

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **PRESTON SCHOOL**

Yeovil, Somerset

LEA area: Somerset

Unique reference number: 123891

Headteacher: Mr R A Jones

Reporting inspector: Tom Ferris  
4344

Dates of inspection: 15 – 19 May 2000

Inspection number: 187626

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

© Crown copyright 2000

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

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the School Inspections Act 1996, the school must provide a copy of this report and/or its summary free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 11 to 16

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Monks Dale  
Yeovil

Postcode: Somerset  
BA21 3JD

Telephone number: 01935 403801

Fax number: 01935 431216

Appropriate authority: Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Mrs E Adams

Date of previous inspection: 18 March 1996

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Tom Ferris	Registered inspector		What sort of school is it? How high are standards – the school's results and pupils' achievements? How well are pupils taught? How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
Sally Hall	Lay inspector		How high are standards – pupils' attitudes, values and personal development? How well does the school care for its pupils or students? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
Robert Cory	Team inspector	Mathematics	
Roger Samways	Team inspector	English	
Andrew Stillman	Team inspector	Science	
John Adams	Team inspector	Design and technology	
Martin Graham	Team inspector	Information and communications technology	
Anthony Boyden	Team inspector	Business studies Vocational	
Mike Hillary	Team inspector	Geography Equal opportunities	
Mary Higgins	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	
Anthony Hill	Team inspector	Art	
John Forster	Team inspector	Music	
Ken Stevenson	Team inspector	Special educational needs English as an additional language	
Caroline Runyard	Team inspector	Physical education	
Felicity Shuffle-Botham	Team inspector	History Religious education	

The inspection contractor was:

Dorset School Inspection Services  
School Effectiveness Service  
Dorset County Council  
County Hall  
Dorchester  
Dorset  
DT1 1XJ

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

The Registrar  
Inspection Quality Division  
The Office for Standards in Education  
Alexandra House  
33 Kingsway  
London WC2B 6SE

## REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
<b>PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT</b>	<b>7</b>
Information about the school	
How good the school is	
What the school does well	
What could be improved	
How the school has improved since its last inspection	
Standards	
Pupils' attitudes and values	
Teaching and learning	
Other aspects of the school	
How well the school is led and managed	
Parents' and carers' views of the school	
<b>PART B: COMMENTARY</b>	
<b>HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?</b>	<b>12</b>
The school's results and achievements	
Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development	
<b>HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS?</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES</b>	<b>31</b>

## **PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Preston School is a comprehensive school for boys and girls from the ages of 11 to 16. There are 794 pupils on roll, 437 boys and 357 girls. There are considerably more boys in Years 7, 9 and 11. The ethnic mix of the pupils is predominantly white, with very few pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds. The percentage of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is in line with the national average. The main needs are specific learning difficulties (dyslexia) and behavioural and emotional difficulties. The attainment of the pupils on entry to the school is slightly above average. Only a very small number of the pupils have English as an additional language, two of whom are at the early stages of acquiring English.

### **HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS**

Preston School is a very effective school that caters very well for its pupils. They arrive with slightly above average attainment. By the age of 14 they are well above average in the national tests and above average across the rest of the curriculum. By the age of 16 they achieve well above average results at GCSE. Almost all make good progress in their time at school; many make very good progress, particularly but not only those who arrive with below average attainment. The teaching is very good, as is the quality of leadership and management provided by the headteacher and the deputies. The school provides very good value for money. Its strengths far outweigh its few weaknesses.

#### **What the school does well**

- Standards in English and science at both key stages and in design and technology, art, music and business studies at Key Stage 4 are high.
- Many less able pupils, including those with special educational needs, make very good progress.
- The very good quality of the teaching ensures that the pupils learn effectively.
- Very effective senior management provides clear direction for the school and very good strategic and financial planning.
- The school successfully identifies the potential of each pupil and tracks their progress through from Year 7 to Year 11.
- The provision for both moral and social development makes a major contribution to the personal development of the pupils.

#### **What could be improved**

- The performance of the pupils, especially boys, in modern languages at Key Stage 4.
- The provision of opportunities for the pupils to apply their information and communications technology skills across the curriculum.

*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 March 1996. It has continued to improve since then. Results in the national tests at the age of 14 have improved from above average to well above. It has maintained the very good features identified in the last report – the very good results at GCSE, the very good behaviour of the pupils and the very good quality of leadership and management. The two subjects that have not shown sufficient improvement are modern languages and geography. Improvements have, however, been made in the two areas criticised last time. In religious education, the requirements of the Locally Agreed Syllabus are now being met at Key Stage 4. Provision for information and communications technology has improved at Key Stage 4. It now meets requirements in Year 10 and provision is to be increased in both Year 10 and Year 11 from September 2000.

## STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with				Key
	all schools			similar schools	
	1997	1998	1999	1999	
GCSE examinations	A	C	A	C	well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E

Apart from an expected “dip” in 1998, the school’s results at GCSE have been well above average. The proportion of pupils achieving at least five A\*-G grades has been very high. No pupil left last year without at least five passes at A\*-G. The number of passes at the highest grades, A\* and A, was above average. In 1999, the school’s results were statistically in line with those achieved in schools with similar intakes, based on the proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals. However, given that the attainment of the pupils when they enter the school is slightly above average, the GCSE results are very good. The subjects that performed best in 1999 were art, science, design and technology, English and business studies, in all of which the results were well above average. The subjects that did not do so well were mathematics and French, in which the results were average, and geography, in which they were below. From the evidence of the inspection, however, standards are improving in mathematics and geography.

At the age of 14, the school’s performance in the national tests in English, mathematics and science is now well above average. Compared to similar schools, the results in English (above the average) and science (well above) were better than in mathematics, in which they were below the average. As in Key Stage 4, the evidence from the inspection points to improving standards in mathematics.

At both Key Stage 3 and in GCSE the trend in the school’s results has been upwards, in line with the national trend. The school has set itself challenging targets for the next two years and is making good progress towards them. The pupils’ achievement, including the progress they make over time, is very good in English, science, design and technology, art and business studies. It is good in religious education and for those pupils who study physical education or religious education to GCSE. The one subject in which the pupils’ achievement over time is less than satisfactory is modern languages.



## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. The pupils are enthusiastic about lessons, concentrate well and are keen to do their best.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. They behave very well in lessons and around the school. A very small number misbehave in some lessons.
Personal development and relationships	The pupils have very good relationships with one another. They show respect for their teachers. They are trustworthy and enjoy taking responsibility.
Attendance	Good. Attendance rates are in line with the national average. Unauthorised absence is much less than in other schools. Punctuality is very good.

A particular strength is the pupils' willingness to take initiative and responsibility. For example, many volunteer to participate in assemblies and in the year and school councils. They initiate charity work and help others with their reading. Many of the older pupils carry out their duties as prefects with considerable responsibility.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged 11-14 years	aged 14-16 years
Lessons seen overall	Very 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.*

The very good quality of the teaching ensures that the vast majority of the pupils make good to very good progress in acquiring skills, knowledge and understanding. In most lessons their interest is engaged and they work at a good pace. The quality of the teaching is a key factor in the well above average results in the Key Stage 3 tests and at GCSE.

During the inspection 96 per cent of all lessons seen were judged to be at least satisfactory; 68 per cent to be at least good; and 24 per cent to be very good or better. Five per cent of all lessons seen were judged to be outstanding. It was not possible to observe teaching in Year 11 as these pupils were on study leave. However, scrutiny of their work and analysis of the teachers' records indicate teaching that is at least good or even better. Key characteristics of the best teaching are very good subject knowledge, enthusiasm, meticulous planning, skilful questioning, high expectations and very good relationships. In the small number of less than satisfactory lessons, key features were low expectations and slow pace.

The teaching in English and science is very good at both key stages; in mathematics it is good at Key Stage 3 and sound at Key Stage 4. The teaching is also very good in art in all years, and in design and technology and business studies at Key Stage 4. In modern languages, although the lessons seen were generally satisfactory, a key weakness over

time is that expectations are not as high as they should be and the teachers do not give the pupils sufficient practice in speaking.

Pupils with special educational needs are well taught, whether those needs are specific learning difficulties or emotional or behavioural difficulties. Literacy is taught very well; standards in reading and writing are well above average. Numeracy skills are not so well taught. Apart from in Year 7, standards in numeracy are only average.

#### **OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL**

<b>Aspect</b>	<b>Comment</b>
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. The quality of learning experiences provided effectively underpins the standards achieved.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good. Very well organised. The teachers are very aware of the pupils' needs and plan well to minimise their difficulties. Very good review of the progress they make.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	The very small number of pupils are well supported and are making good progress.
Provision for pupils' personal development, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Sound provision for spiritual development. Good provision for cultural development. Very good provision for both moral and social development.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very effective. Strong pastoral system that supports the pupils' academic and personal development.

The school works very well with parents. It ensures that parents can communicate directly with the teaching staff when they need to. Information for parents, including the annual report on their children's progress, is mostly very good.

A particular strength in the curriculum is the breadth and depth of coverage in English, science and business studies. A relative weakness is that the limited amount of time available for religious education and for information and communications technology at Key Stage 4 does restrict the extent of the pupils' experience even though basic requirements are met. Extra-curricular opportunities are good and the school has built up very good contacts with schools abroad and in other parts of the United Kingdom.

#### **HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED**

<b>Aspect</b>	<b>Comment</b>
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good. Very clear direction. Significant impact on reaching and maintaining the very good standards in both the pupils' learning and their behaviour.

How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors have a clear view of their role. They have ensured that the school has operated within a tight budget without going into debt, and that almost all statutory requirements are met.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Outstanding. Very good systems for analysing results, for setting targets and for monitoring the effectiveness of teaching.
The strategic use of resources	Very good forward planning and efficient use of available resources. Below average income; well above average results; very good value for money.

Staffing is good. Almost all the teachers are very well qualified for the subjects they teach. There is a small amount of non-specialist teaching, for example in religious education. Whilst not unsatisfactory, this does limit to some extent the depth of the pupils' learning. The school's accommodation and the level of resources for learning are both adequate. The school pays good attention to the principles of best value, for example in comparing its costs with other schools and in ensuring competition when purchasing resources. The two areas in which statutory requirements are not fully met are collective worship and the inclusion of all required elements in the school's prospectus. Particular strengths in the leadership and management are listed above. The extent to which the school's aims and values are reflected in all aspects of its work is outstanding.

#### **PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL**

<b>What pleases parents most</b>	<b>What parents would like to see improved</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The high expectations.</li> <li>• The progress made by their children.</li> <li>• The quality of the teaching.</li> <li>• How the school keeps them informed of their children's progress.</li> <li>• The leadership and management.</li> <li>• The quality of care.</li> <li>• The approachability of the teachers.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Homework.</li> <li>• The range of extra-curricular activities.</li> <li>• How well the school works with parents.</li> </ul>

The inspectors endorse fully the parents' positive views. They did, however, find the quantity and quality of homework to be appropriate, even though occasionally homework is not set when it is scheduled and for the older pupils competing coursework deadlines at times lead to a particularly heavy load. Inspectors found that the school provides a good range of extra-curricular activities for a school of its size. They could find no evidence that the school does not work closely with parents.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

### **HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?**

#### **The school's results and achievements**

1. The pupils' attainment when they arrive at the start of Year 7 is slightly above average. This is based on both their performance in the national tests at the age of 11 and on the standardised tests administered by the school. The spread of ability does, however, vary from year to year. The current Year 11, for example, contains a greater number of more able pupils than other years.

2. At the age of 14 [at the end of Year 9] the performance of the pupils is well above average in the national tests in English, mathematics and science. This has been the case for the last three years and represents clear improvement since the last inspection when it was described as above average. Compared to all schools, the 1999 results in English and science were well above average: results in mathematics were above average. Girls perform better in English, boys perform better in mathematics.

3. The school does better in the Key Stage 3 tests than similar schools [i.e. based on the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals]. In 1999, the results in science were well above average; in English they were above average; but in mathematics they were below. The overall results were above average. The fact that the pupils arrive with slightly above average attainment and reach well above average standards by the age of 14 indicates very good progress and very good achievement over the three years. Very good teaching and management, especially in English and science, plus the strength of the school's target setting and tracking of the pupils' performance, are the key factors that explain this. Weaker, though not unsatisfactory, management, teamwork and teaching explain the difference in the results in mathematics. The evidence of the inspection does, however, point to clear improvements in mathematics [see paragraph 9 below].

