standards.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

60. Leadership and management are good, overall. The leadership and management of the school by the headteacher, supported by the deputy head and the senior and middle managers, are very good. The governing body fulfils its responsibilities well. Senior managers, working closely with heads of subject, monitor the school's performance well. As a result of this analysis, effective action is being taken to improve the work of the school. This has led to good progress since the time of the last report and the school is very well placed to improve in future. Resources are deployed well to improve the quality of education for the benefit of pupils and the school succeeds in getting the best value from its use of its funds and resources. Levels of staffing are satisfactory, as are learning resources. The accommodation is satisfactory and is cared for well, providing a good environment for learning.
61. The headteacher provides very clear direction for the work of the school. There is a strong and appropriate focus on the further improvement of the already good examination results, while not losing sight of the importance of other aspects of school life, such as pupils' personal development. The school's priorities for development are very appropriate and include a focus on raising the attainment of boys. The action taken to meet the school's targets has been effective. The Key Issues from the last report have all been acted upon and the proportion of pupils gaining five or more GCSE passes at the higher grades, A* to C, rose significantly in 2000. This concern for development includes a high level of concern for social inclusion. In other words the school is committed to improving the quality of education for all pupils, irrespective of their background. The school has a very good record for accepting pupils who have failed to succeed, often because of behavioural difficulties, in other schools and enabling them to successfully complete their education to the age of 16. Its skills in integrating and supporting these pupils can be measured by the low rate of temporary exclusions at the school and the absence of permanent exclusions.
62. The new target the headteacher has set for the school, of 60 per cent of pupils attaining five or more GCSE passes at A* to C, is an ambitious one, but the systems in the school, for setting targets for pupils based on their prior levels of attainment, tracking their progress and providing academic and pastoral support, are so effective that the target is attainable. There is also a good process for monitoring and evaluating teaching. This is successfully raising standards of teaching across the school and ensuring that lessons are planned and taught following similar principles in all departments - principles that are based on good and successful practice, following advice and recommendations from the local education authority.
63. The headteacher's monitoring of the work of the school has led to good improvements. It was recognised two years ago that the results in English were relatively low, because of staffing problems. An action plan was put in place in close partnership with the head of department and the local education authority was involved in reviewing and supporting the department. A number of changes were made, including a restructuring of the classes. Attainment in the GCSE examinations rose: the proportion of pupils who gained A* to C passes in English rose from 41.1 per cent in 1998 to 48.6 per cent in 1999 and 58.9 per cent in 2000. The inspection has found that standards are continuing to rise. An action plan was instigated for food technology, leading to a rise in A* to C passes from 52.9 per cent in 1999 to 66.6 per cent in 2000.
64. The process of management is very effective. It is open and consultative and leads to a shared commitment to improvement and capacity to succeed. The school has applied for the Investor in People award in recognition of its commitment to staff support and development and this is currently being considered. All major decisions, including the setting of the school development plan, go through a process of consultation. Governors are involved and parents are consulted, by way of questionnaires, and their views taken into account. The school regularly seeks the views of pupils. There is a very active student council.
65. The aims and values of the school are reflected well in its work. Because of the open and communicative systems of management and decision-making, there is a consistent approach throughout the school to ensuring that all behave courteously, take responsibility for their actions

and value education. Some policies, such as the health and safety policy, are new and so are not as consistently implemented as those, such as the behaviour policy, that have been developed over a long period of time.

66. Almost all those with delegated responsibilities, for a subject or for pupils' welfare, carry out their roles very effectively. The school is committed to the principles of performance management. The school's strategies for appraisal and performance management are very good.
67. Improvement since the last inspection is good. Assessment is more effective and teaching is better. The quality of support in class and in withdrawal sessions has improved and materials are well matched to pupils' needs. The good quality of Individual Education Plans and reviews has been maintained, as have effective links with outside agencies. Pupils' attitudes and achievement continue to be good.
68. Leadership and management of the provision for pupils with special educational needs are very good. The co-ordinator is tireless in her commitment to pupils with learning difficulties. She has built up a very effective team of teaching assistants, who are developing their own areas of expertise. Emphasis is not only on academic achievement but on raising pupils' self-esteem and this leads to a positive response from pupils in lessons. The statutory requirements of statements are met.
69. The special needs department is well staffed. All teachers have benefited from training in the teaching of pupils with special educational needs. Good examples were seen, as in mathematics and science, of the use of different materials to help pupils with special educational needs learn. Resources are adequate, though there are too few computers in the department. Accommodation is unsatisfactory. There is no resource base and the co-ordinator's office is cramped. Withdrawal sessions often take place in corridors or the library, where passing pupils provide an unwelcome distraction and affect the pace of learning.
70. The governing body carries out its responsibilities satisfactorily. It is well organised and the different committees, of which there is an appropriate range, meet regularly. They are well informed, thorough in their monitoring of many aspects of the work of the school, including the budget, and have a satisfactory overview of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Most governors are linked to subjects or areas of the curriculum and visit the school at least once a year to spend a day observing the school at work. They then prepare useful reports on their visits to inform the rest of the governing body. Their knowledge of the school and the curriculum is developing well as a result.

Finance

71. The school has efficient and effective procedures for financial control and is well supported by administrative staff. Finances are managed effectively. The most recent auditor's report identified two minor issues and the governing body has accepted the recommendations it contained. The school has appropriate funds to meet contingencies and unexpected expenditure. Specific grants, including that for inclusion, which allowed the employment of a person to support behaviour and learning and an attendance officer, are spent effectively on the purposes for which they were intended and in line with the priorities for the school's development. Monies allocated for special educational needs are used to deploy staff well to ensure that statutory aspects of statements are met and to provide necessary resources to promote literacy. The governing body is consulted prior to any actions being taken to ensure that their role is proactive rather than reactive. Spending patterns are monitored at regular meetings of a finance committee.
72. The school is very effective in applying the principles of best value in allocating resources to the school's priorities. The allocation of resources to departments is now transparent and is determined by an agreed, weighted formula. There has been an increase in allocation of approximately 10 per cent per year since 1996. Since the last inspection, the school development plan now provides a comprehensive view of the school's affairs and gives a longer-term financial plan. Although the cost per pupil of running the school is above average, the quality of education it provides is good and pupils achieve well. Overall, the school provides good value for money.

Staffing, accommodation and resources

73. Staffing, accommodation and learning resources are satisfactory, overall. The number, qualifications and experience of teachers and support staff are matched to the demands of the curriculum. Although there are some non-specialists employed in the teaching of some subjects, such as English, any problems are minimised by the support they receive and their careful deployment by the head of department. There are several learning support assistants who are particularly effective in helping pupils with special educational needs, affording them full access to the curriculum.
74. Accommodation is good, overall, with some new science laboratories. The design and technology area is only satisfactory as some of the teaching takes place in an outside building, but this will be rectified through a future building plan. There is a purpose-built drama studio, although this is considered to be too small for larger classes. Most of the teaching areas are bright and airy with attractive display work, providing a pleasant environment for teaching and learning.
75. Resources are good in most departments and very good for history and science. They are unsatisfactory for art because of a lack of investment in non-consumables, such as historical reference material and information and communication technology (ICT) facilities. There is a satisfactory ratio of computers to pupils in the school but some departments find it difficult to gain access to them and more equipment is needed in the ICT department.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

76. In order to continue to improve and to raise levels of attainment and improve the quality of education in the school, the governors, headteacher and teaching staff, with the support of the local education authority, should:
- evaluate the successful strategies used by those departments that attain a relatively high proportion of A* to C passes at GCSE and adapt them in other subject areas, particularly history, to raise the attainment of pupils so that it is more consistently high across the school (paragraphs 4, 10, 24, 26, 53);
 - improve the progress made by lower-attaining boys to raise their levels of attainment in the GCSE examinations by:
 - * fully implementing the literacy policy to raise the literacy levels of lower-attaining pupils from the time they enter the school;
 - * developing teaching and reward strategies that will help to make the attitudes of these pupils towards school as positive as those of the large majority of pupils, who are gaining great benefits from their time in school and valuing all it has to offer (paragraphs 4, 5, 9, 14, 84, 85, 94).

The governors are urged to include in their action plan the following areas for development, which the inspection team noted with concern but did not pick out as key issues. These are:

- the lack of information and communication technology (ICT) facilities in art and of provision for control and measurement in the ICT department (paragraph 75);
- the need for full and consistent implementation of the school's assessment policy across all subject areas (paragraph 53);
- the provision for multi-ethnic education, which is underdeveloped in many areas of the curriculum (paragraph 41).

