

# INSPECTION REPORT

The Grammar School for Girls Wilmington  
Wilmington

LEA area: Kent

Unique Reference Number: 118872

Inspection Number: 187656

Headteacher: Dr J Viggers

Reporting inspector: John Woodroffe

Dates of inspection: 1 – 4 November 1999

Under OFSTED contract number: 708161

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Grammar
Type of control:	Self-governing (Foundation)
Age range of pupils:	11 – 18 years
Gender of pupils:	Female
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr J French
Date of previous inspection:	22 May 1995

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		The efficiency of the school
Anthony Mundy, Lay Inspector		Attendance
		Partnership with parents and the community
		Staffing, accommodation and learning resources
John Plant	Mathematics	Attainment and progress
Peter Hooker	Science	The curriculum and assessment
Hilary Gerhard	English	Equal opportunities
Terry Fitchett	Modern foreign languages	Attitudes, behaviour and personal development
		Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development
		Support, guidance and pupils' welfare
Paul Shallcross	Design and technology	
	Information technology	
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Marcia Foley	Geography	
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		Key Stage 4 + sixth form

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## MAIN FINDINGS

### What the school does well

- The ethos of the school is excellent.
- The vision and leadership qualities of the headteacher are key factors in the success of this school. Staff give very good support.
- All pupils make good progress.
- Teaching is good. Teachers have very high expectations of themselves and the pupils. Teachers' subject knowledge and understanding are very good. They use time and resources very well. Homework is a very effective component of the teaching and learning programme.
- Relationships are excellent and the attitudes and behaviour of the pupils are very good. The way in which pupils develop as caring, confident and sensitive individuals is excellent.
- Links and relationships with parents are very good. Parents express strong satisfaction with the school.
- Financial control and budgetary administration are excellent. Financial planning is very good.

### Where the school has weaknesses

- |   |
|---|
| I. The school has not extended and developed information technology sufficiently since the last inspection and too few pupils achieve at the higher levels. |
|---|

**The school has many strengths and no significant weaknesses. The school was judged as a very successful school in the last inspection report and it has maintained the good progress. The governing body has implemented its action plan successfully. However, matters relating to the inadequate accommodation and safety aspects of movement between the two sites are outside the ability of the school to improve.**

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

The school has made good progress in addressing most of the issues identified in the last report:

Good practice has been maintained in teaching and learning and the quality of teaching has improved. There were less than 2 per cent of lessons which were not satisfactory compared with 9 per cent previously. Assessment and recording procedures have been developed and good use is made of information and data particularly for individual target setting in Key Stage 4. The school is to develop this further in Key Stage 3 using data from the Key Stage 2 tests. Since the previous inspection, attainment in English, mathematics and science at Key Stage 3 has risen slightly. At GCSE there has been a small downward trend, but this was reversed in 1999. Religious education has been included in the sixth form curriculum. It is a valuable and worthwhile programme;

There has been no increase in accommodation for physical education, but the school makes good use of what is

available. The previous inspection was during the summer and this one in the autumn. The combined judgements indicate that good use is made throughout the year for the different activities of the National Curriculum. The school has sustained its efforts to ensure the safety of its pupils in moving between the two sites. However, it is powerless to take further action and has approached the local authority for support on a number of occasions.

Whilst the school's requirements and expectations in information technology have increased since the last inspection and most pupils have increased their competency and level of skills, achievement has not improved relative to other schools nationally, particularly at the higher levels.

The school has continued to develop in both the academic and personal areas of education. It has the capacity to continue this improvement.