4. The very good performance of the pupils is then sustained through to the end of key Stage 4. The 1999 GCSE results, based on the average total points score of each pupil [the best indicator of a school's performance], were well above average. Judged on the proportion of pupils achieving five or more passes at A\*-C, they were above average. No pupil left the school last year without a GCSE pass. In fact, all pupils in the school achieved at least five passes at A\* to G. This is very high compared to both all schools and similar schools. At GCSE the performance of girls is better than that of boys. However, over the last three years the results of both boys and girls have been well above the national averages for boys and girls respectively. In 1999, the boys' results were above, rather than well above. The school has put in place an appropriate range of measures to improve boys' results further. Very good senior management, very good target setting, very good provision for pupils with special educational needs and good teaching are the key factors in the school's success at GCSE.

5. Compared to similar schools [the comparison based on free school meals], the results at GCSE are statistically average. Compared to schools with similar results at Key Stage 3 two years earlier, the school's results are also statistically average. However, on both indicators the results are just below the threshold for above average. Neither indicator takes into account the pupils' attainment on entry. The school adds most value in Key Stage 3 and then maintains this very good standard through to the end of Key Stage 4. Overall, it does very well by its pupils.

6. In both the Key Stage 3 results and at GCSE, the trend in the school's results has been in line with the national trend. It has maintained its well above average performance at both 14 and 16. For the next two years it has set itself challenging targets for performance at GCSE [70 per cent of the pupils to get five or more passes at A\* to C in 2000]. From the evidence of the inspection the school is making good progress towards meeting these targets.

7. In 1999, the subjects that performed best at GCSE were art, science, design and technology, English language and business studies. The subjects that did not do so well were mathematics, geography and French. The poor performance of boys in French is a cause for concern. Girls performed better than boys in design and technology, in history and in English.

8. In English, standards are well above average in speaking and listening, in reading and in writing at both key stages. The effectiveness of the school's strategy to improve literacy has ensured good standards across subjects. Good examples of extended writing were seen in history, religious education, science and in design and technology. The vast majority of the pupils enjoy reading and are willing to take on increasingly demanding texts. At both key stages, most of the pupils are competent over a wide range of writing and make good progress in developing their command of structure and style. By Year 11, many have developed a good understanding of literary criticism and can argue a case persuasively.

9. From the evidence of the inspection, both lesson observation and scrutiny of the pupils' work, it is clear that standards in mathematics at both key stages have improved. By the end of Year 9 they are now well above average; the pupils currently in Year 11 are attaining above average standards. There remains a weakness, however, in numeracy. Apart from in Year 7, standards are only average and many pupils are too dependent on calculators. Nevertheless, they are able to apply their overall mathematical skills competently in subjects such as science and design and technology. In science, the pupils' attainment is well above average in all aspects and by the end of each key stage. Very good management and very good teaching are the key factors.

10. At Key Stage 3, the pupils' achievement is very good in both English and science. Standards are above expectations by the end of the key stage and the pupils' achievement good in mathematics, design and technology, history, art, physical education and religious education. Standards are broadly in line with expectations and achievement sound in modern languages, geography, information and communications technology [ICT] and in music. At Key Stage 4, standards are well above average and the pupils' achievement very good in English, science, design and technology, art, music and in business studies. Standards are above average and achievement good in history, religious education and in physical education [for those pupils taking the subject as a GCSE course]. Standards are broadly average and achievement sound in geography, information and communications technology and in physical education. The one subject in which the pupils' achievement is unsatisfactory is modern languages, largely because the teachers are not stretching the pupils as much as they could.

11. Particular strengths in the pupils' attainment by the end of key Stage 4 in subjects other than the three core subjects include standards in food technology and textiles; the ability of higher attainers in history to analyse and present opposing views before making judgement; the ability to discuss moral issues in religious education; and the level of understanding of key concepts in business studies. The ability to understand and use

important technical vocabulary is a strength across the curriculum. In modern languages, standards in speaking and writing are a weakness.

12. The pupils with special educational needs (SEN) make very good progress overall in both Key Stages 3 and 4, and their attainment is often much better than expected. For example, pupils with low test scores on entry frequently go on to achieve well in Key Stage 3 tests and achieve high grades at GCSE. This is particularly evident in English where all pupils, including those who had reading and writing difficulties, achieved GCSE grades at or above grade F. Progress is also very good in science and art, and good in almost all other subjects. Pupils show least improvement in mathematics, modern foreign languages and music, but even here progress is sound.

13. The pupils with Statements of SEN make good progress towards the targets set in their Individual Education Plans (IEPs). Pupils typically achieve gains of a year in their reading and spelling ages between annual reviews. Given their prior experience and difficulties this is better than might be expected.

14. The pupils for whom English is an additional language make good progress. Although their language skills may still be less well developed than the other pupils', they are improving their speaking and listening skills quickly. One pupil with an exceptionally high level of personal motivation has made very good progress, and has developed an excellent vocabulary in a very short time.

#### **Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development**

15. The pupils' attitudes to school are very good, and this enthusiasm has a substantial impact on the standards of attainment and progress. The school's challenging ethos of expecting "100 per cent effort" from the whole school community has been taken up by the vast majority of pupils. They listen carefully to their teachers and are keen to answer questions. They settle quickly to their work and concentrate well on the tasks they have been given. This was seen, for example, in a Year 8 history lesson situated in an information and communications technology suite, where the layout of the room restricted the teacher's observation. Pupils listened attentively to the teacher's instructions and persevered with their desktop publishing.

16. The high standards of pupils' behaviour have been maintained since the last inspection. Overall the behaviour of pupils is very good. The school operates as an orderly community and this has a very positive impact on pupils' learning. Behaviour in lessons is generally very good. Pupils understand that the teachers have high expectations of good behaviour and respond well to the system of rewards and sanctions. Behaviour at lunchtime is very good, and pupils are allowed into certain areas of the school without close supervision. Bus drivers and swimming pool attendants praised the good behaviour of the pupils outside school. Pupils are trustworthy and show respect for property. Pupils say that incidents of bullying are rare. The rate of exclusions is broadly in line with that found at schools of this size.

17. A small number of pupils, mainly Year 10 boys, have unsatisfactory attitudes and poor behaviour in some lessons. This is often when the teacher has not established clear classroom routines. These pupils lack enthusiasm, work at a slow pace, call out and distract other pupils. The negative attitudes and anti-social behaviour of these pupils have a detrimental effect on their own and others' learning in this small number of lessons.

18. The pupils' personal development and relationships are very good. Relationships are particularly strong throughout the school community. The pupils say that the school is a very friendly place. Boys and girls work well together in groups and show respect for adults working in the school. Younger pupils appreciate the support they receive from older pupils through the prefect system and paired reading. Pupils are helpful and courteous, and enjoy talking to visitors about their work. They respect each other's beliefs and express their opinions without fear of ridicule. They enjoy taking responsibility and help in the classroom and around the school. Year 10 pupils are eager to take up their duties as prefects, and the year and school councils endeavour to bring about improvements in school life. Pupils enjoy raising money for charity and many take part in the wide range of extra-curricular activities with enthusiasm.

19. The pupils have maintained the good attendance record found at the time of the last OFSTED inspection. Attendance at 91.2 per cent is broadly in line with the national average, and no year group had an attendance rate of less than 90 per cent. Truancy from school or individual lessons is rare, and the vast majority of absences are because of illness. Very few pupils are late for school and the school day begins promptly. The pupils' good attendance rate and punctuality have a positive impact on attainment and progress.

### **HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?**

20. The teaching is very good in Key Stage 3 and good in Key Stage 4. During the inspection, 96 per cent of all lessons seen were judged to be at least satisfactory, 68 per cent to be good or better and 24 per cent to be very good or better. Five per cent of all lessons seen were judged to be outstanding. At Key Stage 3, 97 per cent of the teaching was judged to be at least satisfactory, 71 per cent to be good or better and 23 per cent to be very good or better. At Key Stage 4, it was only possible to observe lessons in Year 10 as the Year 11 pupils were already on study leave. Of the teaching seen in year 10, 93 per cent was judged to be satisfactory or better; 59 per cent to be good or better; and 26 per cent to be very good or better. Scrutiny of the pupils' work in Year 11 and analysis of the teachers' records indicate that the teaching in Year 11 is at least good, and possibly better than that. Overall, the quality of the teaching is a strength of the school and a key factor in the above to well above standards and in the very good achievement of the majority of the pupils. At the time of the last inspection the teaching was described as being "good to outstanding in half of the lessons". That figure is now two thirds of all lessons, representing a clear improvement in the standard of teaching.

21. The teaching has a very positive impact on the pupils' learning. Good knowledge and understanding of the subject they teach, effective planning, high expectations, effective methods and good use of their time and available resources ensure that the pupils' acquisition of knowledge and understanding is very good, that they work at a very good pace in the vast majority of lessons and that they concentrate very well and show a high level of interest in their work. The pupils' learning is very good at Key Stage 3. It is good at Key Stage 4. In a small proportion of the lessons seen, slightly more in Year 10, the pupils' level of interest was low and they made little progress in the lesson. This was clearly related to some weakness in the teaching. At times a lack of strong subject knowledge holds back the pupils' learning, for example in some music and religious education lessons.

22. A number of parents expressed some concern about the amount of homework set though they were not specific as to whether they felt that too little or too much was set. The inspectors found that the teachers set appropriate homework tasks to consolidate and extend the pupils' learning. Although, on occasions, homework is not set when it is

scheduled to be and although at Key Stage 4 coursework deadlines can cause the load to be heavy, the judgement of the inspectors is that homework makes a good contribution to the pupils' overall progress. The teachers' ongoing assessment of the pupils' learning in lessons is a strength. The quality of their marking is generally good.

23. The subjects in which the teaching is very good are English, science and art at both key stages, and design and technology and business studies at Key Stage 4. The teaching is good at both key stages in history and religious education; it is good in mathematics and in design and technology at Key Stage 3 and in music and physical education at Key Stage 4. In modern languages, though the teaching is not unsatisfactory overall, there are nevertheless some significant weaknesses in the teaching over time. For example, expectations are not as high as they should be and the teachers do not always give the pupils sufficient sustained practice in speaking.

24. In the best teaching [i.e. in approximately one lesson in four], the key characteristics are:

- very good subject knowledge and an enthusiasm for the subject which communicates itself to the pupils and increases their motivation;
- meticulous planning that builds on the pupils' previous learning and ensures that their knowledge, skills and understanding are extended;
- skilful questioning that challenges and extends the pupils' understanding and confidence;
- high expectations of all pupils, especially but not only of those whose attainment on entry to the school was below average;
- very good relationships, good management of the pupils and lessons conducted at a brisk pace, all of which ensures that the pupils want to do well and that they concentrate well.

25. For example, in a Year 10 business studies lesson, the teacher's choice of stimulating resources and the brisk pace at which he conducted the lesson led to a very good quality of discussion in small groups and to a very good understanding of what makes for effective recruitment advertising. In a Year 7 athletics lesson, the teacher's high expectations and encouragement of all pupils, whatever their ability, ensured a high level of motivation and determination and improved performance. In an outstanding Year 9 history lesson, the teacher's choice of very stimulating resources and challenging questioning instilled a sense of excitement and pace and led to the pupils developing an acute awareness of the excitement felt by many Germans at the time of the rise of Hitler. In another outstanding lesson, this time Year 8 science, the teacher built effectively on the pupils' previous understanding; his enthusiasm and skilful questioning ensured a well above average understanding by the end of the lesson of the nature and structure of atoms and electrons.

26. In the small number of unsatisfactory lessons seen, the main characteristics were low expectations and slow pace. For example, in a Year 7 design and technology lesson too much time was spent on copying and labelling what the pupils already knew. In a Year 8 music lesson no work was available for those who finished the main task quickly. In a Year 9 modern languages lesson, the task did not engage the pupils. As a result few produced work of an acceptable standard. In each of these lessons the quality of the pupils' learning was not satisfactory.

27. The pupils with special educational needs are taught well in most subjects, and particularly well in English, science, art and in design and technology at Key Stage 4. This



results in very good learning. In the best lessons, the work is well matched to the pupils' needs, the teacher maintains a brisk pace and talk is used effectively to stimulate the pupils' learning. For example, in a good science lesson the teacher used a range of questions and extensive discussion to prompt the pupils to think carefully about the key features of levers and forces. This meant that the pupils were fully involved in the lesson and well motivated. Relationships between the teacher and pupils were also good, and this meant that the teacher could challenge incorrect answers without damaging the pupils' self-esteem. The use of information and communications technology, although only seen in a small number of lessons, was very effective at motivating these pupils and providing them with alternative ways of recording their work.