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	110
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	38

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
5	27	50	19	0	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll

	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	589	
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	53	

Special educational needs

	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	40	
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	204	

English as an additional language

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	1

Pupil mobility in the last school Year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	33
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	22

Attendance

Authorised absence

	per cent
School data	7.4
National comparative data	5.9

Unauthorised absence

	per cent
School data	0.1
National comparative data	0.4

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3

Number of registered pupils in final Year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting Year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	54	70	124

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	28	40	41
	Girls	57	54	57
	Total	85	94	98
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	70 (73)	76 (66)	81 (56)
	National	63 (63)	65 (62)	59 (55)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	27 (33)	49 (50)	27 (26)
	National	28 (28)	42 (38)	30 (23)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	16	44	34
	Girls	39	53	53
	Total	55	97	87
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	46 (52)	78 (71)	73 (60)
	National	64 (64)	66 (64)	62 (60)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	15 (23)	53 (50)	29 (31)
	National	31 (31)	39 (37)	29 (28)

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4

Number of 15 Year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting Year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	50	55	105

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	22	48	50
	Girls	39	54	54
	Total	61	102	104
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	58 (48)	97 (96)	99 (100)
	National	47.4 (46.6)	90.6 (90.9)	95.6 (95.8)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	42 ([])
	National	38.4 (38)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	589
Any other minority ethnic group	0

Exclusions in the last school Year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	10	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y11

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	36
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	16.4

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y7 – Y11

Total number of education support staff	29
Total aggregate hours worked per week	708

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y11

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	74.1
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	24.8
Key Stage 4	20.8

Financial information

Financial Year	1999/2000
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	£
Total income	1466406
Total expenditure	1462983
Expenditure per pupil	2484
Balance brought forward from previous Year	85665
Balance carried forward to next Year	89088

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	589
Number of questionnaires returned	66

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	45	45	6	3	0
My child is making good progress in school.	64	24	12	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	35	50	14	0	2
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	26	52	17	5	2
The teaching is good.	35	52	6	0	8
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	39	44	11	5	2
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	52	33	12	2	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	68	23	6	2	2
The school works closely with parents.	36	47	11	5	2
The school is well led and managed.	48	38	11	0	3
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	58	33	5	3	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	20	45	9	3	12

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

ENGLISH

77. The attainment of 16-year-olds in 2000 was average, although few pupils gained the higher grades of A* and A in the GCSE examinations when compared with the national average. Girls attained above average results but the number of A* and A grades was below average. Boys' results were well below average. Attainment in English literature showed the same pattern.
78. The attainment of 14-year-olds has been above average for the past four years and in 2000, against similar schools, was average. Boys' attainment was average and the attainment of girls was above average.
79. The department rigorously examined its results last year and has put several methods into place to raise the attainment of boys. The inspection found that this is beginning to be successful. One of the reasons for the relatively poor performance of boys has been the unsatisfactory attitudes of a significant number, which has led to a loss of motivation. This is still a factor but more boys are being motivated by the subject as a result of the introduction of texts that will appeal to them and setting them targets following assessment of their work. Another reason was difficulties with staffing, which have now been resolved. Very good departmental planning ensures that language and literature are taught equally and this has improved performance. As a result, attainment of 16-year-olds, although still average, is improving, although girls perform more highly than boys. A small number of pupils are attaining well above average standards. The attainment of 14-year-olds is still above average.
80. Between Years 7 and 9, pupils achieve highly. They enter school with below average attainment and by the age of 14 are attaining above average standards. Older pupils achieve appropriately and many girls continue to achieve highly. A significant number of boys underachieve because of their attitudes. For example, they are content to sit and listen rather than take part in discussion and therefore extend their learning. This is less of a problem with pupils in Year 10 because of the action taken by the department. Pupils with special educational needs achieve highly because they are supported well by the learning support assistants, who play a vital role in the classroom. Higher-attaining pupils achieve appropriately because the activities are usually challenging, although there are some exceptions when they do the same work as other pupils and mark time when they finish quickly.
81. Many 14-year-olds speak confidently and can put forward a point of view. Many listen attentively and critically, although a number of pupils, often boys, have poor skills of listening. Older pupils are often highly articulate and can sustain an argument, using examples to support their point of view. Girls in a Year 11 revision class engaged in a lively debate about a poem.
82. Many pupils develop good reading habits and skills. The reading record contributes effectively to this as pupils have to read from a range of genres and many enjoy completing it. Younger pupils develop good skills of skimming and scanning the text to find out the main points and then reading closely to gain information. Many use the blurb to find out about the text and they begin to develop understanding about how to compare and contrast different texts. This develops well when they start examination work and they apply their growing understanding of literary devices such as assonance, onomatopoeia and alliteration to their critical analysis of poems. Lower-attaining pupils do not analyse texts in depth and they have difficulties with reading texts they have not come across before. They often stumble over words they do not know and they do not use the meaning to correct errors they make.
83. Fourteen-year-olds begin to develop a good awareness of different styles of writing and, by the time they are sixteen, many are proficient in using the styles themselves. A Year 7 low attaining class knew the difference between writing to persuade, to inform and to instruct and they all wrote a paragraph in one of the styles. Many of this class had attended the Summer Literacy School, run for primary pupils whose literacy skills are below average and who are about to enter the school. In the lesson, they built on the skills they had learned in the Summer School. Many pupils plan their work first, using methods such as spider graphs and flow charts. This is a helpful strategy promoted by the English department and it helps pupils give shape to their

writing. Pupils who take drama sometimes use this method when they write scripts. Higher-attaining 16-year-olds write fluently and expressively and make good use of quotations to support their point of view. The work is often accurate and presented well, as is expected by most members of the department. A Year 11 boy wrote a poem about the feelings of a child who was living in the Second World War. The poem showed sensitivity and empathy with children of that time. In his analysis of the poem he wrote: *The language used within the poem had to be chosen carefully. I wanted to show some knowledge of language yet at the same time, show the naivety of the child. Technical jargon could have swamped the poem, and I really did not want this as many accounts have been given similarly.*

A girl in Year 9, writing to the title of *On my own* wrote as an introduction: *Have you ever been up Milton Hill on a sunny day? It's breathtaking, you can see the whole of Milton, with its rows of tiny, quaint cottages and little, neatly kept gardens and the people, looking rather like ants, going to and fro. If you look in a different direction, you can see a huge expanse of green, all different sorts, dark green, light green, turquoise, apple, all blurred together in a huge forest that stretches for miles.* This account had been improved by drafting; the pupil had altered words and changed some word order to give a better effect.

84. Lower-attaining pupils, often boys, have difficulty in organising their ideas, improving their writing and in using accurate spelling and grammar. Their work is often brief. This affects their access to some other subjects.
85. The majority of pupils have positive attitudes towards their work and they behave well. A significant number of pupils, mainly boys, have negative attitudes and poor skills of listening. These are affecting their attainment. However, generally, these pupils do not disrupt lessons because teachers have very good skills of managing behaviour. A minority of staff are less skilled and lose time in settling these pupils. Most pupils come to school prepared to learn, bringing the right equipment and materials with them. They do their homework and bring it in promptly, as most teachers have high expectations of this. Relationships in most classrooms are good and often very good so that pupils have the confidence to try out their ideas without fear of being mocked. Generally, girls are more ready to contribute than boys. Where teachers are aware of boys' underachievement and use methods to encourage them to contribute, boys take part eagerly. Most pupils work hard on the activities. They collaborate well when they are asked to work in groups or pairs and this effectively extends their learning. Pupils develop good skills of independence as they are expected to research, to use dictionaries and to have a mature approach to their work.
86. Teaching is good overall and much is very good or excellent. It ranges from satisfactory to excellent. The department is staffed by a small number of specialist staff and others who are not specialists. The non-specialist staff are highly skilled practitioners and use the very good subject guidance well, but their lack of expertise in English sometimes means they cannot extend the learning of pupils effectively, particularly when assessing pupils' work. However, this imaginative use of staffing has enabled the department to group pupils by attainment and to focus more closely on the individual needs of the pupils.
87. A key strength of the department is the planning of lessons, which enables pupils to develop their knowledge, skills and understanding of language and literature. A Year 8 class studying the play *Burston School Strikes* developed their reading skills because the planning led to a lesson that was taught briskly and wasted no time. Many staff use deadlines well to maintain the pace of the lesson and thus the motivation of the pupils. In a few lessons, the pace was slow and so pupils, particularly boys, lost interest.
88. In the classes where achievement is high, teachers have high expectations of their pupils' work. A lower-attaining Year 7 class achieved very highly in their understanding of sentence structure because of the teacher's very high expectations. In this lesson, the teacher used specialist vocabulary to describe grammatical structure and pupils understood the language and used it themselves. Another strength is the clarity of explanations, which consolidates and extends learning. In another Year 7 class, pupils who were studying *The Goblin Market* developed their understanding of the characters through clear explanations. Teachers question effectively, probing the ideas of pupils so they are encouraged to think deeply and to reflect on their learning. This led to high achievement of Year 11 pupils who had returned for a revision class. The

thoughtful questions enabled them to study the language of the poetry closely and gain a deeper understanding of the literary devices used by poets.