• **Standards in subjects**

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

<b>Performance in:</b>	<b>Compared with all schools</b>	<b>Compared with similar schools</b>	
1999 Key Stage 3 Test English	A*	D	<i>well above average</i> <b>A</b>
1998 GCSE Examinations	A*	C	<i>above average</i> <b>B</b>
1998 A/AS – levels	B	C	<i>average</i> <b>C</b>
			<i>below average</i> <b>D</b>
			<i>well below average</i> <b>E</b>

At Key Stage 3, the attainment of pupils in English, mathematics and science is very high compared with schools nationally. In the 1999 key stage tests it was below average when compared with other grammar schools in English and science, but above in mathematics. In GCSE examinations in 1999, 99 per cent of pupils achieved 5 or more A\* to C grades. This is very high and well above the average for grammar schools over previous years. The performance in science was particularly good. Pupils also did very well in geography, modern foreign languages, design and technology and history. There were no outstanding weaknesses. Attainment at A level is very close to the national average. In 1999, the overall pass rate was 94 per cent. In many subjects it was 100 per cent. In 1999, it was well above the 1998 national average in English Literature, business studies and physical education and good in mathematics, art and design and geography. It was below the 1998 average in modern foreign languages, history and design and technology.

At the time of the inspection, comparative statistics for the 1999 GCSE and A/AS level results had not been published.

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## Quality of teaching

	Overall quality	Most effective in:	Least effective in:
Years 7-9	Good	Modern foreign languages; design and technology	Religious education; geography; art + design
Years 10-11	Very good	Science; modern foreign languages; geography	
Sixth form	Good	Geography; modern foreign languages; English; design and technology; physical education	History
English	Good		
Mathematics	Very good		

Overall teaching is good. It is very good or excellent in 31 per cent of lessons and satisfactory or better in 98 per cent. It is less than satisfactory in only 2 per cent. In Key Stage 4, the quality of teaching is especially high and it is good in the sixth form.

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

### Other aspects of the school

Aspect	Comment
Behaviour	Behaviour is very good. Relationships are excellent throughout the school community.
Attendance	This is very good and above the national average for all secondary schools
Ethos*	The ethos is excellent. High expectations in all the work of the staff and pupils are at the heart of the school's success.
Leadership and management	Leadership is good. The headteacher shows vision and strong leadership. There is good support from staff. The role of the governing body in monitoring and evaluation is underdeveloped.
Curriculum	Broad, balanced and well planned. There are good opportunities for all pupils. Careers education and guidance are very good.
Pupils with special educational needs	These pupils make good progress, are well supported and are valued members of the school community.
Spiritual, moral, social & cultural development	This is very good overall. Provision for social development is excellent and moral development is very good. Opportunities for cultural development are more limited.
Staffing, resources and accommodation	The match of qualifications and experience is good. Non-teaching staff make a significant contribution to the success of the school. Staff development is good with the exception of information technology. The school uses the accommodation very well and minimises the difficulties associated with the inadequacies.
Value for money	Very good value for money.

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

· **The parents' views of the school**

<b>What most parents like about the school</b>	<b>What some parents are not happy about</b>
II. Friendly and accessible staff. III. Good information, including annual reports and regular newsletters IV. Good standards of work V. Very good behaviour	VI. The volume of homework in some subjects in

The school is greatly valued and respected by parents. They have very good involvement in their children's learning. The concerns expressed by a few parents about homework were not substantiated in discussion with pupils and parents during the inspection. However, some pupils require more guidance about how much time to spend on their work at home.

· **KEY ISSUES FOR ACTION**

The headteacher, senior staff and governors should:

- \* develop the teaching and use of information technology by:
  - ensuring that it is an integral part of the teaching programme in all subjects,
  - developing skills in depth and ensuring that all pupils reach the higher levels of competence,
  - providing a programme of development and support for staff,
  - producing a detailed scheme of work which is linked to that in all other subjects.
 (Paragraphs 7, 15, 43, 135, 147, 170, 184, 185, 186, 187, 189, 193, 201, 223.)