28. The classroom assistants usually provide good support in lessons, enabling the pupils with special educational needs to take a full role in the lesson and to make good progress. For example, in a history lesson the resources had been adapted to reduce the quantity of reading and to focus on the key aspects; and the classroom assistant helped the pupil with special educational needs to understand these and to be fully included in the lesson. However, in a significant minority of lessons the teacher had not planned the classroom assistant's role with sufficient clarity, and for some parts of the lesson the classroom assistants were not able to contribute to the pupils' learning.

29. Pupils for whom English is an additional language are well supported by a visiting specialist teacher. This work is not always followed through effectively into the curriculum as too little time is available for liaison between teachers. Nonetheless, subject teachers do provide the pupils with additional help with reading and writing in their lessons, which helps them to make good progress.

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

30. The range and quality of learning experiences are very good at Key Stage 3 and good at Key Stage 4. A particular strength at both key stages is the provision for pupils with special educational needs. The quality of the learning opportunities effectively underpins the standards achieved. The school has improved provision for information and communications technology and religious education, both criticised in the last report.

31. At Key Stage 3, balance, breadth and relevance are all very good. In addition to the statutory National Curriculum and religious education, breadth is achieved through the addition of personal, social and health education [PSHE] and drama for all pupils. A fortnightly lesson in each of Years 7, 8 and 9 ensures that all key requirements of the Programme of Study for information and communications technology are met.

32. At Key Stage 4, both breadth and relevance are good. The school provides a compulsory core curriculum for 80 per cent of the available time, though within this there is choice in both the humanities [history, geography and religious education] and in design and technology. Breadth is achieved through the addition of art, drama, business studies, music and both physical education and religious education as GCSE subjects. Some 20 per cent of the pupils study all three sciences to GCSE. Only a very small number, however, choose to study a second foreign language.

33. To ensure relevance for all pupils, the school has introduced two programmes which incorporate specific elements of work-related learning to meet the needs of a relatively small number of lower achieving pupils. One programme combines additional support on the development of basic skills with further experience of employment routes and training

through extended work experience with local employers and a linked course with Yeovil College. The other contains elements of careers exploration and other aspects of job investigation through a more diversified Youth Awards programme. Most of the pupils find the programmes interesting and relevant to their needs and stress that they have been helped to gain greater self-confidence as a result. Improvements in their attendance and behaviour have been noted since they enrolled on the programmes. However, the rationale for maintaining the two programmes as separate entities is not clear.

34. There is one significant weakness in the balance of the Key Stage 4 curriculum. This relates to the time available for religious education and information and communications technology. Although the school has not increased the time for religious education, improved planning ensures that the basic requirements of the Locally Agreed Syllabus are now met. Nevertheless, the limited amount of time does limit the extent of the pupils' knowledge and understanding [i.e. of those who do not study the subject to GCSE]. All pupils in Year 10 now receive lessons in information and communications technology and this is sufficient – just – to ensure that they have adequate experience of the basic requirements. Appropriately, the school is to double the amount of time for information and communications technology from September 2000 in both Year 10 and Year 11. Equality of opportunity in the curriculum is good; the one area that is restricted is the second modern language in Year 9, which is only studied by the upper sets.

35. The curriculum is well planned in almost all subjects. A particular strength is the breadth and depth of coverage in English, science and business studies. Planning in modern languages is satisfactory. However, the plans, especially in relation to opportunities for extended speaking and writing, are not consistently implemented. The main overall weakness lies in the unsatisfactory use of information and communications technology in subjects. The pupils' opportunities are too constrained by the level of interest and competence of individual teachers and at times by the lack of computers in subject areas. As a result they do not receive sufficient experience in applying the skills that they learn in their information and communications technology lessons. The two exceptions to this are in English, especially word-processing, and in business studies. Provision for information and communications technology for the Year 11 pupils who have just left did not meet statutory requirements. In all other respects statutory requirements are met.

36. The provision for personal, social and health education (PSHE) is good. Heads of year are effective in co-ordinating and monitoring a well-structured programme. Tutors usually teach their own tutor groups, although there is some specialist teaching within year groups. Many staff have received appropriate training in aspects of PSHE and the teaching seen during the inspection ranged from satisfactory to good. The materials used in the health education lessons provide pupils with very good information and advice, for example on aids and sexually transmitted diseases. Provision for drugs and sex education is good.

37. The provision for careers education and guidance is good. Careers education forms part of the PSHE programme and there are clear learning objectives for each year group. The programme enables pupils to develop their industrial awareness as well as practising skills such as writing a curriculum vitae and resolving conflict. There is a good structured approach to business links, for example, Year 9 make industrial visits to local employers. Year 10 pupils are very well prepared for the world of work through the work experience programme. The school provides good advice to Year 11 pupils in making choices about life beyond school. Good careers advice and guidance is provided by the careers advice service.

38. The school's partnership with the community is good. These links have a positive impact on the pupils' attainment and their social and cultural development. Particularly strong links with an association of eight European schools result in beneficial exchanges of pupils and joint projects. For example, most Year 8 pupils have a European pen friend and correspond by post and e-mail. Exchanges focus not only on language, but on areas of the curriculum such as food and history. A travelling art exhibition celebrates work from all the schools in the association.

39. The school has established good links with local employers, and pupils benefit from industrial visits, work experience and industrial mentors. A good range of trips and residential visits enrich the curriculum. Contact with the local community is more limited, but there is some good practice. For example, Year 8 pupils organise a party for senior citizens and some pupils are elected to the local Youth Council.

40. The provision of extra-curricular activities is good. Pupils have the opportunity to participate in a good range of sporting, musical and other activities, including outdoor and adventurous activities. There are school teams in rugby, football, basketball, badminton, cricket and athletics. In music there is a choir and a wind band, together with a range of smaller ensembles. The curriculum is further enhanced by numerous visits both in the UK and abroad, for example the Year 9 trip to the First World War battlefields. [See also paragraph 38 above.]

41. The school makes very good curricular provision for pupils with special educational needs (SEN). Pupils with SEN are fully and effectively included in the school curriculum. Some pupils in Years 7 and 8 are withdrawn from assembly and tutor time for additional literacy support. This provision is usually short term, is effective, and the benefits of the programme outweigh any disadvantages of the withdrawal. All the curricular needs of pupils with statements of special educational needs are met. The effectiveness of the provision is clearly visible in the GCSE results achieved.

42. Eleven pupils are disapplied from the National Curriculum. Replacement programmes are well planned and effective in meeting the needs of these pupils. For them the work-related curriculum in Key Stage 4 is an appropriate extension to the existing curriculum. [See paragraph 33 above.]

43. A small range of additional curriculum opportunities is offered to the pupils identified as gifted and talented. This includes residential activities and entry into national competitions. These are helpful but this is an area that would benefit from further development.

### **Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development**

44. The school does not meet the legal requirements for a daily act of worship. Assemblies are used well to re-enforce positive attitudes and to applaud success, and time is sometimes provided for reflection on occasion. Tutor time that replaces assembly is not used as an opportunity for spiritual development, and the 'thought for the day' has little impact.

45. The school makes sound provision for the spiritual development of its pupils. Very good opportunities are present in religious education, where pupils are encouraged to reflect on their own beliefs and values, and to consider the purpose of life and man's place in the universe. Good opportunities for spiritual development are found in the history department's visit to the First World War battlefields and pupils are clearly moved by the

experience. The combined English, art, music and drama departments' project on 'Faces of War' provides a valuable opportunity for pupils' spiritual growth. In other areas, however, opportunities are missed and the lack of a current policy, awareness-raising strategies for staff, or audit of existing opportunities contribute to this omission.

46. The school makes very good provision for the moral development of its pupils. There is a very clear behaviour policy that is well understood by the pupils. Assemblies provide a clear moral message and the teachers themselves support the school's aims through their high expectations of behaviour and in their treatment of the pupils. Personal and social education lessons provide a clear platform for discussion of such topics as the dangers inherent in smoking and the use of drugs. In religious education, particularly in Key Stage 4, pupils consider moral questions concerning ethical dilemmas, such as the practice of abortion and euthanasia, and are given the opportunity to reflect on the consequences of actions taken. Moral issues are raised and debated in a range of subjects. In business studies pupils consider the moral implications of choice in advertising and social attitudes of business. In science, design and technology, English, geography and in history, contemporary moral issues are discussed ranging from the question of genetic engineering to the work of consumer groups. The morality of war is considered in many areas from different angles and pupils are encouraged to reflect on their own values and opinions and those of others.

47. Provision for the social development of pupils is very good. They are encouraged to support the work of charities and through a range of activities pupils experience interaction with a variety of people. Examples of this are the senior citizen party organised by Year 8 pupils and the activities of the school's band. The school has developed an effective system of mentoring for younger pupils through its prefect system. The paired reading scheme and the year council provide opportunities for the pupils to take responsibility in the work of the school. Pupils are encouraged to participate in a wide range of extra-curricular activities and are given the opportunity to enter competitions, such as the 'European Young Consumers Competition', and the 'National School Competition' run by St John Ambulance, in which they are most successful. Pupils from Preston school attend the National Youth Council and at present hold the position of chair and vice-chair. Pupils have access to a wide variety of visits both overseas and at home, such as the skiing trip and the visit to the Millennium Dome, and these opportunities enable pupils to develop confidence and self-reliance.

48. The school provides good provision for the cultural development of its pupils. The music department provides a wide range of opportunities to listen to and to perform music in and outside school. There are theatre and concert visits to widen the experience of pupils, and the Preston Arts Week encourages participation in a wide range of artistic endeavours. The school's links with Europe are a major strength, and the school's membership of the European Schools' Association provides a valuable link with schools from several European countries. Pupils exchange correspondence with pupils in Europe, and exchange visits are made with several European schools, European visitors being made welcome in the school. There is sound awareness of the multi-cultural nature of Britain today. In food technology pupils use recipes from other cultures, and pupils visit the Sikh Gurdwara, the Islamic Mosque and the Hindu temple in Bristol as part of their religious education. In art pupils considered the Islamic culture and its contribution to design and architecture and in physical education pupils study dance from other cultures. Poetry and books from other cultures are an important feature of the curriculum in English.

## **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?**

49. As at the time of the last OFSTED inspection, pastoral care remains a strength of the school. The school provides excellent educational and personal support and guidance for its pupils. Pupils are valued and well known by the staff. Relationships between tutors and pupils are strong. Continuity of care is enhanced by form tutors and heads of year remaining with their tutor groups during the pupils' five years in school. Heads of year are very caring and show great concern for their pupils. They work very hard to give help and guidance to pupils who have academic or personal problems. For example, the head of Year 11 organised intensive 'coursework completion' workshops after school. Parents appreciate the high level of care shown by the school and generally they fully support the staff in their pastoral work.

50. Tutor time is used effectively. A structured programme has a good emphasis on literacy, and pupils have time for personal reading and sharing reviews of books. Tutors check and sign planners and discuss issues with individual pupils. Good opportunities for personal interviews between pupils and tutors are provided throughout the year.

51. The school has good procedures to ensure the pupils' welfare, health and safety. The school's arrangements for child protection are good. There is a clear child protection policy, and the staff have received basic awareness training. The special educational needs co-ordinator [SENCO] is the designated member of staff and carries out her duties effectively.

52. The arrangements for first aid are good. Several members of staff are qualified in first aid, and a good number have received basic training. The full-time nurse co-ordinates first aid, and is based in a well-equipped medical room. She provides high quality care for pupils who are ill or injured, and adds a further dimension to the personal support for individual pupils.

53. The school pays due regard to health and safety. Overall management of health and safety is the responsibility of a deputy head. The staff health and safety representative effectively co-ordinates health and safety issues on a day-to-day basis. A clear and detailed health and safety policy is in place. A comprehensive risk assessment was carried out last year, but not all issues raised have been fully addressed. A fire officer recently checked the premises. Any potential hazards are recorded and the appropriate action is taken. A number of health and safety concerns were brought the attention of the school including the lack of foot stops in some design and technology areas.

54. The school's procedures for monitoring and improving attendance are very good. Unexplained absences are followed up by tutors and heads of year, involving a deputy head and the educational social worker where appropriate. Holidays taken in term time are discouraged and the headteacher decides if they should be authorised. Patterns of absence are monitored and parents are contacted if there are concerns.