89. In many lessons, the tasks are well chosen to match the attainment of the pupils and resources are carefully chosen to motivate boys. One example was a Year 9 class who were starting to study the novel *Hangman* and part of the introduction was to write a diary entry as a character. One of the resources used was an extract from the film *Kes*. A number of boys who had entered the room apathetically and initially were uninterested were stimulated by the material and contributed to the discussion. In a few lessons, the tasks did not extend the learning of the higher-attaining pupils, who finished quickly and marked time.
90. Homework is set regularly and successfully extends or consolidates the learning of pupils. Sometimes, the work is to finish off a piece of work that is part of the lesson. This can penalise the lower attainers and make few demands of the higher attainers. A good way of dealing with this was observed in one lesson where the teacher stated that half an hour needed to be spent on the homework: higher attainers were expected to develop their ideas and lower ones to complete the task.
91. Very good opportunities are given to develop language skills. Pupils are encouraged to write in a range of styles, to read a range of genres and to develop speaking and listening skills through discussion as a class, in groups and in pairs. As a result, all areas of the curriculum are developed equally. Much, although not all, of the marking in the department is very good. It encourages pupils to reflect and indicates where they have been successful and how the work can be improved. This feature is another indicator of the high expectations of most of the staff.
92. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is good. The learning support assistants are effective, supporting sensitively and unobtrusively and enabling pupils to contribute to the lesson. Pupils in the lower-attaining sets often make very good progress because of the skilled and thoughtful teaching, which maintains their interest and motivation and is well planned to build up their understanding and skills. One feature of this is the materials that are used; resources such as white boards, games and models support the motivation of pupils. A Year 10 class taking the Certificate of Achievement in English made good progress because of the careful deployment of learning support assistants and the small steps that were built into learning about characters.
93. A significant feature of the very good and excellent teaching is enthusiasm for the subject, which results in lively and energetic teaching. This is transmitted to the pupils and leads them to enjoy the subject. This led to high achievement in one Year 7 class of lower-attaining pupils who were learning how to write a simple sentence accurately. The teacher's enthusiasm was infectious and pupils enjoyed the lesson and learned much about word order.
94. The majority of pupils use skills of literacy well in other subjects to read for information and to present ideas in writing. A significant number of pupils, often boys, have difficulty with writing, particularly with accuracy of spelling and grammar. Many pupils can express their ideas orally, although this varies across departments depending on whether or not discussion is encouraged. In art, pupils give good descriptions and they use discussion as a means of learning. The school has drawn up a policy for literacy, which it plans to implement in September 2001. Many departments refer to literacy in their subject guidance but the approach is not yet used consistently.
95. The English department is a quickly improving one because of very strong leadership, more stable staffing and very good analysis of examination data, which has led to thoughtful initiatives to raise the attainment of boys. There have been improvements since the last inspection in the quality of teaching and marking and higher-attaining pupils are beginning to achieve appropriately. The head of department has high expectations of her staff and has established a very good framework within which they can work. The monitoring of the work of the department is good, although it sometimes slips because of the pressure of other commitments. Assessment is good, although there is inconsistency in how members of staff use the information. The department is starting to set targets for all its pupils with the aim of raising attainment. Areas for further work are raising the attainment and improving the motivation of boys and the accuracy of assessment in Years 7 to 9.

DRAMA

96. The attainment in drama of 16-year-olds has been above average for a number of years and last year was well above average. The proportion of pupils gaining A* and A grades was well above average. The subject is mainly taken by girls but the boys who take it do equally well.
97. The inspection found that attainment of 16-year-olds is above average. Most pupils understand technical terms and many evaluate their work critically, sometimes with perception. Many enter roles with conviction and use dramatic conventions well. Many 14-year-olds develop good skills in performance: they are skilled at improvisation, use facial and body movement well to portray emotion and have a good understanding of dramatic conventions such as freeze-framing and melodrama. They begin to evaluate the performance of themselves and others. Girls attain more highly than boys, who are sometimes less mature, which affects their ability to enter role. Written evaluations show a good understanding of performance but the weaker literacy skills of the boys sometimes affects their ability to do this.
98. The majority of pupils achieve well, although a significant number of younger boys underachieve because of their immature attitudes. Higher-attaining pupils achieve highly, particularly older ones. Occasionally, they are not given the opportunity to shape their work using their own ideas because of the pressure of time, so they do not achieve as well. Pupils with special educational needs achieve highly when they receive support in the lesson. In one example, a pupil who initially displayed great immaturity achieved highly in the lesson, contributing well to the group and joining in their improvisation. This was due to highly sensitive and effective support by the learning support assistant, who encouraged him gently but firmly and without confrontation.
99. The majority of pupils have positive attitudes towards the subject and behave well. Attitudes and behaviour of older pupils are better than those of the younger ones. A significant number of younger boys have poor skills of listening and concentration and, during the introduction to a lesson, they become restless and switch off. However, when they start work, the vast majority of them work hard, concentrate well and enjoy the lesson. They collaborate extremely well in groups.
100. Teaching is good overall and has many strong features. Excellent subject knowledge enables teachers to ask appropriate questions to develop the thinking and, therefore, the performance and evaluation of the pupils. Planning is very good and ensures that skills and knowledge are built up incrementally. A particular strength of the planning, which leads to high attainment, is the good balance, from Year 7, between performance and critical, written evaluation. As a result, pupils are well prepared for examinations.
101. Deadlines are used well, which encourages pupils to work quickly and maintains their motivation. Teachers have high expectations of performance, so pupils know they must give of their best. The teachers provide an excellent role model; in a Year 8 class, a pupil was absent so the teacher had to step in to take the part: this was done sensitively, so as not to take over the group, but the performance gave the audience and the players an excellent example of how to improvise. The department is aware of the need to promote literacy and encourages its development throughout its work. The management of behaviour is good overall but is better with older pupils. Sometimes, in the younger classes, time is lost in gaining attention when pupils have been engaged on an activity and are excited by it. This occasionally happens in the older classes.
102. Homework is used well to extend the learning that takes place. Work is very well marked with comments that suggest how work may be improved so that pupils are clear about what they need to do. Assessment sheets are very good, with space for comment by pupils and teacher. These provide a good record of progress.
103. The leadership of the department is very good. The senior management team is kept informed of the department's activities through a regular newsletter that also provides a good record of what has happened in the department. The department makes a very good contribution to the personal and social development of pupils. The accommodation provides adequate facilities for small groups but is cramped when large classes use it. It is sometimes affected by noise from the hall next door that can interfere with freeze-framing and reflection.

MATHEMATICS

104. In 2000, in Key Stage 3 National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9, the pupils' average point score was above the national average, when compared to all schools, and well above, when compared with similar schools. The percentage of pupils gaining Level 5 or higher was above the national average, as was the percentage achieving Level 6 or higher, when compared with all schools. When compared with similar schools, the percentage achieving Level 5 or higher was very high, and the percentage achieving Level 6 or higher was above the national average. Teacher Assessment closely mirrored these results. Performance in mathematics was better than that in both English and science. On entry to the school, these pupils had below average levels of attainment, so the raising of attainment to above average, by the end of Year 9, represents good achievement and demonstrates good progress. Girls performed better than boys. The level of performance over the last three years has shown continuous improvement and has always been above the national trend, and greater than that achieved in the other core subjects in the school.
105. GCSE mathematics results, in 2000, were well above the national average for grades A*-C. They were above average for those achieving A* and A, and above the national average for those achieving grades A*-G. The policy of the department is to enter all pupils for the examination. Girls outperformed boys in terms of gaining grades A*-C, although the percentage of boys achieving A* and A grades was higher than the percentage of girls. The results in mathematics are better than those achieved in all other subjects. In addition, an express class of pupils was entered for the examination one year early. All achieved A*-B grades and nearly all achieved A*-A grades. Results in GCSE mathematics have shown continuous improvement since 1998 and, considering the below average attainment on entry to the school, represent very good progress by the pupils.
106. From evidence of scrutiny of work and lessons observed during the inspection, the level of attainment at the end of Year 9 is above national expectations. Having entered the school with below average results, these pupils have made good progress as they responded to the often very good or excellent teaching. In Years 7 to 9, pupils study in sets and there is evidence of appropriately differentiated work for pupils of different abilities, mainly provided by the use of worksheets. In each year an Express class is created to include pupils who have achieved Level 5 or higher on entry to the school. Year 7 pupils, in their study of simple linear equations and inverse operations, enjoy undoing 'spider leg' equations. They know that the expression $3x + 4$ is a series of operations in a particular order and that the equation $3x + 4 = 13$ can be solved by undoing the operations in reverse order. Lower-attaining pupils and those with special educational needs make good progress as they demonstrate their understanding to the rest of their class by using large labelled cards. Average attainers in Year 9 are able to calculate both the interior and external angles of a regular polygon and are able to determine the formula for a regular polygon with 'n' sides. The work of higher attainers shows good understanding of the volumes of cones and the solving of quadratic equations. Higher attainers in Year 9 have the opportunity to attend master classes at Plymouth University and to take part in both the Junior and Intermediate Mathematics Challenge. Numeracy skills show good progress throughout the key stage. Literacy skills are emphasised by the display and discussion of key words in each lesson.
107. At the time of the inspection, Year 11 pupils had already left the school, for study leave, and the only evidence of the quality of their work came from work samples. At the end of Year 11, on that basis, the level of attainment is well above national expectations. Pupils have achieved very well in relation to prior attainment. Some higher-attaining pupils in Year 11 have already been successful in the GCSE mathematics examination and now follow an introductory course to A level mathematics. This can lead to their entry into the GCSE statistics examination this year. These pupils produce high quality, cross-curricular work, involving geography, statistics and information and communication technology, from their field study visit to Plymouth. Lower attaining pupils have much of their work based on the solving of problems. Higher attainers in Year 10 understand vectors and, using their trigonometrical knowledge of angles, work co-operatively in pairs to calculate the distance travelled by canoe on a flowing river. Pupils use calculators confidently and appropriately. Average-attaining pupils know the five rules of index notation, although some had difficulty using the correct letter case or placing the index figure correctly. Lower-attaining pupils, consolidating earlier work, are able to recognise and draw the reflection of simple shapes. Low-attaining pupils, in their study of the angles of triangles and quadrilaterals, know the number of degrees in a straight line and at a point, and can demonstrate using torn corners of paper shapes. The presentation of their work is of variable standard.