**In addition to the key issue above, the following less important weaknesses should be considered for inclusion in the action plan. These are indicated in paragraphs:**

- \* develop a structured programme of classroom observation by:
  - identifying all managers who will be responsible for the improvement of teaching and learning strategies and are to be involved in classroom observation and evaluation;
  - ensuring that teachers are clear that the programme is to bring about improvement;
  - agreeing the aspects of teaching and learning to be observed with each teacher;
  - ensuring that time is available for feedback and setting future targets for improvement and development;
  - sharing good practice within and across subjects;
  - using data and other information to measure and evaluate improvement and progress.
 (Paragraphs 36, 38, 40, 82, 136, 148, 179, 225.)
- \* ensure that all schemes of work are of good quality and underpin excellence in the classroom by:
  - agreeing what constitutes a valuable scheme of work and a format for the school;
  - agreeing what should be included relating to subject content, teaching and learning strategies, assessment criteria and timescales and pedagogy;
  - introducing a monitoring programme to ensure that short term planning is supported by the schemes of work;
  - linking marking and short term targets for individual improvement to lesson planning and schemes of work.

(Paragraphs 85, 109, 133, 148, 170, 194, 211, 226, 234.)

- **INTRODUCTION**

- **Characteristics of the school**

The Grammar School for Girls Wilmington is a selective school for girls aged 11 to 18. It has complementary timetabling arrangements in the sixth form with Wilmington Grammar School for Boys. It is situated on the outskirts of Dartford in an area of high socio-economic advantage. It has good relationships with the local community and commerce.

It was a Grant Maintained school for 10 years before becoming a Foundation school in September 1999. The pupils are from mixed socio-economic backgrounds both rural and urban and most live in private housing. The number of pupils from the ethnic minorities is higher than in many similar schools and the percentage of pupils speaking English as an additional language is higher than in most schools. Approximately three quarters of the students enter higher education when they leave school and almost all the others obtain employment.

The roll has increased steadily since the last inspection and the school is consistently oversubscribed. The catchment area is wide and this year pupils were admitted from 66 different primary schools. The number of pupils entitled to free schools meals is well below the national average. There are no students with statements of special educational need.

Attendance is good and parents are very supportive. There has been no unauthorised absence and no pupils were excluded last year.

The aims of the school are shared with pupils and parents. They are appropriate and focus upon high achievement and the development of the whole pupil as an individual within a changing and challenging world. The school judges its pastoral care and support programmes to be particular strengths and these are reflected in the daily life of the school.

**Key indicators**

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

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

Year	Boys	Girls	Total
1999	0	116	116

<b>National Curriculum Test Results</b>		English	Mathematics	Science
Number of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	Boys	0	0	0
	Girls	114	114	109
	Total	114	114	109
Percentage at NC Level 5 or above	School	99 (99)	99 (99)	94 (97)
	National	n/a (65)	N/a (60)	N/a (56)
Percentage at NC Level 6 or above	School	83 (99)	98 (92)	83 (88)
	National	N/a (35)	N/a (36)	N/a (27)

<b>Teacher Assessments</b>		English	Mathematics	Science
Number of pupils at NC Level 5 or Above	Boys	0	0	0
	Girls	116	116	116
	Total	116	116	116
Percentage at NC Level 5 or above	School	99 (100)	99 (100)	99 (100)
	National	N/a (62)	N/a (64)	N/a (62)
Percentage at NC Level 6 or above	School	99 (100)	99 (95)	90 (97)
	National	N/a (31)	N/a (37)	N/a (31)

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

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

Year	Boys	Girls	Total
1998	0	115	115

<b>GCSE Results</b>		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A* to G	1 or more grades A* to G
Number of pupils achieving standard specified	Boys	0	0	0
	Girls	111	115	115
	Total	111	115	115
Percentage achieving standard specified	School	96.5 (97)	100 (100)	100 (100)
	National	46.3 (44.6)	87.5 (89.8)	93.4 (95.2)

.....  
1 Percentages in parentheses refer to the year before the latest reporting year  
2 Percentages in parentheses refer to the year before the latest reporting year

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

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

Year	Male	Female	Total
1998	0	70	70

A/AS examination in the latest reporting year:

Average A/AS points score per candidate	For candidates entered for 2 or more A-levels or equivalent			For candidates entered for fewer than 2 A levels or equivalent		
	Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
School	-	18.3	18.3	-	- (1.7)	- (1.7)
National	N/a	N/a	N/a (17.6)	N/a	N/a	N/a (2.8)

#### Attendance

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

		%
Authorised Absence	School	4.8
	National comparative data	7.9
Unauthorised Absence	School	0.2
	National comparative data	1.1

-  
-  
-

#### Exclusions

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

	Number
Fixed period	0
Permanent	0

-

#### Quality of teaching

Percentage of teaching observed which is:

	%
Very good or better	31
Satisfactory or better	98
Less than satisfactory	2

.....