55. The procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour are very good, and the school generally has a calm and harmonious atmosphere. The school has a brief behaviour policy. Detailed procedures are printed in the staff handbook. Pupils, staff and parents understand the clear system of rewards and sanctions. These are consistently applied by staff. The ethos of promoting good behaviour is reinforced in lessons, assemblies and through the examples of adults working in school. The school has good systems in place to monitor and inform parents of both unacceptable and improving behaviour. Procedures for monitoring and eliminating any bullying or oppressive behaviour are good. Pupils report that rare incidents are dealt with effectively.

56. Procedures for the assessment of pupils' academic performance are good. Pupils are tested formally each year in each subject. Grades are collected centrally and analysed using the latest technology. The results are shared with the class teachers and used to track performance and indicate underachievement. Assessments are monitored carefully to show differences in performance of boys and girls. This has identified the underachievement of groups of boys at Key Stage 4. Academic progress is also monitored very well throughout the school through good informative marking and a programme of regular assessments, which are carefully summarised. These are used very effectively for formal end of key stage assessments, to monitor and support pupils' academic progress and to set individual and group targets, which are carefully monitored to show progress. The assessment information is used well in most subjects to ensure that targets are met. The overall procedures for assessment are very good in English, art, history and GNVQ; they are good in mathematics, science, design and technology and physical education. There are, however, weaknesses in modern languages, information and communications technology and in music at Key Stage 3, in each of which the teacher assessments are often too generous.

57. Procedures for the identification and assessment of pupils with special educational needs (SEN) are good. The school uses an appropriate range of assessment strategies to identify and diagnose needs. There are systematic and effective procedures for monitoring the progress of individual pupils, especially with respect to the targets set in their Individual Education Plans (IEPs). Procedures for the annual review of statements of special educational needs are thorough and meet requirements. There is a high level of parental involvement in this process.

## **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?**

58. Overall, the parents' views of the school are very positive, and they say that their children like school. Parents feel that the school has high expectations and that their children make good progress. They say that teaching is good and they are kept well informed about how their children are progressing. They feel that the school is well led and managed. They are pleased by the standard of care and find the staff are very approachable. A significant minority of parents have concerns about homework. The inspection team found homework to be appropriate and does not share these parents' views. Through the questionnaire some parents expressed some concern about the range of extra-curricular activities and about how closely the school works with parents. The inspectors found that the school provides a good range of extra-curricular activities for a school of its size. They could find no evidence that the school does not work closely with its parents.

59. The school has very effective links with its parents and has maintained the standards found at the time of the last report. Parents support the work of staff in helping the pupils overcome academic or personal problems. The school works hard to ensure that parents can communicate directly with key members of staff. For example, all heads of year have their own direct line telephone number and voice mail. The headteacher is also available to talk to parents at a surgery held on one evening a week.

60. The school provides very good information to parents and this helps them to take an active part in their children's education. Pupils' annual reports are of a high quality in all subjects except information and communications technology. They give parents clear information about the pupils' strengths and how pupils can improve their work. The school also sends parents useful interim progress reports which highlight strengths and areas of concern. Parents are invited to two consultation evenings a year (one with tutors and one

with subject teachers) and these provide valuable opportunities for parents to discuss their children's progress. The school invites parents to valuable information sessions, for example on preparation for GCSE examinations and raising achievement in Year 8. Newsletters are sent to parents twice a term and give them useful information about future events and celebrate the school's successes. The prospectus and annual governors' report are informative, but the prospectus does not contain all the information it should, for example the school's admissions policy, the national Key Stage 3 and GCSE results.

61. The parents make very good contributions to their children's learning at school and at home. Most parents view and sign the pupils' planners and some use them effectively as a means of communication with tutors and staff. The school works very closely with parents of pupils with special educational needs. There are good opportunities for parents to meet with the SENCO and most of these parents attend their children's annual reviews. The vast majority of parents are keen to work with the school to help their children to achieve their best.

62. The impact of parents' involvement in the work of the school is good. The active Parent, Teacher and Friends Association raises considerable funds for the school. They also assist at school events such as productions and act as a 'sounding board' when changes in school life are proposed. Parent governors make significant contributions to the school community and most parents have signed the home/school agreement.

#### **HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?**

63. The overall quality of leadership and management in the school is very good and has a direct impact on the quality of the teaching and on the very good achievement of the vast majority of the pupils.

64. The headteacher and the two deputies, ably assisted by the extended senior management team, provide very clear and effective leadership. They are instrumental in ensuring that the school's key aims of maximising each pupil's potential and establishing and maintaining very good relationships are central to everything the school does. The close working relationship between the head and the two deputies and their complementary skills have ensured a very high level of consistency in overall direction and the expectations of the teaching and non-teaching staff and of the pupils. This in turn has helped strengthen the quality of teamwork in most subjects.

65. Planning for future development is very good. The school's planning process is thorough and actively involves staff and governors. The plan itself is succinct. It contains a thorough review of progress on previous priorities, and then focuses on a small number of key priorities for the school, including, for example, raising standards in information and communications technology. Costs are clearly identified. The overall quality of subject action plans is good; each shows the contribution that the subject intends to make to each of the whole-school priorities.

66. A major strength of the management of the school is the thoroughness of its target-setting process. The collation and analysis of data on the pupils' progress is very thorough. When they arrive, the pupils' performance in the Key Stage 2 national tests and their performance in standardised tests administered by the school are used to set challenging targets in all subjects for the end of Year 9. Their progress is then tracked twice yearly. Careful analysis by senior managers leads to effective intervention when individual pupils appear to be underachieving. As the pupils enter Key Stage 4, the school uses both their performance in the national tests at age 14 and their performance in a standardised

reading test to set individual, subject and whole-school targets for GCSE. Again, progress is checked twice each year and the data analysed. A minority of pupils, whose performance is below that expected, receive additional help and support. The main impact of this process has been to raise expectations by providing good information about each pupil's potential to all staff.

67. Senior managers have a very good awareness of strengths and weaknesses in the work of the school and a further major strength of the management is the monitoring of teaching. As a key part of its "Team Quality Assurance" programme, all heads of subject observe each member of their teaching team towards the end of the Autumn Term. Towards the end of the Spring Term, each of the senior managers observes the teachers in the subjects for which they have oversight. They then give feedback to individual teachers and to the departments. Issues of importance for the whole staff are shared. For example, the most recent round of observation pinpointed some inconsistency in both expectations and the pace of lessons within some subjects. Where more serious weaknesses have been identified, for example in the recent leadership and management of the geography and modern languages departments, appropriate action has been taken to improve the situation.

68. The overall quality of leadership and management in subjects is good. It is very good in English, science, art, business studies and for special educational needs. It is no coincidence that these are the subjects in which standards are highest. There are now new heads of department, recently appointed, in the two subjects where leadership and management had been weak. The heads of year also provide very effective leadership to their team of tutors, not only in respect of the personal and social education programme in their year but also in helping them to track individual progress and to support the pupils' personal and academic development.

69. All statutory requirements for special educational needs are met. The school policy is in line with the SEN Code of Practice, and provides clear information about the school's systems and procedures. Procedures and systems are tightly organised. The requirements for the school's annual report are met. The school's funding for provision for special educational needs has been used appropriately and with very good effect. The special educational needs co-ordinator [SENCO] is very effective. She is enthusiastic, energetic and has high expectations of the pupils, which she communicates effectively to the teaching staff and to the team of learning support assistants.

70. The governing body is relatively inexperienced, following considerable recent changes in personnel. Few were governors at the time of the last inspection. Nevertheless, they have a clear view of their role and a good awareness of the school's strengths and relative weaknesses. They have been instrumental in ensuring that the school operates within a tight budget without going into debt. With the exception of collective worship and of the omission of some required information in the school's prospectus they are ensuring that statutory requirements are met.

71. The school makes very good use of its financial resources. Educational priorities are supported by very good, careful financial planning. The budget is prepared with the close co-operation of the governors and has focused spending carefully on the school's priorities, notably the maintenance and improvement of high standards in the core subjects and improving the provision for information and communications technology. Very effective use is made of new technology in management and administration, notably in efficient financial administration, budget setting and monitoring the progress of the pupils. Specific grants are used very well for their designated purposes. For example, the funds available



for special educational needs support are enhanced and spent wisely. Financial control is very good. The most recent auditor's report endorses this and the recommendations of the report have been promptly acted upon by the school. The school takes care to apply the principles of best value. It ensures that standards and costs compare with those of other schools, that those with responsibilities are challenged to justify the use of resources, that there is competition in the purchasing of resources and services and that there is consultation before major spending decisions are taken.

72. The school's accommodation is adequate overall. Since the last inspection the school has created four new computer areas, which has helped to improve standards in information and communications technology throughout the school. Also, two food technology rooms have been remodelled, which has improved the range of opportunities available for practical work. The weaknesses in the provision for physical education, which were identified in the last inspection, have also been addressed. The accommodation for all subjects is now adequate, with the exception of music. Here a significant number of music lessons currently take place in non-specialist accommodation where the pupils lack access to the appropriate resources for practical work.

73. The senior management team has a very good understanding of the important contribution a good staff makes to school improvement. It is the guiding principle of the long-term plan for staff restructuring that informs new appointments. The issues raised concerning non-specialist teaching at the last inspection have been resolved to good effect in English. However, in some other subjects, most notably religious studies, there is still non-specialist teaching in which the lack of strong subject expertise does limit the depth of the pupils' learning.

74. There are excellent arrangements in place for the regular review and development of all staff. The result is a very committed teaching staff. Arrangements for staff development are very good. Significant initiatives for teaching staff include literacy and data interpretation for department managers. Both have made a very valuable contribution to improving standards throughout the whole school. Development is carefully targeted to ensure maximum impact across the school: for example, all staff, teaching and non-teaching, have undertaken 'Drugs Awareness' training; lunch time supervisory staff have received child protection training. Staff development is well planned to ensure that the long-term vision for the school can be achieved. For example, all staff are being trained in information and communications technology. There are thorough procedures in place for the induction and support of newly qualified teachers and newly appointed staff. Non-teaching staff have been involved in appropriate training for their roles. In partnership with Exeter University, the school has proved to be a very good training ground for student teachers.

75. The level and quality of the school's resources for teaching and learning are adequate. The ratio of pupils to computers (8:1) is in line with the national average for secondary schools. The two computer suites are, however, not used as much as they could be. The provision of fiction within the English department is very good. The stock of books in the library is adequate in number to support the curriculum. However, weaknesses in the management of the library have led to unsatisfactory co-ordination with subjects and to low rates of borrowing. The library is not making the contribution to standards that it could be.

## **WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?**

76. In order to improve further the standard of education provided, senior managers and governors should:

**(1) improve standards in modern languages, by:**

- raising the teachers' expectations of what the pupils, especially boys, can achieve;
- improving the overall quality of the teaching;
- ensuring that the pupils have more opportunities for speaking in class and for extended writing;
- improving assessment procedures.

See paragraphs 7, 23,130-132.

**(2) improve the pupils' experience in information and communications within subjects, by:**

- ensuring that all subjects plan effectively for this;
- ensuring that planned training for staff results in improved confidence and greater use of information and communications technology;
- ensuring that there are adequate resources within subjects;
- improving assessment procedures;
- establishing a clear leadership role for information and communications technology.

See paragraphs 34-5 and 128.

77. Other weaknesses, which are less serious but which should be considered, are: the provision of more opportunities for spiritual development within more subjects (paragraphs 44 and 45); ensuring that the library plays a more effective part in supporting subjects (paragraph 75); bringing levels of numeracy up from average to above (paragraphs 9 and 92); including all required information in the school's prospectus (paragraph 60).