108. Teaching is generally very good. In Years 7 to 9 and in Year 10, teaching is very good, overall; never less than satisfactory and mainly very good or excellent. Features of the very best teaching seen include the setting and display of clear learning objectives at the beginning of each lesson and a rigorous plenary prior to the end of the lesson. There is detailed planning and preparation of equipment for each lesson, including a very clearly written instruction for any support assistance. Teachers' expectations are high. There is a brisk pace to lessons and pupils are challenged by the tasks set, often with appropriate time limits. Relationships are very good. Very good classroom management skills, especially with classes for lower attainers, and a planned, well-managed diversity of activities during each lesson, lead to very good teaching and learning. The rate of progress in learning is good in Years 7 to 9 and is very good in Year 10. The use of 'show-me' boards is a strength, especially in Year 10, where it gives the teacher an immediate feedback of pupils' learning and allows immediate adjustment to planned teaching. Regular marking of work, with indications of achievement and effort, is evident, although on occasions the teacher is over-congratulatory in response to poorly presented work. Homework is set regularly and is appropriate. Pupils with special educational needs, with good support from teachers and education assistants, make equal progress to their peers. Many lower-attaining pupils have been aided in their progress by attendance at a Summer Numeracy School and at Springboard classes, held on four evenings per week. Where teaching and learning is not as effective, the teacher prolongs the warm-up session and it lacks rigour and its purpose is lost. On occasions, opportunities were not taken to maximise assessment of pupil knowledge during the lesson, for example, when pupils had self-marked tests. The very good teaching practice evident in many lessons should be shared to assist consistency within the department.
109. Standards of behaviour are very good, overall. In Years 7 to 9, attitudes are rarely less than satisfactory: they were very good or excellent in two-thirds of lessons seen. In lessons, pupils generally arrive punctually, settle quickly, respond to the challenge of their teachers, show interest in their work and keep to task. They enjoy mathematics and wish to achieve. Lower-attaining pupils respond well to known, regular classroom routines; for example, in Year 9 when playing 'Corners', an activity requiring frequent movement within the classroom. In one lesson, where pupils' attitudes were unsatisfactory, a very small number of immature boys attempted to draw attention to themselves by making unnecessary working noise and calling out for assistance without raising hands. Their peers consistently ignored them. In Year 10 behaviour was mainly very good and was never less than satisfactory. Relationships between pupils are very good and pupils work co-operatively, for example when playing a 'power indices' card game. Lower-attaining pupils enjoy working independently as they attempt to gain further certificates by completing modules in a course related to mathematics and the world around.
110. The leadership of the department, the commitment of an experienced staff to raising standards of attainment and the quality of teaching are strengths of the department. The monitoring of performance within the department by the head of department, now assistant headteacher within the school, is very good. The department is conscious of the gender differences in its examination results and is addressing the issues through a series of action points and consideration of teaching style within the department. The provision of Express and 'master classes', Springboard activities and the use of Successmaker, and regular GCSE clinics support and encourage pupils to achieve. The early entry of a class of Year 10 pupils for the GCSE mathematics examination gives opportunity for these pupils to enter the GCSE statistics examination. Links with primary schools are good and are strengthened by a Summer Numeracy School and by the provision of master classes for Years 5 and 6. The department has recently introduced a new scheme of work for Years 7 and 8 based upon the National Numeracy Strategy. An audit of all schemes of work, especially those aligned to commercial text, should be carried out to ensure that all aspects of the National Curriculum Programmes of Study are being properly covered. This will also allow identification of opportunities for the greater use of technology, especially in Years 7 to 9, the further development of literacy, and the inclusion of teaching opportunities for spiritual, moral and cultural issues. The department has had difficulty in gaining regular access to the information and communication technology area, and currently information and communication technology staff teach Year 7 pupils work on databases. Teaching accommodation is clean, bright and well maintained and is adequate for the class sizes. Resources are good and are well prepared and managed by teachers. There has been a good response to the issues raised at the last inspection. Numeracy strategies have been implemented, structured mental arithmetic has been introduced, and the most able pupils are now stretched from Year 7 onwards. Recording practices, using computers, have been introduced and give good information to support pupil

assessment and target setting. Pupils' reports now give good information to parents at regular intervals throughout the year.

Numeracy

111. An excellent, recently agreed, whole-school numeracy policy is in place. Curriculum areas were surveyed in September 1999, to determine the mathematical content and skills requirements of each subject. Discussions have since taken place between the mathematics department and other departments, to discuss common numeracy topics. Teachers have been provided with a list of numerical skills and practices that pupils should be encouraged to follow and a list of strategies to help in the promotion of numeracy within each subject. During the inspection, good evidence of the application of numeracy skills was seen in a number of areas. Cross-curricular work, between the geography and mathematics departments, allows higher-attaining pupils in Years 10 and 11 to use fieldwork data, obtained in Plymouth, as raw material for their work in GCSE statistics. Year 7 pupils, using the Internet for population study, show good mental arithmetic skills and estimation ability when working interactively with the website, applying variations to birth and death rates. Scrutiny of work shows pupils, throughout all years, to be successfully using and interpreting information from a range of graph types to illustrate their work in geography, history, mathematics and science. Using graphs, Year 9 science pupils efficiently calculate speed from a distance/time experiment and Year 8 pupils estimate the percentage ground cover of plants in an ecological sampling. Time lines are regularly used in history. Numeracy contributions are listed in every music lesson plan and within lessons pupils seek the beat competently across the whole ability range. In design and technology there is good evidence of Year 7 pupils using special concepts in producing nets for a packaging design and, in art, of scaling up and down in model construction. Efforts to raise the profile of numeracy are made at the Summer School and at Springboard clubs, through mathematics quizzes, mathematics assemblies, paired mathematical activities, the display of work and at parents' meetings. However, it is now necessary to consolidate this good practice throughout all departments. A whole-school training day is planned for the next academic year.

SCIENCE

112. Pupils' attainment in science is broadly average on entry to the school. In 2000, the results in National Curriculum tests for Year 9 pupils were above average, overall, although the number of pupils obtaining higher grades was only average. There was no significant difference in the achievements of boys and girls. These test results have been showing an upward trend since 1998. In the 2000 GCSE examinations the proportion of pupils achieving A*-C grades was well above national averages, overall. Attainment was above average for dual award science and for pupils who sat separate science examinations: biology and chemistry results were above the national average but physics was below. Taking the results overall in GCSE examinations, they were well above national averages.
113. Inspection evidence shows that, by the age of 14, attainment is above average, overall. Pupils can describe feeding relationships between plants and animals in various habitats and higher attainers can explain the effects of the environment on the distribution and abundance of organisms. Year 8 pupils showed competence in the use of data-logging equipment during ecological survey work. Investigation skills are good and pupils make good progress in developing them across the key stage. Pupils can express their ideas well because key words and important terminology are emphasised during lessons.
114. By the time they are 16, pupils' attainment is well above average, overall. Average pupils can discuss the properties and reactions of alkali metals and write word equations for these reactions, while more able pupils can construct and balance the equations using chemical symbols. Investigation skills have developed from Key Stage 3 and investigations for GCSE coursework are planned and carried out well. Numeracy skills are good and are used to carry out scientific calculations, plot graphs and handle data. Written work is well presented and most pupils can clearly express their knowledge and understanding of scientific concepts. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in science.
115. The attitudes and behaviour of pupils during lessons are good in all years. They arrive promptly to lessons and quickly settle to work. They listen attentively when required and are willing to answer

questions and make valuable contributions to discussion sessions. Most of them concentrate diligently during written work and during practical sessions they listen carefully to instructions and work co-operatively together. Pupils often take responsibility for various aspects of the work and help in distribution and collection of apparatus. They pay careful attention to safety issues, such as the wearing of goggles, and handle chemicals and apparatus safely. Most pupils take a pride in their written work, paying attention to presentation, producing neat handwriting and accurately drawing graphs, tables of data and diagrams. Almost all pupils are well motivated, enjoy science and find it interesting.

116. The good standards of teaching seen during the last inspection have been maintained. All the lessons seen during the inspection were good or very good with no difference between year groups. No Year 11 lessons were seen because of pupils' absence on study leave. Lessons are well organised and teachers are enthusiastic (which is transferred to the pupils) and display a good subject knowledge, delivering lessons with confidence so that explanations are clear and accurate.
117. Two of the strengths of the teaching are the good classroom management and positive relationships, which are established in most lessons. There is a friendly rapport between teachers and pupils and also good discipline, leading to a good learning environment in which pupils are keen to learn. At the beginning of lessons objectives are clearly stated so that pupils are fully aware of what they are to learn and the reviews at the end of each lesson help to consolidate learning. Work is carefully matched to pupils' learning needs in all lessons. Good use is made of support staff so that pupils with special educational needs are given equal access to the curriculum. In all years there is an emphasis on developing thinking and investigative skills with the aim of improving practical assessment grades at GCSE level. Homework is set on a regular basis and is used to reinforce work covered in lessons. Books are marked regularly and annotated with constructive criticism and guidance, praise where it is deserved and encouragement in order to motivate pupils. Marking includes clearly defined grades for effort and attainment. The schemes of work have in-built assessment tests, which are used regularly and the results shared with pupils so that they know what National Curriculum level they are working at or what grade they are likely to achieve at GCSE level. Targets are set for pupils that encourage them to work harder.
118. Management of the department is good. There is strong leadership and a good team ethos, with all staff committed to maintaining the good standards of achievement seen in recent years. The efficient monitoring and evaluation of pupils' performance and record keeping are contributory factors to these achievements. The department receives very good technical support and the accommodation and resources are good, which also assists in maintaining high standards. The attractive displays of pupils' work around the department help to provide a pleasant working environment conducive to learning.