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

### Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	158
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	43

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
5	19	44	27	4	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	794	
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	42	

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	16	
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	139	

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	4

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	26
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	25

### Attendance

Authorised absence	%
School data	8.6
National comparative data	7.9

Unauthorised absence	%
School data	0.2
National comparative data	1.1

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

### Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	88	79	167

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	65	63	69
	Girls	69	55	56
	Total	134	118	125
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	80 (80)	71 (74)	75 (79)
	National	63 (64)	62 (60)	55 (56)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	40 (51)	48 (51)	41 (53)
	National	28 (34)	38 (36)	23 (27)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	65	71	66
	Girls	71	62	55
	Total	136	133	121
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	81 (82)	80 (76)	73 (80)
	National	64 (62)	64 (63)	60 (62)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	37 (49)	59 (59)	33 (30)
	National	31 (31)	37 (36)	28 (31)

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

\* still to be supplied by school

### 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
	1999	59	77	136

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	29	60	60
	Girls	49	76	76
	Total	78	136	136
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	57 (47)	100 (96)	100 (96)
	National	47 (47)	91 (90)	96 (96)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	44 (39)
	National	38 (37)

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

Vocational qualifications		Number	% success rate
Number studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	10	100
	National		n/a

### ***Ethnic background of pupils***

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	4
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	1
White	785
Any other minority ethnic group	4

### ***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	37	2
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)	43.4
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	18

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

#### **Education support staff: Y7 – Y11**

Total number of education support staff	14
Total aggregate hours worked per week	383

#### **Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y11**

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	78.3%
---	-------

#### **Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11**

Key Stage 3	25
Key Stage 4	23

### ***Financial information***

Financial year	1998/99
----------------	---------

	£
Total income	1,613,541
Total expenditure	1,599,615
Expenditure per pupil	2,133
Balance brought forward from previous year	19,447
Balance carried forward to next year	33,373

## **Results of the survey of parents and carers**

### **Questionnaire return rate**

Number of questionnaires sent out	794
Number of questionnaires returned	110

### **Percentage of responses in each category**

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	45	47	6	1	1
My child is making good progress in school.	55	42	3	1	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	35	52	5	4	5
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	20	58	16	5	1
The teaching is good.	37	56	3	0	4
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	44	45	8	2	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	63	35	1	0	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	72	27	1	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	37	46	12	1	4
The school is well led and managed.	47	50	2	0	1
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	51	41	5	0	4
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	29	54	9	5	4

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

### **ENGLISH**

78. The pupils' attainment in the National Curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 3 is well above average compared to results in all schools. It is above average compared to similar schools. This has been a consistent pattern of results for both boys and girls over the past four years. Girls perform better than boys. However, both boys' and girls' performance is well above average compared to the national averages for boys and girls respectively. These well above average standards are reflected in the lessons observed and in the scrutiny of pupils' work. Given that the pupils arrive with slightly above average attainment, this represents very good achievement over the three years of this key stage.

79. At Key Stage 4 the 1999 GCSE results in English are well above average for pupils gaining A\*-C grades compared to results in all schools. They are above average compared to similar schools. The performance of boys was above the national average for boys; the girls performed well above the national average for girls. In English literature the 1999 results are broadly in line with the average, with boys falling slightly below average and girls performing well above average. In lessons observed and in the scrutiny of pupils' work current attainment is well above average in language and above average in literature. In general, the vast majority of the pupils, including those with special educational needs, continue to achieve well through Key Stage 4. No pupil at the school failed to achieve a GCSE grade in English last year.

80. As part of its cross-curricular literacy policy the school emphasises the importance of talk in learning. The design of Key Stage 3 schemes of work in English ensures that all pupils experience a very good range of speaking and listening tasks. As a result, they develop very good skills through group discussion, poetry performance, interviews and role-play. This is well reflected in many English and drama lessons where pupils work successfully in pairs and small groups – exploring ideas and responding orally to printed and visual texts. As they move into Key Stage 4 and face the demands of GCSE, pupils are increasingly able to present their ideas more formally in presentations to the whole class and in smaller groups. In whole-class situations most pupils respond confidently and with enthusiasm to their teachers' questions.

81. The overall standards of reading are well above average at the end of both key stages. Since the last inspection, the department has been successful in enhancing the status of independent reading throughout the school, providing more texts suited to reluctant readers, low attainers and boys. All Key Stage 3 pupils take part in a progressive "Reading Challenge" and English lessons regularly start with concentrated periods of independent reading. This is extended and complemented by additional sessions in tutorial time. Pupils enjoy these opportunities, making good use of recently purchased resources as well as texts brought from home. Teachers monitor pupils' reading closely and expect them, increasingly, to tackle more demanding texts in preparation for the challenges of Key Stage 4. For example, all Year 8 pupils cover a unit of work on poetry from different cultures, which is then extended and developed in a compulsory component of the GCSE syllabus. Reading for information is also covered effectively in the Year 8 work on biography, when pupils have to use library books to research the lives of famous people. The English department could, however, be more active in exploiting the full potential of the wide-ranging poetry collection.

82. Standards in writing are well above average. Pupils in Key Stage 3 classes cover an increasingly wide range of writing, exemplified in their files, in displays and through occasional in-house publications. There are some very good book reviews, amusing limericks and alternative re-writes of traditional stories. A particularly striking feature of Year 8 writing is the quality of personal and creative responses to the cross-curricular project on 'Faces of War'. Drafting and revising are encouraged and there is a systematic and effective approach to spelling, with pupils in Years 7 and 8 being re-grouped for fortnightly lessons based on their performance in regular tests. Teachers make good use of computers in lessons so that pupils are able to word-process their writing and present it in a variety of interesting and attractive forms. A particularly good example of this was in a lower attaining group where Year 7 boys were making very good use of Power Point to produce a spelling program for pupils in the local primary school. There is more scope, however, to develop further the potential of the Internet and e-mail in the department's work. At Key Stage 4 pupils make very good progress in writing across a range of styles for their GCSE coursework. Year 11 pupils produce an impressive range of very good quality writing, particularly in the wider reading assignments. Some pupils, for example, wrote perceptively in comparing aspects of storm scenes in Hardy's 'Far from the Madding Crowd' and Golding's 'Lord of the Flies', while others looked at the theme of 'fear' in Dickens' 'Great Expectations' and Watson's 'Talking in Whispers'. Year 10 pupils develop their literary critical skills in work on drama and poetry as well as being able to develop an argument when writing on important social and moral issues. In exploring how gender roles will develop in the 21<sup>st</sup> century many pupils demonstrate very good control of sentence structure and style.

83. The overall quality of teaching is very good. This makes a very significant contribution to the very good quality of the pupils' learning and to their very good achievement over time in both key stages. The teachers know their subject in depth and they inspire pupils with their own enthusiasm. Their teaching is characterised by thorough planning, high expectations and skilful variation of teaching and learning strategies. They pace their lessons well and provide purposeful, regular opportunities for pupils to learn both through talking in a variety of pairs and small groups and also through whole-class discussion and reflection. They use the Key Stage 3 schemes of work and GCSE syllabuses most effectively to provide continuity of knowledge, skills and understanding. Teachers make very good use of all assessment data for individual pupils, incorporating the department's high quality procedures for tracking and recording progress and achievement. Consequently the pupils know their levels of attainment and can see how to improve through clearly focused targets. Several outstanding lessons were seen. For example, in a Year 8 lesson on poetry from other cultures, the teacher's very clear focus on issues such as slavery and oppression, his ability to challenge the pupils' thinking and the emphasis on the pupils acquiring the appropriate technical language of literary criticism all lead to the pupils making very good progress in their understanding and appreciation.

84. The leadership and management of the department are very strong. This also makes a very significant contribution to the pupils' learning and achievement. The head of department has been particularly effective in managing change since the last inspection, leading to very good improvements in curriculum, staffing, accommodation and resources. The teachers work very well as a team, sharing responsibilities and contributing to the very clear sense of direction manifested in the handbook and in the action plan. Priorities now are to develop curriculum links with the drama department and make more effective use of the library resources and information and communications technology.

85. Cross-curricular literacy has been a whole-school priority over the past two years and this has resulted in the production of an excellent guidance file for staff. A significant



feature of this guidance is the school's own training video, featuring uses of talk in science, design and technology, geography and personal, social and health education. Most subjects make very good use of displays of subject-specific vocabulary in classrooms. Pupils' writing skills are well developed in a number of subjects, including design and technology, history, religious education and science. Whilst reading is a strength in the work of the English department there is scope for further development across the whole curriculum, particularly in making planned use of the library.

86. Drama is taught as a separate subject at Key Stage 3 and is a popular GCSE option at Key Stage 4. The most recent examination results are well above the national average for pupils gaining A\*-C grades and are in line with the average for A\*-G.

87. Owing to the absence of the drama teacher during the inspection it was not possible to evaluate teaching and learning in the subject. It is clear, however, from the evidence available and from discussion with pupils that standards are good and that drama makes a significant contribution to the life of the school. This is to be seen particularly in the quality of recent productions, such as Miller's 'The Crucible', which was successfully presented as part of the Year 11 GCSE course.

## **MATHEMATICS**

88. In the 1999 Key Stage 3 national assessments the pupils' attainment was above the national average but below the average of similar schools. Standards have been above the national average over recent years, as they were at the last inspection in 1996. In the 1999 assessments the standards attained by girls were below those of boys. Lesson observation and scrutiny of the pupils' work during the inspection indicate that current standards in mathematics have improved in response to developments in the school and are now well above the national average. For example, pupils in Year 7 could investigate the relationship between points on the perimeter and within a shape, and find a formula for the relationship. Boys and girls now do equally well. However, standards in arithmetic, particularly mental arithmetic, are only average and pupils in Year 7 are on the whole better at mental arithmetic than those in Years 8 and 9.

89. In recent years standards in mathematics at the end of Key Stage 3, although above average, have been below those attained in English and science, an indication that standards in mathematics have not been as high as they should have been. However, the achievement of the pupils currently in Key Stage 3 is good. Nearly all pupils, including those with special educational needs, make good progress over the key stage. In most lessons the pupils are given challenging work, which results in a good pace to their learning. The targets for this year have been set well above the level of 1999 and provide an appropriate challenge.

90. In the 1999 GCSE examinations, standards were broadly in line with the national average. The attainments of boys was, on average, significantly below that of girls. At the time of the last inspection, standards were described as above average. Results for mathematics were lower in 1999 than those for English and science, an indication that standards in mathematics have not been as high as they should have been.

91. Evidence from the inspection, however, indicates that the current standards of sixteen-year olds, following a careful scrutiny of their work and teachers' records, have improved, as a result of better planning and better monitoring of the teaching. Standards are now above the national average, although the performance of girls is still significantly better than that of boys. Standards are particularly high in statistics where the best pupils

successfully attain good GCSE results in Year 10. However, standards in arithmetic over the key stage are only average, and many pupils are too dependent upon calculators for routine calculations. The achievement of nearly all pupils, including those with special educational needs, is sound. For example, most pupils in a high ability set in Year 10 could solve quadratic equations by trial and improvement techniques, using calculators. Targets for 2000 have been set above the national average and provide a good challenge.

92. Standards of numeracy are broadly average. Apart from Year 7, where standards of numeracy are high, pupils are relatively weak at mental arithmetic. However, in all years the pupils are competent in applying the different mathematical skills they have to other subjects, notably in science and design and technology.

93. Nearly all pupils are well behaved and apply themselves well to their tasks, largely as a result of effective teaching. Pupils' behaviour and attitudes are good at Key Stage 3, where they have a positive attitude to mathematics, particularly to problem solving. Pupils' behaviour and attitudes are sound at Key Stage 4, though a minority of pupils lack interest and do not apply themselves as well.

94. Teaching and learning are good at Key Stage 3 and sound at Key Stage 4. At Key Stage 3, most lessons have a good pace and pupils make good progress. The teachers' class management skills are good and encourage the pupils to work hard. Pupils acquire new knowledge and skills well and are able to apply these to solving problems. For example, in a very good Year 7 lesson, the pupils made very good progress in solving simple equations and applied these skills well to problems involving angles. Generally, the work is challenging and well explained, helping the pupils' understanding. Planning is good, expectations are challenging and teaching methods are effective. However, at Key Stage 4, the teachers do not use as wide a range of teaching strategies and the pace of the lessons is relatively slower compared to those in Key Stage 3. In an unsatisfactory lesson with Year 10, on number patterns, the work was not well explained indicating some problems in the teacher's subject knowledge. A significant number of pupils made little progress during the lesson. Resources are generally used well. However, although in Year 7 the pupils learn to use computers to solve problems in mathematics, these skills are not used sufficiently in later years.

95. The management of the subject is good. Improved planning and monitoring are leading to increasingly effective teaching. In comparison to the time of the last inspection, standards are broadly similar. From the evidence of the inspection, they are now improving again.

## **SCIENCE**

96. The school's 1999 Key Stage 3 science results are well above both the national average and the average for similar schools. Results at GCSE are well above average. Hardly any pupils fail to achieve a GCSE grade; approximately two thirds achieve at least two passes at A\*-C; and almost all who study the three separate sciences achieve A\*-C grades in each subject. Boys and girls achieve equally well. The least able, including those with special educational needs, also do well. These very good standards have been maintained since the last inspection.

97. The pupils' attainment seen in class and in their written work confirms that achieved in recent examinations. At both key stages it is in line to reach standards well above national expectations. Given average attainment in science on entry to the school, their overall achievement is very good. Boys and girls perform equally well. Results have

improved from above average to well above since the last inspection. The organisation and presentation of the pupils' work is generally of a very good quality and the vast majority of pupils read and write well. Good literacy skills help them to prepare good notes and records and to participate well in class discussions. Pupils' performance is comparable across all four attainment targets. The pupils enter the school with average attainment in science. The Key Stage 3 and GCSE results are thus particularly good as they progress to being well above average. Pupils make very good progress in science in an enjoyable and positive atmosphere.