ART AND DESIGN

119. Art attainment at the end of Year 9 is above expectations for the ages of the pupils. By the end of Year 11, attainment is above expectations for the GCSE course. In the 2000 GCSE art examination, 85 per cent of pupils gained A* to C grades. This continued a consistent trend, in recent years, of GCSE art results that are well above the national average for similar schools.
120. A feature of almost all work is its individuality. From Year 7, pupils can involve their own ideas, interests and experiences as they develop their responses to the work set, so that their work in art is always individually expressive. For example, there are as many different interpretations of the Year 7 'World-in-a-box' project as there are pupils, each exploring the possibilities of the project in a different way, making each piece unique. Pupils respond very positively to these opportunities, working productively with keen enthusiasm and enjoyment. In all year groups, visual research and experimentation in sketchbooks feature strongly at the development stages, so that in the finished products there are many examples of complex imagery, often with powerful meanings conveyed through the use of colour, tone, texture, pattern and composition. Good examples of this are the many different paintings in response to the 'Chiaroscuro' (light and shade) project. Pupils handle materials and processes skilfully, often accomplishing intricate feats of craftsmanship, or controlling their materials so that their expressive intentions are realised.

121. Knowledge and understanding about art and design are good. Pupils can discuss other styles or periods of art, sometimes using specialist vocabulary. However, most of this knowledge is of European traditions, with little experience of the art, craft and design of other world cultures.
122. Strengths of attainment are painting and drawing, especially where the GCSE course followed focuses on these areas in particular. Approaches to painting are varied from close realism to impressionist, expressionist or abstract styles. The range of approaches to drawing is more limited, although there is evidence of some fine work within this.
123. Teaching is very good for all year groups. In all art lessons seen there was an atmosphere of relaxed yet disciplined purpose. Expectations are high and the pace is vigorous. Lessons are well prepared and planned to provide good development over time. Expert subject leadership provides pupils with the confidence they need to learn new skills. All pupils receive plenty of individually tailored, evaluative, one-to-one support, enabling them to develop according to their own needs and abilities, and in this way pupils of all levels of ability are stretched and challenged. Pupils are able to share the art teacher's passion for the subject and they value the advice they receive. They behave and work well and make progress.
124. Currently, there are few opportunities for pupils to develop skills in printmaking. There are no opportunities for making or manipulating imagery using computers. Studio space is limited, making difficulties for three-dimensional work in general, and clay modelling for sculpture or ceramics in particular.
125. Assessment criteria for art are strongly related to GCSE criteria in Years 10 and 11 but not yet fully linked to National Curriculum levels in earlier years. Currently, pupils in Years 7 to 9 are not clearly informed about how their work is judged on completion.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

126. Pupils' attainment in the Year 2000 assessment at the end of Year 9 was above the national average. Girls did significantly better than boys, particularly at the higher levels. From observations in lessons and of completed work, standards reached by the oldest pupils are about average, overall, with girls once again out-performing the boys. Attainment is similar in all areas, with some good work being seen in each. Pupils are capable of working through a design process effectively and produce a better than average standard of graphics work.
127. Results at GCSE level have been consolidated since the last inspection and they are consistently above the national and local averages. Pupils perform well in design and technology in comparison with other subjects of the school. Girls once again significantly out-perform the boys and gain good success in food, graphics and textiles. The number of grade A* and A's, however, is lower than should be expected in food, textiles and resistant materials, highlighting an issue that needs to be addressed by the faculty. Work completed by pupils for GCSE in textiles and graphic products was examined in some detail. Many examples of work showed a high attention to detail and considerable design innovation. The standards of craft skill in many of these artefacts was good or very good. The work of an all-boys cohort seen in resistant materials demonstrated an improving situation, in which many had achieved higher performance than was predicted earlier in their course. The performance of boys overall at GCSE remains an issue. Many underachieve. Research into the rationale for the construction of groups and setting arrangements, as well as appropriate task-setting that challenges and motivates boys more effectively, are needed in the future.
128. All the teaching seen during the inspection was at least of satisfactory standard. The majority of the teaching was good, with examples of very good teaching in all areas of the subject. The pupils responded to this teaching with obvious enthusiasm. This level of teaching enabled pupils throughout the age range to make significant gains in their knowledge and understanding of the subject. The teachers generally know their subject areas well. Classroom management is, however, variable in quality. The ways in which pupils are taught as a whole-class group, the methods of maintaining lesson pace, pupils' behaviour and challenge for those working on individual projects need to be reviewed to ensure a consistency of approach within the faculty. The use of design methodologies within the faculty is variable and this sometimes presents pupils

with contradictory approaches. Understandable, practical and standardised approaches to various design tasks need to be agreed and implemented by all staff in the faculty. One of the major strengths of the faculty is the quality of design folio work combined with graphic presentation. The teaching of this aspect is good overall and pupils of all ages are taught well: pupils respond by producing much good quality work.

129. The faculty has undergone a fairly recent change in management and changes in approach are seen in a number of ways. There is already good evidence to show that alternative approaches to the work of pupils, particularly in Years 10 and 11, are showing beneficial effects. Further developments include the re-introduction of particular craft skills that have remained dormant, along with extra-curricular work that involves refurbishing a boat from the local area.
130. The National Curriculum for design and technology is taught throughout the faculty but not all areas are covered suitably. The areas of systems and control as well as knowledge and understanding of structures are not taught sufficiently and this needs attention. Projects that contain more rigorous tasks in this context need to be developed. This is known within the faculty and steps are under way to address this issue.
131. Resources are satisfactory for most of the department's work. Teaching materials as well as consumable materials are in good supply in all materials areas. The rooms used for the teaching of food and textiles are of a temporary nature but are equipped and organised appropriately. There has been a recent up-grading of computers within the faculty and, whilst this is very helpful, greater provision has to be made to ensure that it is used more frequently and effectively throughout the faculty.

GEOGRAPHY

132. Standards of attainment in Year 9 are close to, but below, national expectations. This indicates, however, that good progress has been made during Years 7 to 9 from below national expectations on entry to the school. Standards seen in lessons show a commitment to learning, with pupils being taught strategies for learning. By the end of Year 9 pupils can use these various strategies to their advantage and can describe and explain geographical patterns and processes. To do so, they use literacy and numeracy skills well, alongside diagrammatic work.
133. Geography is a popular subject and recruits high numbers of pupils to GCSE courses. At present, the lower-attaining pupils follow a course leading to the Certificate in Achievement. This course is successful. Last year, all pupils who completed the course were graded with distinctions. Higher and moderate-attaining pupils follow a course leading to GCSE. Standards of attainment are above national expectations for GCSE. Progress made by pupils in Years 10 and 11 is good and they achieve well.
134. Girls' achievement exceeds boys' achievement in geography in all years. The gap is wider in Years 7 to 9 than it is at GCSE but in both cases it is not as wide as it is in the school overall. The head of department is taking a leading role in developing and using learning skills.
135. Teaching is, overall, very good in the department. Most is very good or excellent, some is good and a little is just satisfactory. Where it is very good, it is typified by teachers who are very enthusiastic and have good knowledge of the subject and their pupils. They use a variety of stimuli and tasks, lessons are well planned and have good pace, and teachers support their teaching with good use of literacy strategies, learning strategies and ICT. Pupils are encouraged to acquire new skills, knowledge and understanding through the variety of tasks, stimuli and learning styles that their teachers provide. Where teaching is just satisfactory, lessons are not planned to match the individual needs of pupils and time limits set for tasks are not kept.
136. Geography is well managed. The department has a high profile in the school. Display in the geography classroom supports pupils' learning and creates a very positive working environment. Other classrooms used by the department are shared with other subject areas and geography teachers do not have a permanent base. Display of work to support learning is not possible. Access to the board is hindered by desks and cupboards in some rooms where geography was seen being taught. Also the whiteboards are too shiny to use effectively with an overhead projector. Teachers are not able to illustrate their teaching efficiently. A second room dedicated

to the subject would benefit pupils' learning. The displays on the corridors attract the pupils' interest and encourage pupils to question and discuss the subject with their teachers. Senior managers in the school monitor teaching in line with school policy. All teachers within the department have been involved in the monitoring of particular aspects of teaching and learning to inform departmental review. Teachers make use of the school's system to communicate progress and targets for improvement to pupils and their parents. Pupils below Year 10 did not show understanding of National Curriculum level descriptors in geography, or what they had to do to improve their performance to match targets set. They did, however, understand the department's marking system.