98. The quality of teaching is very good. It is typified by high expectations. Teachers are committed, work well together and make good use of time. They manage the pupils well, building on their good knowledge of the pupils and from their understanding of how to approach situations without having to be confrontational. They match the work well to the ability and previous attainment of the pupils. They pay considerable attention to ensuring that the pupils acquire the appropriate technical language. However, the provision of opportunities to use information and communications technology, for example using remote sensors and collecting data, is a weakness. A good range of science-related visits, for example to engineering works, effectively enhances the pupils' learning.

99. The quality of their learning is consistently very good and in nearly one lesson in five it is excellent. This clearly results from the very good quality of most of the teaching. For instance, in one Year 10 top set biology lesson, pupils were working on improving the reasons they had given for their predictions as to why one of light, heat or carbon dioxide would influence the rate of photosynthesis in pondweed. They worked very well in small groups and organised their own book research. The ethos in the laboratory was more like a professional research organisation than a Year 10 lesson and the progress being made was excellent. However, it is also a strength of the department that the progress of the lowest set in Year 10 was also very good, with the pupils successfully researching the sensitivity of skin and how well they could detect various stimuli. As with the top set, they worked well, stayed on task and were genuinely interested in the science. The pupils' behaviour is consistently good in science.

100. The department is very well led and managed. The head of department has provided a very clear sense of direction and the teamwork is strong. The deployment of the teachers is effective. Each group in Key Stage 3 has only one teacher and, where possible, the same teacher remains with the group right through the key stage. The pupils' performance is very closely monitored and the information well used in setting targets and in planning for each class. This is a department that has a clear capacity both to maintain the very good results and to continue to improve.

## **ART**

101. The pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is above national expectations overall. They enter the school with a wide range of experience and an understanding of art that is slightly above national expectations. The very good teaching from Year 7, focusing on basic art skills and the development of the pupils' knowledge and understanding of art, ensures that their achievement is good and that they make good progress through the key stage. Year 7 pupils learn to mix colours appropriately and use texture and shading in their observational drawings. They research and take notes on important artists and art movements. They learn to draw architectural details found on local buildings; they can name such details as 'capital', 'lancet window', 'gargoyle' and 'finial' and learn the function of many of those details. Higher attaining pupils show good imagination in developing an artistic textile approach to the construction of their personal books. By Year 8 the pupils

have a good knowledge of Egyptian and Islamic cultures. Using Islamic patterns, they are able to develop attractive scroll and key patterns around their central designs. By the end of the key stage, those pupils who opt for GCSE art have a good grounding from which to work.

102. The proportion of pupils achieving grades A\*-C in GCSE examinations in 1999 was exceptionally high and well above national expectations, both for boys and girls. Results have improved more rapidly than national results over the past three years and boys' results are edging closer to those of girls. The very knowledgeable, committed and enthusiastic teaching, in conditions that are barely adequate, has ensured that their achievement and progress through Key Stage 4 are both very good. The majority of pupils respond well to the high expectations of work and behaviour, ensuring that classes are generally productive and disciplined.

103. The very good balance between knowledge of art and artists and of practical work in a good range of media enables pupils to build their experience and understanding of art steadily through each key stage. A weakness, however is that at present they do not have sufficient opportunity to reinforce their studies through visits to galleries, sculpture parks and workshops. The work on display around the school is well mounted and contains some very good portrait studies in the style of artists such as Braque, Picasso, Manet and Lautrec. The pupils' sketchbooks are well annotated and show evidence of investigation over a wide range of techniques and processes. These include print making, collage, textiles, mask making and papier-mâché work, as well as observational and imaginative drawing and painting. Some pupils make good use of poetry as a stimulus for their work. Higher attainers in Key Stage 4 use their knowledge of colour skilfully to explore backgrounds which complement or contrast the observational elements of their composition. Where lessons conclude with a planned critical evaluation, the pupils develop their observational and critical skills and become more confident in evaluating their own work, as well as that of important artists. Although resources, accommodation and specialist teaching skills limit the scope of ceramic and other three-dimensional studies, the pupils are able to model, slab and coil clay forms. Some pupils at Key Stage 4 are venturing into plaster and wire modelling and are gaining the confidence to work on a larger scale. A strength of the GCSE course work can be seen in the individuality of their creative effort. Pupils with special educational and language needs make very good progress in lessons.

104. The quality of teaching and learning in almost all lessons seen was very good. The two main teachers have an excellent knowledge and understanding of their subject. Although their teaching experience is very limited, they have worked hard as a team to develop and extend the good work of the department. In one lesson observed, however, the teaching was less than satisfactory; this was a very difficult, lower attaining class of older pupils, taught by a non-specialist, in which expectations were not sufficiently high. The pupils were slow to settle, did not concentrate and so made unsatisfactory progress through the lesson. In the overwhelming majority of lessons, the teachers have very good relationships with the pupils. They make very good use of their own art skills and pupils clearly trust their knowledge and judgement in art lessons. In a lesson that was rounded off with a class evaluation of work, the opportunity to improve pupils' critical skills was well used. This enabled them to use the technical terms learned and to gain confidence in exercising critical judgement. Expectations of both behaviour and standards of work are high and pupils respond well to them, producing work that they are pleased to show and discuss with visitors. The enthusiasm, knowledge and good management of behaviour ensure that pupils are well motivated and enjoy art lessons in a pleasant and industrious working ethos.

105. The recently appointed head of art has done well to maintain the high quality of management noted at the last inspection; he and his colleagues work in conditions that are cramped, have little control over available light and very poor storage facilities. In these barely satisfactory conditions they are able to deliver excellent GCSE results that are a credit to the school. The resources for computer aided art are inadequate and will need to be improved if the department is to bring information and communications technology onto the curriculum in a fully effective way.

106. The department has made a good response to the last inspection. GCSE results have improved at a faster rate than national results. The progress and achievement of pupils in lessons, including those with special educational and language needs, have improved. The overall quality of teaching has improved and the very good quality of management, including the monitoring and evaluation of the work of the department, has been maintained. There are still too few opportunities for the effective use of information and communications technology.

## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

107. By the end of Key Stage 3, the pupils achieve standards that are above average. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, make good progress in lessons and over the key stage. Their achievement is good. The pupils develop very good knowledge and understanding of the subject and their ability to develop, plan and make their ideas is very good. For example, pupils in Year 9 develop imaginative ways of storing items for their desk tidy. They also show very good attention to detail in working out how they will make their idea, and in its construction. However, their ability to use pneumatics, mechanisms and electronics is a weakness, as is their ability to use computers for designing and making.

108. By the end of Key Stage 4, the standard that the pupils achieve, both in class and in their examinations, is well above average. In the 1999 examinations 74 per cent of pupils gained A\*-C grades, compared with 49 per cent nationally. The number gaining the highest grade was also above average. The GCSE results have improved consistently over the past three years. Standards are clearly higher than at the time of the last inspection, when they were described as "sound with a significant number of pupils achieving very good standards". The pupils' achievement at Key Stage 4 is very good. Standards are highest in food and textiles. In textiles, for example, all pupils gained A\*-C grades in 1999 and 66 per cent gained an A or A\* grade. The standard of coursework achieved by the current Year 11 maintains this high standard, other than in graphic products, where standards are lower this year. The pupils make very good progress over the time they are at the school and both boys and girls generally do better in design and technology than in most of their other subjects. The boys achieve well above the national average for boys; the girls exceed the national average for girls by no less than 30 per cent.

109. The teaching and learning at Key Stage 4 are very good. The teachers have very good expertise and high expectations, to which the pupils respond well. The pupils' learning is very good at this key stage. They are very well motivated and enjoy their work. They concentrate very well and show good levels of independence when designing and making their ideas. They form very good relationships with teachers and the other pupils. Behaviour is very good. The pupils are responsible and show good safety consciousness when working with tools and equipment. Good support materials provide guidance for pupils in organising their work and very well managed lessons ensure good progress and the efficient use of time. The teachers provide well-focused individual support for the

pupils. Good marking and feedback ensure that pupils know how to improve. In one very good textiles lesson, Year 10 pupils from a wide range of ability were at different stages of designing and making their garments. The teacher ensured that they all had clear targets for the lesson and gave effective individual support, which in turn ensured good progress in their work. The standard of teaching and learning at Key Stage 3 is good. In the best teaching, the teacher's enthusiasm motivates the pupils and an interesting range of activities promotes good levels of concentration and pace in their work. In the very small amount of unsatisfactory teaching at Key Stage 3, the pace of learning is too slow. Inappropriate activities, such as the copying of notes, take up valuable time that could be used more profitably.

110. The subject is well managed overall, particularly at Key Stage 4. This is a key factor in the success at GCSE. Good progress has been made in improving the accommodation since the last inspection by remodelling and extending two food rooms. However, poor specialist provision for graphics is limiting the range of opportunities available to the pupils. Also, computer equipment for designing and making and resources for electronics and control are inadequate and this is adversely affecting standards in these areas.

111. The head of department and the teacher with responsibility for food and textiles provide clear direction for the subject. The monitoring of teaching is a strength. Key Stage 3 is not as well co-ordinated as Key Stage 4, resulting in some instances where the teaching does not build clearly on previous learning. Assessment at Key Stage 4 is very good; the quality of the feedback to the pupils on their coursework and clear guidance on how to improve have contributed significantly to the standards achieved at GCSE. These standards have continued to improve since the time of the last inspection.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

112. Standards are just above national expectations at the end of Key Stage 3. The achievement of most pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 is sound. Year 7 pupils, including the less able, are developing sound mapwork skills. They can use scale and map symbols to draw simple maps and use the eight points of the compass to find and give directions. Year 8 pupils can describe and explain the processes which produce the landscape features in a typical river valley. In Year 9 pupils are able to describe the character of a place such as the Brazilian rainforest and explain how human activities are affecting the environment in that area. Year 9 pupils are able to research using a range of resources such as textbooks, CD-ROMs and the Internet. More able pupils are developing the ability to write extended reports and write persuasive arguments about environmental issues.

113. In 1999, GCSE results were below the national average. Pupils studying geography did not do nearly as well as in their other subjects. Except for 1999, however, results at GCSE had been above the national average for a number of years. From the evidence of the inspection, the attainment of the pupils currently in Years 10 and 11 is at least in line with national expectations. The present Year 11 pupils have completed some sound GCSE coursework and the mock examination results indicate an improvement compared to last year's standards. Their current achievement is satisfactory. They have completed a range of case studies from around the world and acquired a sound range of necessary geographical skills and techniques. Evidence from mock examinations indicates that most pupils are able to describe and explain the formation of physical features and the effects of physical processes, such as flooding and volcanic activity, on human activities. Many individual pupils are now making good use of computers to complete their GCSE coursework. In one Year 10 lesson pupils were able to describe and explain the effects of physical processes, such as coastal flooding, on people and the environment. They can

appreciate the conflicting views that people have on the benefits of coastal protection and the need for environmental management. Less able pupils are able to explain the site of settlements using an annotated sketch map whereas more able pupils are able to explain the processes which can cause change in a settlement over time. Pupils with special educational needs are making good progress in all years as a result of engaging and supportive teaching.

114. Although many classes have had more than one teacher this year, the teaching during the week of the inspection was good. This was clearly having a good impact on the pupils' learning, which was also good. Pupils respond well in lessons and have very positive attitudes. Good behaviour is a feature of most lessons. Pupils usually settle very quickly and listen attentively to teachers. In most lessons many pupils attempt to answer questions. Some less able boys in Year 8 were particularly motivated by the encouraging nature in which the teacher accepted their answers. Most pupils stay on task and move to the next activity with the minimum of fuss. Pupils have a positive attitude towards each other and work well in paired work and group situations. Older pupils show perseverance in completing their GCSE coursework. Only occasionally do a small minority of pupils, mostly boys, distract each other from their learning. Teachers plan carefully and have clear objectives, which are explained to pupils at the start of lessons. They use a good range of teaching and learning styles to actively engage pupils. This promotes good learning, particularly for less able pupils and those with special educational needs. In one Year 8 class the quality of the question and answer session encouraged all pupils to offer suggestions and attempt to answer questions. In one Year 10 lesson the teacher used a range of computer images and sources. This provided pupils with the necessary information to take on the role of a person involved in an environmental debate. Pupils were then able to work in pairs and share their ideas successfully. Pupils' progress and behaviour are continually monitored in lessons and teachers ensure that pupils stay on task with clear time limits. Teachers are aware of, and increasingly develop pupils' literacy skills in lessons by good reference to subject terminology and support for pupils' writing skills. There is some non-specialist teaching which, although satisfactory overall, does result in some missed opportunities to further pupils' understanding of some topics, such as rivers in Year 8.