137. The department is now well resourced. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 have textbooks available for use at home and a range of text and library books available in the classroom. All pupils are encouraged to buy revision guides, which are also available in the school library. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 have a wide variety of textbooks available in class and in the library. They do not have a set textbook, because resources are being reviewed in light of the introduction of new schemes and the purchase of suitable text resources. The department makes good use of ICT facilities, when available. Unfortunately, the timetable puts examination classes in ICT rooms at times when geography teachers and pupils would benefit from access. Access to the new computer suite, planned for September, will be useful.
138. Since the last inspection geography has improved. Subject specialists staff the department. The examination results are above national expectations. Field study is resourced and makes an important contribution to success at GCSE and Certificate of Achievement. Resources to support learning have improved, especially in relation to textbooks, now available to support homework for older pupils, and library resources. Areas that need to be developed include increasing the use of field study to support learning in Years 7 to 9 and the increased use of assessment information with these year groups, shared with pupils, to show them what they need to do to improve.

HISTORY

139. The attainment of pupils at the age of 14 in 2000, based on assessments carried out by teachers, was in line with national expectations for pupils of that age. The percentage of pupils attaining the higher level was below what is found nationally. The attainment of boys was significantly lower than that of girls. The results for 2000 represented an improvement since the previous year but the disparity between the attainment of boys and girls remained similar. Current levels of attainment, based on a full range of evidence seen during the course of the inspection, were also in line with what is seen nationally.
140. In 2000, the percentage of 16-year-olds attaining the higher grades A*-C in GCSE was significantly below the national average. The percentage attaining the highest two grades, A* and A, was also below the national average, as was the percentage attaining grades A*-G. There was no difference in the attainment of boys and girls. Pupils who took the history examination did less well, in general, in this than in their other subjects. They achieve less well in history than in most other subjects they take. Over the past three years there has been an overall decline in the percentage of pupils attaining A*-C, although the predicted grades for 2001, if reached, would represent a move towards the national average. The evidence of older pupils' attainment available during the course of the inspection was very limited, because not only had all lessons for Year 11 pupils finished in order to allow them to start their study leave, but pupils had taken nearly all their written work with them in order to revise for their examinations. The evidence available suggests that attainment is below what is found nationally, although this judgement must be viewed in the light of the narrow range of evidence available.
141. Although standards of attainment at the age of 14 remain similar to those reported after the previous inspection, attainment in GCSE has declined since the previous report, when it was judged to be in line with national expectations.
142. By the age of 14, most pupils recall historical facts and information and are able to draw conclusions from these, although for lower-attaining pupils this happens on a simple level. Most pupils are able to extract information from written and pictorial sources. Higher-attaining pupils understand that situations have both causes and consequences and that these can be both short and long-term. Pupils across the attainment range, including those with special needs,

understand that historical knowledge and understanding are derived from a range of sources and can evaluate their reliability, using them to draw their own conclusions. For example, one lower-attaining group, after watching a popular modern film based on the D-Day landings was able to make simple judgements about the accuracy of this version and made informed and sensitive comments about the state of mind and morale of the troops involved. All pupils use an appropriate range of methods of recording their knowledge and understanding.

143. Based on the very limited amount of written evidence available, pupils at the age of 16 have a fairly accurate understanding of historical facts and situations but this is not always used to its full effect by average and lower-attaining pupils to build arguments and produce written answers. Pupils across the range of attainment understand the techniques of the evaluation of primary sources of information but average and lower-attaining pupils find it very difficult to put this into practice when examining a source.
144. The attainment of pupils during their first three years in the school is satisfactory. Most pupils develop an appropriate range of historical facts and understanding. They acquire skills in extracting, classifying and evaluating information from an increasing range of sources, although lower-attaining pupils do not make as much progress in these key historical skills. The progress of pupils who choose to study history in their final two years is not, in general, sufficient to enable them to attain a higher grade in the GCSE.
145. The attitudes and behaviour of pupils of all ages are satisfactory, overall. Most pupils listen to their teachers and, in response to tasks which are appropriately varied and which meet their needs, they show both enthusiasm and, at times, sensitivity. Even when tasks have limited appeal, most pupils are willing to work hard. Most pupils can work quietly when this is required and show appropriate levels of concentration. There is, however, a minority of pupils who spend too much time chatting idly amongst themselves and who make inappropriate comments. Although these are small in number, they have a considerable effect on the "mood" of the lesson and on the concentration levels of others.
146. At the time of the inspection, the head of department was unavoidably absent and his teaching was being carried out by a temporary teacher. All teaching seen was at least satisfactory and approximately half was good. The good lessons were mainly for Years 7 to 9, and teaching is good overall for these year groups. It was only just satisfactory at GCSE level. This represents an improvement since the previous inspection, when some "weaknesses" were noted in the teaching of the younger classes. Teachers plan their lessons effectively and have clear objectives for what they want their pupils to learn. Teachers frequently plan a wide range of appropriate activities and pupils respond to these positively, making the most of the learning opportunities that are offered. On these occasions the planned activities stimulate and maintain pupils' interest and learning is promoted throughout the lesson. In less successful lessons, however, the tasks do not meet the needs of all the pupils in the group and there is insufficient variety to maintain the interest of all pupils, especially those who find it difficult to concentrate on more lengthy tasks. When this happens, although most pupils are prepared to try their best, their learning is restricted by the limitations of their tasks. Teachers make good use of clear explanations and questioning designed to extend pupils learning by making them think hard. The marking of pupils' work is regular and frequently supportive but little specific advice is given about what needs to be done in order to improve. On some occasions marking consists of little more than a mark and an effort grade.
147. There are several areas for development in the way in which the department is led and managed. Little has been done to identify and narrow the wide difference in the attainment of girls and boys. There are no measures in place to specifically promote the attainment of boys and there are no plans to put such measures in place. The scheme of work for pupils aged 11-14 is lacking in detail, especially in terms of setting out and "tracking" how and when the key historical skills are to be taught. There is no formal scheme of work for pupils following the GCSE course, although there is now a draft scheme, which has been drawn up by a part-time member of the department, based on current practice. Insufficient thought has been put into entry policy to GCSE in history. A very large percentage of those choosing to take history as an examination course are not entered for GCSE and thus have no opportunity to gain this qualification. There is no policy for the assessment of pupils' work and, although work is assessed regularly, the results of these assessments are not used sufficiently to offer guidance to pupils on what they need to do to improve. Although pupils have a target for their attainment in history, this is expressed as a

National Curriculum level. Since the marking of their work does not regularly give any indication of the level at which the pupil is working, it is extremely difficult for pupils to trace their progress towards their targets. The procedures for assessment were judged to be "poorly developed" in the previous inspection report and insufficient progress has been made since then. Although there is a handbook for the department, it offers little guidance to teachers since it is presented in a disorganised fashion and some of the documentation it contains is out of date. After the previous inspection the documentation was judged to offer "clear procedures" but these have not been maintained since then. The subject is well resourced and makes good use of material published on the Internet to provide pupils with a variety of interesting materials. During the week of the inspection, during which the head of department was unavoidably absent, good quality support and guidance was given to the temporary teacher in order to minimise the effect of this absence on pupils.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

148. Standards of attainment in information and communication technology, (ICT) reported in the 2000 statutory Teacher Assessments at the end of Year 9, are well above the national average. The standards of attainment observed in Years 7 to 9 during the inspection were variable but at least satisfactory and in line with national expectations, overall. Work of a good standard was seen being completed by pupils during the course of the inspection. There is insufficient coverage of work involving control, measurement and recording events and in consequence pupils do not make sufficient progress in ICT by the end of Year 9.
149. In Years 7 to 9 pupils demonstrate some good usage of ICT. In two Year 9 lessons, pupils were able to create their own databases, explain the meaning of 'data types' with clarity and interrogate the answers to queries with skill. This level of expertise was not uniform across the school, however. Virtually all the pupils have a confident and enthusiastic approach to their work and can navigate their way around the school systems and Internet web-sites effectively. Pupils have an overall sound working knowledge of commercial software packages that produce databases, word-processing or spreadsheets at the end of Year 9.
150. Twenty pupils were entered for a GCSE examination in ICT last year, representing 19 per cent of the year group. The results were slightly higher than the national average but fewer pupils achieved the highest grades. Pupils make variable progress in ICT in Years 10 and 11. It is the lack of access to facilities that has delayed progress in many instances. The access to equipment has been problematic for some time and the school has taken major and recent steps to overcome this shortfall, both centrally and across the curriculum. All pupils are aware of the basic information and communication tools, such as word-processing, use of spreadsheets and Internet access. The lack of a coherent teaching programme that ensures that all pupils cover what is expected of them, combined with insufficient facilities in curriculum areas, leads to too much variation in what they can learn. Some aspects of the Years 10 and 11 curriculum, like those of Years 7 to 9, are not being covered satisfactorily and, as a consequence, not all statutory requirements are being met.
151. The school is in a period of considerable transition in ICT. Major recent equipment purchases, the introduction of a new school network and a further opening of a specialist room in September 2001 have promoted considerable change. The equipping of specialist areas such as science and design and technology is targeted in a long-term plan that will hopefully improve access for departments to ICT equipment and resources. The use of interactive white boards that project a computer display to a whole class is helping transform the use of ICT in classrooms. Further staff training within curriculum areas for the use of ICT is planned for the near future.
152. The attitude of pupils of all abilities to information and communication technology is a strength and promises much for the future. Pupils of all ages arrive with enthusiasm and generally work hard to progress themselves. Observed behaviour was very good both in lessons and in open-access times. Many pupils spend significant amounts of time outside lessons in order to complete tasks.
153. The quality of teaching of ICT is good, overall, ranging from satisfactory to very good. The knowledge of individual staff around the curriculum areas is also variable. A common feature amongst the staff is the willingness to improve and ensure curricular coverage. Of the lessons seen in both key stages there were some notable features concerning the teaching. For example,

in two Year 9 groups the use of the white boards helped to increase the pace of learning greatly. This enabled the teachers to cover greater areas of work, thereby ensuring better progress and thoroughly captivating the pupils, gaining their total attention. It was also noted that excellent teaching aids have been developed within the science faculty by a member of staff. These animated displays make learning the scientific phenomena much easier through their organised and systematic methods of presentation.