115. In the recent past pupils have not always had sufficient opportunity to develop information and communications technology skills themselves. However, this was being addressed in the week of the inspection when teachers were using computers in the classroom and Year 9 pupils were using the Internet to search for information on Brazil.

116. The previous inspection report highlighted the lack of fieldwork in geography. There is now a more extensive and coherent programme of fieldwork. Year 8 pupils had recently completed a successful visit to the Dorset coastline and GCSE pupils make good use of the local area to apply their enquiry skills. There have been weaknesses in the management of the subject in recent years. These have contributed to the decline in results, most noticeable in 1999. Given this decline, there has been insufficient improvement since the last inspection. A new head of department had just taken up the post at the time of the inspection. He has a clear grasp of what needs to be done. He is aware of the key areas for development, which include raising standards, completing schemes of work and integrating the use of information and communications technology across the subject.

## HISTORY

117. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is above the national expectation. Girls perform better than boys. By the end of Key Stage 3, the pupils can identify key features of the period studied and they can empathise with the people of the time, such as soldiers in the First World War. They have a sound sense of chronology and can create time lines, aware that history is divided into time periods. They can research, select and extract information in response to extended questions, for example in their investigation into the role of Napoleon in the French revolution. Pupils can use different sources to obtain information and all are aware of the value of primary and secondary sources. Pupils are aware of the purpose of propaganda and the need to acquire a balanced view, for example in their work on Robbespierre, 'Hero or Villain?'. Higher attaining pupils can identify links between events and the influence of motive in the actions of individuals and countries.

118. The attainment of the pupils at the end of Key Stage 4 is above the national average. The number of pupils gaining grades A\*-C at GCSE is above the national average. The results for girls over the last two years have been well above the national average; the results for boys have fallen to a level in line with the national average. Over the last two years every pupil entered achieved a pass grade. The pupils can select and arrange information in response to questions and present the information in extended writing that is fluent and reasoned. There is some lack of analysis in their responses however, particularly from the lower and lower middle attainers, whose answers generally display only obvious connections. Higher attaining pupils can offer reasoned argument and present opposing views before making judgements. All pupils are aware that history can be viewed from different, valid perspectives and study examples of this in their work on the history of Ireland. All pupils undertake first-hand research in support of their study of architecture and gardens, and can compare changes in style and taste. On balance, they are too dependent upon the teacher for direction in research and ideas. Pupils use source material effectively and are aware that it has differing values to the historian. Lower attaining pupils, and those with special educational needs, are developing a good understanding of the periods studied and the skills that support the historian's work, though they are less aware of the causal links that affect events. The pupils' achievement at both key stages, including their progress over time, is good.

119. Teaching and learning are good in both key stages. Some very good teaching and one outstanding lesson were seen. Lessons are often taught with an enthusiasm that reflects upon the pupils, and the pace is generally brisk. Lessons are well planned to include a variety of learning strategies and to ensure good use of the time. Teachers have a secure subject knowledge that enables them to add colourful detail to lessons and to respond to pupils' questions concisely, creating confidence in their understanding. Good use is made of question and answer to assess knowledge and understanding and to reinforce earlier learning. High expectations of both work and behaviour support pupils in their studies and create a safe learning environment that enables progress to be made. Teachers take pains to analyse their teaching and its results in order to provide their pupils with the most appropriate support. They make good use of pupil self-assessment at Key Stage 4 in order to enable pupils to develop an understanding of the requirements of the course and to develop a reflective attitude to their own work. There is little self-assessment at Key Stage 3, however, and pupils do not yet use the National Curriculum descriptors to review their work and to be in a position to redress weaknesses. The pupils have insufficient opportunities to use information and communications technology, apart from in the designated lessons in Year 8, which are designed to develop computer skills rather than the use of computers as tools for individual research and analysis.



120. Good teaching including good management of the pupils leads to good attitudes and behaviour, particularly at Key Stage 3 where pupils display a willingness to become actively involved in the work of the class. Pupils display interest in their work and remain 'on task' with little need for teacher intervention. Exercise books suggest a pride in their work, with preparation and drafting of extended writing. Pupils work well in pairs or groups and are supportive of each other, listening with courtesy and attention. The rapport between teachers and pupils is very good.

121. The management of the department is good. The teachers work as a team and there is a clear commitment to the success of the pupils. Examination results are carefully reviewed and steps are taken to investigate areas for improvement. Teachers seek to develop in their pupils an enthusiasm for history and, to this end, they have developed a series of valuable visits, including a poignant visit to the battlefields of the First World War. The use of poetry further enhances the pupils' learning. The lack of computers within the department limits the availability in lessons of Internet access, which would enhance learning.

122. The department has made good progress since the last inspection. As a result it has addressed all the issues mentioned in the last report. Analysis and independent learning are becoming features of its work, with an emphasis on the development of historical skills. The use of information and communications technology as a tool to support learning of history is still undeveloped, and the development of self-assessment is still in progress.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY**

123. At the end of Key Stage 3 standards are broadly in line with national expectations. The pupils' achievement is sound. Standards have nonetheless improved since the last inspection, which stated that many pupils performed below national expectations. Almost all pupils confidently "cut and paste" text and pictures but they are less confident users of equipment to control or monitor devices or events. Given that the pupils arrive broadly average in information and communications technology, their achievement over the key stage is satisfactory but no more than that. There has, however, been a significant increase in the skills on entry in this year. Pupils can confidently use presentation software to create tourist brochures for the New Forest, Dorset and London.

124. Very little teaching could be observed at Key Stage 4. From the evidence of their coursework, however, those Year 11 pupils (a minority) who study the subject for GCSE are achieving average standards. In Year 10, all the pupils now have information and communications technology lessons, some of which it was possible to observe. As in the GCSE course, standards are broadly average; the pupils' achievement, given the limited amount of time for this course, is satisfactory.

125. There are both strengths and weaknesses in the pupils' attainment at both key stages. Pupils in all years confidently select pictures and text from encyclopaedias, atlases, CD ROMs and the Internet, combining them to create leaflets and information sheets. There is, however, repetition and duplication of these tasks between year groups and between the specific information and communications technology lessons and the teaching within other subjects. All students use a publishing package, for example, to present project portfolios. The highest attaining students, at GCSE, design logos and badges and use spreadsheets and databases to develop ordering systems and to design a fire evacuation system.

126. Since the last inspection, the school has improved the provision of equipment. Currently, 85 networked computers are available to the pupils. The ratio of computers to pupils is now in line with the national average. One room, with older computers, is an awkward space to teach in and the use of available computers is lower than might be expected.

127. The quality of teaching and learning is sound at both key stages. Lessons are well planned but there is variation and duplication by different teachers. In the best lessons, the teachers make good use of resources to enhance and extend learning; they provide good support and challenge for individual pupils. At times, however, they miss opportunities for effective whole-class teaching of skills and for pupils to share what they have learned. Where this does happen, the pupils' learning and the standards they achieve is better. For example, in a science lesson pupils use temperature probes to record cooling curves of hot water; in an information and communications technology lesson pupils modelled the market factors in launching a new soft drink. Overall, assessment of the pupils' progress and the use of that assessment in planning are weaknesses.

128. The curriculum at Key Stage 3 meets the requirements of the National Curriculum in that all pupils have sufficient experience of all the main elements of the Programme of Study. The main weakness is that the pupils' experience of information and communications technology in the other subjects they study is patchy; it is too dependent on the skills and level of confidence of individual teachers. In Year 10, requirements are now being met, though the pupils receive relatively few opportunities to use spreadsheets or to use computers for control and monitoring. Requirements were not met in respect of the current Year 11 pupils.

129. Arrangements for the management of information and communications technology are satisfactory insofar as they are now ensuring that basic requirements are being met. At Key Stage 4 this is clearly an improvement, albeit a very recent one, compared to the situation at the time of the last inspection. The lack of one person who has a clear leadership role is holding back the development of this key skill in the school.

## **MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES**

130. Standards in French and German are broadly average at the end of both key stages. Results at GCSE in French have been in line with the national average over the last three years. In 1999 the performance of boys in GCSE French was very low, reflecting the decline in interest many boys show in language learning in Years 10 and 11. In contrast, the girls' performance has been above the national average for girls. Numbers of pupils entering GCSE German in the last three years have been very small; they do not provide enough evidence on which to base a sound judgement on standards. In Year 7 the majority of pupils, including those with special educational needs, make good progress. Thereafter, most the pupils' achievement is satisfactory up to the end of Year 9 but unsatisfactory through Key Stage 4, particularly for the more able. This is an unsatisfactory situation as the same pupils are making good or very good progress in the other subjects they are studying.

131. The teaching and learning are sound, but no more than that; some is unsatisfactory. A small number of lessons were judged to be good but none was better than that. Strengths in the teaching include carefully structured sequencing of activities and good management of the pupils' behaviour in most lessons. In the best teaching, for example a Year 8 lesson taught to above average girls, the teacher's enthusiasm, very good relationships with the group and the pace at which she conducted the lesson led to a high

level of participation by the pupils, very good concentration to a good standard of accuracy and attention to detail in their speaking. However, many pupils do not make as much progress in their lessons as they could because the teachers do not make sufficient demands on them. This is especially so at Key Stage 4 where there are not enough opportunities for the pupils to work in class beyond a basic level. The pupils' progress in speaking is not as rapid as it should be as they generally have fewer opportunities to speak spontaneously or from memory than to practise other skills. This in turn affects their writing where a lack of fluency or understanding of structure means they find it difficult to express anything beyond basic ideas. In lessons where pupils are encouraged to speak more, they are able to make more imaginative responses; for example, some Year 9 pupils wrote witty captions in quite complex language to make up a German photo-story. The majority of pupils are well-disciplined learners who relate well to their teachers. They are polite and work co-operatively with each other. They enjoy working things out when they are given a challenge. If they do get over-chatty, it tends to be because the work they are set does not give them enough to think about. For example, in a Year 9 lesson, able pupils were given a long time to label a diagram of parts of the body, which only involved copying words from the board. The vast majority of pupils transfer good learning skills from other subjects to their work in languages. Good literacy skills help the pupils do well in reading comprehension in the foreign language. For example, in several lessons pupils found no difficulty in working out the meaning of new items in texts because they applied common sense and their general knowledge about language. Most of the teachers use a mixture of the foreign language and English for instructions and explanations, often missing opportunities for the pupils to extend their listening skills in a real situation.

132. Weaknesses in leadership and management have resulted in insufficient improvement since the last inspection. Overall standards at GCSE, described as "well above average" in the last report, have declined. Assessment information is not being used effectively to show the pupils how to improve. The recently appointed head of department has made a useful analysis of the current weaknesses in the department and a sound action plan for improvement has been drawn up. Action now needs to focus on raising standards, particularly of boys, and on increasing the level of challenge in the teaching. The dispersal of modern language teaching rooms across different parts of the school is undesirable as it limits the day-today communications between the teachers.

## **MUSIC**

133. By the end of Key Stage 3, most pupils are working in line with standards that are expected nationally and a significant minority, especially girls, attain standards above these. The school's own assessments show higher results; these assessments, however, are not always accurate and tend to be overgenerous. Pupils can play simple material effectively on keyboards, both alone and in pairs, and construct compositions using a range of technical devices. They are able to use musical vocabulary confidently to describe and to discuss music, although the use of worksheets sometimes curtails opportunities to discuss and write about music or their response to it at greater length. Most pupils are not given opportunities to use computers or other technology to create or record their music. In this respect, a key element of the programme of study for music is not being fully met. Overall, however, their learning and their achievement over the key stage are sound.

134. Over recent years, small numbers of musically able pupils have achieved very good results at GCSE, all in the range A\*-C. Standards are well above average, both in examinations and as shown in the work of the oldest pupils currently. The quality of their learning and their achievement over the key stage are good. Those observed showed very good aural awareness and ability to discuss musical features in an historical context. Their

compositions are technically refined with good consistency of style and they are well performed and presented. Some less able pupils are now beginning to opt for GCSE, reflecting the growing popularity of the subject.

135. Extra-curricular groups perform to a good standard and demonstrate a high level of musical confidence, which reflects the quality of instrumental teaching in the school. Over 10 per cent of pupils receive these lessons, a little above the national norm, and, at rehearsals and performances, they demonstrate their commitment and enthusiasm.