154. The methods by which the work of pupils is recorded and assessed for quality and level across the whole school need to be improved so that a complete picture is created of every pupil's progress in ICT. The early stages of this have been completed and, once finished, will enable staff to verify what pupils have learned, what they are capable of and the steps they have to follow in order to improve further.
155. The management of ICT is led by an enthusiastic teacher, suitably supported by technicians, who keep the systems running effectively. Much of the recent development has been completed 'in-house' and this has enabled the school to get the communications system it requires at good value for money. Further liaison with heads of curriculum areas will help strengthen the provision of ICT in the curriculum.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

156. This is a good, improving department. All the members of staff are relatively new to the school and the head of department has only been in post for eighteen months, yet the department has a clear vision and a shared desire to improve standards.
157. Standards, overall, are above national averages. In 2000, 65 per cent of pupils aged 14 gained Level 4 or above in Teacher Assessments compared with the national average of 64 per cent. Girls performed better than boys. The trend is one of steady improvement, particularly for the proportion of pupils gaining the higher levels. In 1998, 28 per cent of pupils gained Level 5 or above. In 2000, this figure had risen to 41 per cent.
158. GCSE results in French for 2000 were above average. Fifty-five per cent of pupils gained grades A*-C, compared with the national average of 46.1 per cent. No fewer than 98.8 per cent gained levels A*-G. The proportion of pupils entered for the examination as a percentage of the total number of pupils in the year group was high by comparison with national averages. Consequently, results in French compare favourably with results in other subjects and pupils achieve well. Girls performed better than boys. However, the performance of girls was in line with national averages; the performance of boys slightly above. The trend over the last few years is for results to improve steadily. There is, however, some inconsistency in the performance of boys. Poor performance by boys in 1999 led to a fall in the percentage of pupils gaining A*-C grades at GCSE.
159. In German, in 2000, the number of pupils entered for the examination was too small to be statistically significant. All pupils gained grades A*-C and this represents an improving trend compared with previous years.
160. The standards of work seen confirm the evidence of examination results. By the age of 14, pupils in French have speaking and writing skills above expectations for all levels of ability. More able pupils can use French with confidence in lessons while, in their written work, they demonstrate a secure grasp of tenses. Less able pupils are orally confident, with good pronunciation, and can write paragraphs of five or six sentences with a good degree of accuracy.
161. By the age of 16 pupils continue to achieve at a level that is above expectations. Examples of written work seen covered the full ability range, with some particularly good examples of extended writing in which pupils were able to express opinions fluently. This confirms expectations that results will continue to improve this year.
162. In German the standards of work seen were below those of French at both key stages, because of the restricted teaching time for this subject.
163. Overall, pupils make good progress and achieve well. Attainment on entry is below average yet, when they leave the school at the age of 16, results are considerably above average. However, in

a minority of lessons the progress made by boys is unsatisfactory and as a result they underachieve.

164. In Year 7, pupils develop good oral confidence and, because of thorough practice in lessons, good pronunciation. In Year 9, more able pupils are able to begin to discuss quite complex issues in French. In one class the teacher revised adjective endings in French and pupils were able to explain the rules in French. Year 10 pupils are able to undertake extended role plays with confidence. More able pupils can produce short, accurate paragraphs on a variety of topics by the end of Year 7. In Year 8 pupils are extending their written responses and are confident in the use of the present tense of verbs. In Year 9 they demonstrate mastery of the three main tenses. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress.
165. Teaching is good, overall, sometimes very good. Teachers have good subject knowledge and use the foreign language effectively in the classroom. With more able pupils, communication by the teacher is almost exclusively in the foreign language. With less able pupils, it is used more sensitively. Teachers have a good awareness of when it is necessary to use English. Pupils are encouraged to use the language they are learning as a means of communication in the classroom. This helps to develop pupils' listening and speaking skills.
166. Teachers' relationships with pupils are good. Teachers succeed in creating a positive working atmosphere in the classroom, dealing with any inappropriate behaviour firmly but calmly.
167. Teachers' lesson planning is also good. Lesson objectives are clear. A common feature is that teachers ensure a firm basis of vocabulary knowledge before proceeding to use this knowledge to develop skills; another is that they ensure that pupils have secure pronunciation before they see the printed word. In the best lessons teachers ensure that all four skills are developed. The introduction and practice of new vocabulary is particularly well done by all teachers. They use a variety of strategies, different approaches to pronunciation practice, games and a high level of pupil involvement to ensure that pupils' concentration remains good. This, combined with teachers' high expectations, ensures that pupils develop good oral skills and have a good knowledge of vocabulary.
168. The use of resources that have been produced by teachers to support pupils' learning is a particular strength of the department. In Year 7 classes, for example, these resources are used to produce differentiated tasks in mixed-ability groups, which allows pupils of all abilities to make good progress. However, the needs of all pupils in broad-ability bands in Year 8 are not always being met effectively.
169. The marking of pupils' work is thorough and consistent. In Years 7 to 9, teachers assess pupils regularly against National Curriculum levels and record results conscientiously. However, pupils are rarely aware of the level at which they are working because they do not have the opportunity to record their own progress on a regular basis. Teachers do not, as a matter of course, point out to pupils the strengths and weaknesses of their work, so that pupils are not set regular targets for improvement and do not know what they have to do to improve the standard of their work.
170. The department is well led. This is a cohesive department, which has a common philosophy of teaching and a clear commitment to improve standards. Documentation is clear and helpful. The department has good accommodation and ensures that the working environment is positive through its very good use of display, with good examples of pupils' work prominent. The monitoring of the department's work, particularly teaching, by the senior management team is effective.
171. Departmental planning is not yet an effective tool for raising standards. Targets are not measurable and actions to achieve these targets are not prioritised. The department is beginning to use data in its planning but is not yet at the stage where this is having a positive effect on the raising of standards.
172. The department has made good progress since the last inspection. Standards and the quality of teaching continue to improve steadily. There has been some improvement in the use of assessment but this needs to develop further, as does the quality of departmental planning.

MUSIC

173. The pupils at the ages of 14 and 16 attain at levels in line with the national expectation for their ages. The results in GCSE music for the last two years have been below the national average, however.
174. By the end of Year 9, pupils have sufficient knowledge and understanding to be able to construct a rhythmic piece in the ABA format, together with an introduction. They have a clear understanding of the difference in arrangements of a piece of music. In lessons seen, they focused on 'Sailing', made famous by Rod Stewart, and they constructed their own arrangements in small groups. The pupils correctly identify the characteristics of techno-music, as being simple, repetitive, rhythmic and usually syncopated. They have a secure technical vocabulary, which they use with ease. They have an increasingly secure grasp of the rudiments of music.
175. By the end of Year 11, pupils are good at composition. It was a privilege to hear a Year 11 pupil in assembly playing her work 'We should love each other' with confidence and panache. It was an equal privilege to hear a Year 10 pupil and her friend performing a song she has written which is inspired by the work of Amnesty International and which perfectly illustrates the grasp of the technical aspects of composition that these two pupils have. No lessons in Years 10 and 11 were observed during the inspection but a scrutiny of work done and conversations with pupils reveal that standards have risen during the year and are now at the national average. The pupils have a strong history of learning the skills of composition, which stands them in good stead, but they have only this academic year begun to learn the other basic tools, the rudiments, of music. Many of the pupils take instrumental and voice lessons and these have enhanced their skills and knowledge but there is now the opportunity for all pupils to learn these aspects as they are built into the curriculum. The pupils labour under some difficulty, as there is insufficient computer software to support the work that they need to do to achieve high grades in their GCSE examinations. This shortage was also reported at the last inspection.
176. The quality of teaching is consistently good. Two characteristics of all teaching seen, including that of some of the peripatetic tutors, are excellent and enthusiastic knowledge of the subject and a very constructive relationship with the pupils. Not surprisingly, the quality of pupils' learning is also good throughout the department. The youngest pupils achieve very well – they arrive with below average skills and knowledge, yet are quickly attaining at levels slightly ahead of their age. This is also true, though to a less noticeable degree, in other years and is a direct result of the attention to musical skills and language that is now being given in the department.
177. The attitude of the pupils is positive, overall. They enjoy their lessons, listen carefully to each other and to their teachers and they usually work hard. A very moving and impressive occasion was the session that followed the unpacking of the new drum kit. Even though all four pupils, and the tutor, were eager to play the new set, they waited, took time, assessed the differences between the new and the older set – and then with joy and generosity of spirit watched each other play and then had a go themselves. The money for this kit has been raised by the pupils themselves, through the Rock Band concerts and the school concert held last term.
178. The wide-ranging and very balanced curriculum, in place since the beginning of this academic year, is beginning to bear fruit, as it addresses the lack of pupils' knowledge of the rudiments of music. More opportunities are now provided for pupils to perform to and with other people, which is an essential element of the music curriculum. A significant contribution to the musical life of the school is made by the peripatetic tutors and by the many extra-curricular groups held in the department. Since the last inspection, more time has been given to the subject in Years 7 to 9 and this has been a significant improvement.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

179. Pupils' attainment in physical education by the age of 14 is in line with national expectations. This is due to good and sometimes sound teaching and because pupils, in general, have a responsible attitude and approach towards learning. Insufficient evidence was available, during the inspection, for a judgement to be made about pupils' attainment at the age of 16. This was because there were no lessons to observe and physical education is not offered as a GCSE

subject this year. The percentage of pupils following the GCSE course last year achieving A*-C grades in 2000 was above national averages for all schools.