136. Pupils approach music lessons with good attitudes and their behaviour is nearly always good. This is due, at least in part, to the positive ethos that the teachers have been able to establish. Both pupils and staff show each other respect and relationships are constructive.

137. The teaching and its impact on the pupils' learning are satisfactory at Key Stage 3 and good at Key Stage 4. The teachers explain things well and are good at helping individual pupils to achieve success. The work that is set is usually well matched to the pupils' skills and understanding, although some more able pupils at Key Stage 3 are given work that is undemanding. The pupils work responsibly during practical tasks but they are, at times, not sure what they are being asked to learn or what standard they should reach. This lack of clarity is reflected in the teachers' assessments. Sometimes, when music is taught by a non-specialist teacher, the activity is poorly planned to help pupils learn new ideas or to make progress quickly enough. Homework is not currently set at Key Stage 3; this is a missed opportunity to reinforce and accelerate pupils' learning.

138. The leadership of the department is having a clear impact on standards at Key Stage 4. The department's response to the previous inspection has been satisfactory. Planning has improved and more activities to extend the more able have been provided. However, there is still some way to go in providing challenging work for those who already read and play music fluently when they arrive in Year 7. The quality of work that pupils can achieve is hampered by the accommodation for music. There are too few spaces for practical tasks and many pupils receive lessons in a non-specialist room which limits music making and tends to divorce their practical work from related listening and theory.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

139. The attainment of the majority of the pupils by the end of Key Stage 3 is above the national expectation. Their achievement over the key stage is good. This is an improvement since the previous inspection. The pupils' understanding and performance in activities such as athletics and rounders are a strength. They are able to make accurate observations about each other's performance and make constructive coaching points that immediately improve their skills. A particular strength is the pupils' knowledge of the rules that apply to various athletic events. They are able to officiate accurately and record the performance of others. They have a good understanding of technical words relating to physical education and ask and answer questions with confidence. The boys, and a significant minority of girls, have good ball skills and are able to use these effectively in rounders and cricket. The few pupils working towards the expected targets, mostly girls, have poor ball skills. They are slow to judge the speed of an oncoming ball and have difficulty in timing a hit in cricket and rounders.

140. The attainment for the majority of the pupils in Year 10 (who take physical education as a core subject, but not GCSE) is in line with expectations. A minority are attaining below the expectation and a minority above. Overall, their achievement through the key stage is

sound. Most pupils demonstrate increasingly refined skills and their performance is more consistent and effective in games such as tennis and rounders. A minority of pupils play tennis well and are able to use spin effectively within a rally as part of a planned tactic. These pupils are able to outwit an opponent with power and touch. Evaluative skills are again a strength for all pupils. A minority of pupils, though understanding the more complex rules of rounders, do not have the skill level to apply them in the game situation. It was not possible to evaluate standards in Year 11 as these pupils were already on study leave at the time of the inspection.

141. In 1999, GCSE results were above the national average. A consistent trend has been maintained since the previous inspection with the exception of 1998 when A\*-C grades fell to well below the national average. A\*-G were above the national average with 100 per cent gaining pass grades. The reasons for this dip were carefully analysed, resulting in a successful change of teaching methods. Attainment by the majority currently studying GCSE is broadly average. A significant minority are above average and a minority below. The higher attaining pupils present written work that is well researched and structured with careful analysis. They use technical vocabulary with confidence. Those pupils below average have an unsatisfactory depth of knowledge and find it difficult to link practical and theoretical concepts.

142. The teaching and its impact on the pupils' learning are very good at Key Stage 3 and good at Key Stage 4. This is an improvement since the previous inspection. Particular features that have secured this improvement are the inclusion of tasks that have developed the pupils' evaluative, literacy and numeracy skills. Almost all lessons are reinforced with probing question and answer sessions to consolidate knowledge and provoke thought. The teachers' depth of knowledge ensures that pupils have a solid grasp of skills and strategies. An appropriate range of teaching methods is used which encourages valuable responses. For example, in a Year 9 athletics lesson, the teacher challenged the pupils physically and mentally. They had to sustain a high work rate whilst using mental arithmetic to calculate their pace over time. Those pupils unable to take part in the lesson due to injury were involved in timing and evaluating. This helped the performers to improve their technique and encouraged their work rate. Demonstrations by both teachers and pupils help the pupils see how to improve, as, for example, in a dance lesson where they evaluated a particular skill and then used these observations to refine their own performance. The teachers' ongoing assessment in lessons is constructive, ensuring individual and group progress, and there is always sufficient time to transfer new and consolidated skills into the final activity. The teachers have high expectations of all pupils, especially at Key Stage 3, and continually encourage them to strive for better performance, appropriately related to their ability. A good example of this was seen in a rounders lesson where practices were designed with a varying degree of difficulty to improve fielding and batting skills. This resulted in all pupils making excellent progress in their performance and in their understanding of how strategies fit into the full game. Pupils with special educational needs are well integrated into lessons and make good progress. However, a small minority of boys at both key stages make slow progress and behave poorly. In a small number of lessons the teachers experienced some difficulty in teaching these pupils though they did ensure that the learning of the whole group was not affected. Strategies are not always used to manage their behaviour effectively. Assignments both in class and for homework do not always extend the higher attaining pupils, resulting in a slower rate of progress than might be expected. Teacher assessments are effectively used for setting targets for pupils at Key Stage 3 and for those studying GCSE. Assessment procedures for Key Stage 4 core pupils are not specific enough to set sharp targets. This accounts for the slower rate of progress at this level. There is a direct link between the best teaching, the overall rate of progress and pupils' response.

143. For the most part the pupils are enthusiastic and there is a high rate of participation in all lessons. They are willing to practise in order to refine their skills. They enjoy the level of responsibility that is extended to them and often begin their own warm-up before the arrival of the teacher. There is an enthusiastic response to the extra-curricular programme, which provides opportunities for pupils to represent their house and school in a variety of activities. They continue to be successful in area and county competitions and individuals are often chosen to represent the county.

144. The good leadership of the department has ensured a good response to the previous inspection. All of the areas highlighted for improvement have been addressed successfully. The gymnastic equipment has been updated and is now stored effectively. Teaching methods now include greater opportunities for pupils to evaluate their work and this has contributed to the improved standards at Key Stage 3. Above average GCSE results have largely been maintained. The school has recently gained the Sports Mark Award. A particular strength of the department is the willingness to analyse areas of weakness and to devise strategies to improve them whilst keeping a close watch on how they affect the pupils' performance.

## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

145. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is above the expectations of the Locally Agreed Syllabus. The pupils' achievement over the key stage is good. By the end of the key stage the pupils have developed a good understanding of the system of laws by which believers live, for example the ten commandments and the five pillars of Islam, and have considered the relevance of these laws to society as a whole. They understand the main features of Sikhism and Christianity and the role of places of worship in the community. Their visits to places of Sikh, Hindu, Christian and Muslim worship have enabled them to recognise their main features and to have experienced their atmosphere. Pupils understand the significance of ceremony, with reference to the Amrit ceremony in Year 7, and of places of religious significance that give rise to pilgrimage in Year 8. In Year 9, pupils develop a good understanding of the Christian belief in God, and the symbolic representations of this belief in the symbols of the church. They have a sound understanding of the place of some religious artefacts, and their role in the lives of believers. Their knowledge of rites of passage is, however, weak. They are able to consider ultimate questions, such as the purpose of life, and to investigate alternative ideas concerning creation and the nature of God.

146. The attainment of pupils who have chosen to study religion for the GCSE is above average. [NB the first set of pupils to sit GCSE in religious education will do so this year.] Pupils have a detailed knowledge of the main features of Sikhism and Christianity, and can recognise similar features in different religions, for example pilgrimage. They have a good understanding of the main beliefs of Christianity, for example the Nativity, the Resurrection and the Creation, and some knowledge of the relevant supporting biblical text. They are able to consider these in the light of contrasting viewpoints and can offer reasoned opinion, although their responses are generally limited. Pupils have a good grasp of the rites of Christian passage and to a lesser extent the rites of Sikh passage. They are developing their skills of reasoning and discussion.

147. The attainment in the core religious education course for all pupils is average to above. There is some short-fall in the extent of their knowledge and, as a consequence, in their understanding. However, given the limited time available, two lessons per fortnight, their achievement is good. No lessons were taking place during the week of the inspection

at Key Stage 4. Attainment is judged from scrutiny of exercise books only. Pupils consider moral issues from more than one viewpoint and higher attaining pupils are able to come to rational judgements on them, for example the issues surrounding abortion and euthanasia. Pupils reflect on the effects of war and consider the beliefs of the pacifist. Their consideration of Human Rights leads them to consider the effects of racism and they compare the roles of Martin Luther King and Malcolm X in the fight for racial equality in America. There is some evidence of the sensitive use of poetry to express feelings and beliefs.

148. The quality of the teaching and its impact on the pupils' learning are good at both key stages. The department has suffered from some unavoidable disruption caused by staff absence, and the head of department is supporting non-specialist colleagues well in the delivery of their lessons. Lessons are well planned and carefully resourced to encourage a variety of learning strategies, although some lack of pace and urgency was observed. The teachers manage the pupils well, supporting a safe working environment that encourages pupils' confidence in participation. The teachers are good role models, treating the work and opinions of their pupils with respect and encouraging their pupils to do likewise. Most teachers have high expectations of behaviour and work, and this results in good pupil response. Teachers are aware of the need to employ learning strategies designed to involve all pupils and to encourage empathy with the subject. There is good use of music and free writing to encourage pupils to express their feelings and to display an empathy with those of other beliefs or cultures. The use of non-specialist teachers limits the extent to which pupils can follow their own lines of enquiry and the development of the more abstract concepts inherent in religious understanding.

149. The management of the department is good, although it is overstretched. The number of non-specialist teachers with heavy commitments outside the department, who vary year by year, results in a heavy workload and insufficient opportunity for sharing the work of the department. Resources have improved since the last inspection, but they are still insufficient to enable pupils to explore the wide variety of religious experiences or to appreciate the wonder and colour of the cultures involved. The department has very limited access to information and communications technology, and none within the department itself, which would enable pupils to investigate and interact with other faiths.

150. The school meets the legal requirements for religious education at Key Stage 3, and at Key Stage 4 in so far as it covers the outline of the Locally Agreed Syllabus. The time allocation, however, is still below that recommended in the Locally Agreed Syllabus. Since the last report the department has increased its supply of Sikh artefacts, although those of other faiths are still poorly represented. There is an increased study of faiths in addition to Christianity. Although texts at Key Stage 4 have improved, texts for Key Stage 3 are still inadequate and the library still contains many books that are inappropriate and do not encourage use. The department makes a significant contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of its pupils.

## **BUSINESS STUDIES**

151. Business studies is taught as an option at Key Stage 4. The percentage of pupils achieving A\* to C grades at GCSE over the past three years has been well above the national average. The current standard of the older pupils is also well above the national average with just over half of those on course to achieve GCSE grades A\* to B. Nearly all the pupils have a very good understanding of topics such as location of industry, different forms of business organisation and the impact of advertising. The more able pupils use technical vocabulary with confidence and show a very good grasp of business concepts

when evaluating the prospects of setting up new businesses in the immediate locality. The vast majority of the pupils take care with presentation and many make effective use of information and communications technology to display data. Their achievement in the two years of the course is very good.

152. Nearly all the pupils make very good progress. The quality of their learning is very good. They respond enthusiastically and purposefully to teaching that is also very good. Key qualities include good subject knowledge, clear and challenging objectives, a wide variety of approaches and a positive and encouraging approach. In one lesson, the pupils considered the impact of a variety of recruitment advertisements in local and national newspapers, according to a range of criteria they had previously drawn up themselves. They worked briskly and very effectively through a range of stimulating activities. In another lesson the pupils examined the impact on advertising of music and other associated stimuli through the use of a CD and other resources.

153. Business studies provides a rich curriculum experience beyond the confines of the examination syllabus. The pupils derive much benefit from being involved in enterprise teams for part of the course and they have been highly successful over the past two years in a shares competition (pro-share) where they have beaten many teams of older pupils to reach the national semi-finals.

154. The business studies department is very well led. There are clear objectives for the subject supported by detailed strategies for teaching and assessment. Excellent use is made of pupil assessment as a means of gauging the current quality of provision and also as an aid to setting realistic but challenging targets for future pupil attainment. As the previous report made only minimal reference to business studies, it is impossible to judge improvement since then.