180. Across Years 7 to 9, pupils achieve well because they are able to develop further their basic techniques of passing and catching in rounders and bowling action in cricket. Time is given to allow them to consolidate their learning. This means that those pupils who are performing above national expectations are able to transfer the techniques they have learnt into the game situation. They can bowl, with good line and length, in cricket and field with agility and return the ball accurately in rounders. Pupils' development of knowledge and understanding is enhanced by their ability to work co-operatively in pairs and small groups when practising basic techniques.
181. Pupils make good progress and achieve well, because good teaching makes sure that basic skills are acquired and that pupils work productively with one another. For example, there is good learning of arm action and transference of weight in throwing the javelin, in which quality of performance is emphasised. There is also some good learning of basic skills of problem solving and planning in games. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress. This is because of good systems for consultation and planning with the special educational needs department. High-attaining pupils make good progress as a consequence of good skill practices.
182. The quality of teaching is good. In a minority of lessons teaching is satisfactory. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen. The strengths of teachers include good knowledge of the subject, organisational skills, good relationships with pupils, a commitment to pupils' moral and social development and procedures that ensure a safe learning environment. Pupils are able to learn basic techniques through appropriate activities and in an environment that encourages learning. Teachers make good provision for pupils with special needs. Assessment procedures for monitoring pupils' progress have been developed but not all pupils know what they can and cannot do and how to make progress. There is also a need for teachers to identify opportunities to consolidate and develop pupils' use of key words and basic numeracy skills.
183. Pupils' attitudes to learning are sound. They enjoy physical education and have a responsible attitude and approach to their learning. Participation levels are high. Most pupils concentrate well on their tasks. Most are able to work effectively as individuals but also co-operate well when working in pairs and small groups. A few pupils were slow to settle and had weak communication skills when working on a group task. In general, behaviour was sound. Most pupils develop good relationships with other pupils and the teacher. The standard of physical education kit is good. Pupils are able to take responsibility within extra-curricular activities.
184. The physical education curriculum meets statutory requirements. Since the last inspection, progress has been made in developing a Year 10 and 11 curriculum that combines appropriate depth with a balanced range of activities. Lesson planning now includes the development of basic techniques and also gives pupils the opportunity to plan work for themselves. The department recognises the importance of extra-curricular activities, which enhance learning. There is a good range of activities offered and the take-up by pupils is good, with some progressing to local and area teams and competitions. Leadership and management of the department are sound. The subject development plan is improving and now needs to focus on raising standards and pupils' attainment. The department has a strong philosophy of care. A good handbook has systems and procedures for participation, equal opportunities and physical education kit as well as schemes of work for the activities covered within the curriculum. There is now a need to develop monitoring systems so that the head of department is secure about the consistency of the quality of teaching in order for pupils to make progress. Indoor and outdoor facilities are good. There are appropriate systems for the storage, movement and maintenance of good resources.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

185. Results in the GCSE short course for religious education in 2000 were above the national average for grades A*-C and broadly in line with the national average for grades A*-G. All pupils follow the GCSE course and the majority enter for the examination. This was the first group to be entered. The percentage of girls achieving the higher grades, A* and A, is significantly higher than for the boys.

186. In work seen during the inspection, the attainment of pupils by the age of 14 was in line with the expectations of the Agreed Syllabus. Pupils have a sound grasp of the key features of the world faiths studied, Christianity, Islam and Buddhism. They can select and extract information from text and from the Internet in response to questions and present the information clearly. This was well illustrated in a project where pupils investigated Muslim festivals. Higher-attaining pupils demonstrate understanding of the underlying reasons for the celebration of festivals: the majority of pupils accept the facts with little investigation. Pupils consider the work of famous people such as Mother Theresa of Calcutta and Martin Luther King. However, the link between their faith and their work is not securely understood. Pupils consider concepts such as the existence of a deity. In the study of the life of Jesus, pupils develop an understanding of parables and most are able to reset the parable of the 'Good Samaritan' in a modern setting, the more able highlighting the key message rather than simply retelling the story. Pupils consider different priorities when studying Buddhist teaching. Their understanding is over-simplistic at times, resulting in some inaccuracies in response. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress when supported by learning assistants, who enable them to maintain their concentration.
187. In work seen during the inspection, the attainment of pupils by the age of 16 was in line with the expectations of the Agreed Syllabus. No Year 11 lessons were taking place due to examinations, and very little work was available to be seen other than course work. Pupils are well prepared for the examination and the module on 'Belief in God' enables pupils to consider the effects of a religious or secular upbringing on belief. Pupils consider the variety of reasons that may lead an individual to a belief in a deity, including theories of creation. Pupils have a secure understanding of some specialist vocabulary such as 'theism' and 'numinous', and higher-attaining pupils use it with confidence. Pupils have a very good understanding of the role of marriage; the re-enactment supported by the local vicar focused their attention on the significance of the ceremony. During discussion of moral issues such as abortion, pupils displayed the ability to listen to each other and recognised that religious belief, such as in the sanctity of life, may affect choices made. Written responses demonstrate that higher-attaining pupils can suggest reasons for belief. Lower-attaining pupils, however, are more reliant on the information provided by worksheets and the teacher and take information at its face value. Time restrictions and the absence of homework limit the opportunities for investigation and for a greater depth of study. This results in some repetition of examples of faith from the earlier years rather than wider investigation.
188. The attitudes and behaviour of pupils towards religious education are good. The majority of pupils are keen to respond to questions and to offer contributions to discussion. They work co-operatively in groups and are mutually supportive in activities. A minority of pupils make insufficient intellectual effort, completing tasks with little evidence of real consideration of the issues involved. Most pupils' books demonstrate a pride in presentation and in completion of tasks.
189. The quality of teaching is good for Years 10 and 11 and satisfactory overall, though with examples of good teaching, for Years 7 to 9. Lessons are generally well planned and begin with a quick activity that reinforces the learning of the previous lesson. This enables pupils to build on earlier work and for the teacher to assess what they have remembered. Clearly set out work-sheets support understanding and help to conserve time. In lessons where pupils make the greatest progress, the lessons are well structured, with activities designed to lead the pupils in clear stages towards greater development of understanding of a key concept. Where lessons are based on the delivery of information with little active involvement of pupils, progress in understanding is limited. Teachers make good use of group work to enable pupils to learn from each other and role play enables pupils to become actively involved in the situations that they study - for example, the bus boycott of the American Civil Rights Movement. The department is experimenting with the use of ICT and good use is made of it in the investigation of the parable of the 'Feeding of the 5000'. The lack of homework in the upper years results in insufficient time for extended writing, other than for coursework, and as a result there are few opportunities for pupils to develop their ideas in depth or to develop reasoned arguments that would promote understanding. The lack of ongoing marking in Years 10 and 11 reduces the opportunities for teachers to monitor the progress of their pupils. This is compounded by the change of teacher after each module taught. In most lessons, teachers identify key questions to be investigated and, in most cases, the questions are addressed. However, on a minority of occasions teachers focused on the activity rather than the underlying concept. Teachers have a secure subject knowledge of most of the topics studied and this enables them to respond to pupils' questions with confidence that is

transferred to the pupils. Pupils' responses are treated with respect and as a result their confidence grows further. Teachers have a very good rapport with their pupils and this, combined with high expectations of behaviour, results in a warm, secure working atmosphere.

190. The management of the department is good. The head of department has identified appropriate areas for development and has begun to remedy the weaknesses in assessment and content. The handbook is well laid out and clearly indicates the ethos and direction of the department. The schemes of work are being reviewed to include assessment opportunities that will enable teachers to assess pupils' progress towards the targets of the Agreed Syllabus. New initiatives are being trialled, although these have yet to be shared across the department. Resources are being developed. At present they are too limited to enable pupils to experience a variety of approaches, or to support independent investigation. Library resources are weak and include many books that do not invite pupils to investigate. Very good use is made of visitors to the department, although pupils have too few opportunities to investigate the range of cultural experiences that places of worship of all faiths provide.
191. There has been good improvement since the last inspection. The short GCSE course for all pupils in Years 10 and 11 has been introduced successfully and the school is now fulfilling its statutory requirements for sufficient time to complete the syllabus. Religious education is now taught as a discrete subject, no longer as a module in the personal, social and health education course. Assessment opportunities have been developed to enable teachers to judge attainment at the end of each module of work and all lessons are now taught in attractive and suitable rooms. The department has a shared commitment to the development of the reflective and spiritual nature of the pupils and very good opportunities are provided for this to take place.