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

## **PART A: ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL**

### **- EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS AT THE SCHOOL**

#### **- Attainment and progress**

1. Results from the end of Key Stage 2 tests indicate that the attainment of pupils on entry to the school is well above average in comparison with all schools nationally. It is about average when compared with other grammar schools. In each of the last three years, over 90 per cent of the new Year 7 intake have achieved the required score in the school's standardised entrance test. However, of the present Key Stage 4 pupils, less than 80 per cent achieved the required score on entry. More significantly, when the 1998 and 1999 GCSE candidates first entered the school, the proportion of the intake reaching the required score was less than 60 per cent. The attainment on entry of these pupils was below average for a grammar school. This is an important factor when judging the performance of these pupils.
1. At Key Stage 3, the attainment of pupils in English, mathematics and science is consistently very high when compared with all schools nationally. Since the previous OFSTED inspection, attainment in these subjects has risen slightly. However, over the last two years, attainment has fallen to below average when compared to other grammar schools. Raising attainment at Key Stage 3 is an identified priority in the present school development plan.
3. In English, in the 1998 Key Stage 3 national tests, 99 per cent of pupils reached level 6. This attainment was very high, even when compared to other grammar schools. However, in 1999, the figure fell to 83 per cent which was below average for a grammar school. The proportion of pupils reaching level 7 also fell from 44 per cent, which was average for grammars, to 14 per cent, well below average. In 1999, there were significant discrepancies between the test results and the teachers' own assessments of the pupils. The school has recognised the urgent need to re-establish higher levels of attainment in English at Key Stage 3 and has agreed a plan of action to address the issue. The pupils' literacy skills are well developed across the curriculum although some pupils are not at ease in using specialist language to describe their work in subjects such as mathematics.
2. In mathematics, from 1998 to 1999 the proportion of pupils reaching level 6 in the national tests rose from 92 per cent to 98 per cent. The 1999 figure was above average when compared with other grammar schools. Over the same period, the proportion of pupils that reached level 7 improved from 42 per cent to 57 per cent which was below average for grammar schools. Over the last two years, the mathematics department has introduced successful measures that are promoting higher standards, including the introduction of setting by ability in Year 9. Pupils have sufficient numeracy skills to meet their needs across the curriculum.
3. In science, from 1998 to 1999 the proportion of pupils that reached level 6 dropped from 88 per cent to 83 per cent, which is slightly below average for grammar schools. In 1998, 36 per cent of pupils reached level 7, but in 1999, this decreased to 21 per cent, which was well below average when compared to other grammar schools.
4. Overall the attainment of pupils in Year 9 English, mathematics and science is very high and well above the national average, but below average for other grammar schools. The school has introduced measures to address this and from evidence seen during the inspection, these measures are raising standards appropriately.
5. In other subjects, based on the end of Key Stage 3 teacher assessments, there was an increase in the proportion of pupils reaching level 6 or higher, but a decrease in the proportion reaching level 7 between 1998 and 1999. For the last two years, in history, geography and modern foreign languages, almost all pupils have reached the nationally expected level with about 50 per cent exceeding it. In design and technology, the proportion of pupils reaching level 6 or higher rose from 67 per cent in 1998, to 78 per

cent in 1999. However, the proportion of pupils reaching level 7 dropped from 31 per cent to 24 per cent. In 1999, in design and technology, geography and history, a small number of pupils were assessed as achieving level 8. In information technology in 1999, all pupils achieved level 5 or above. However, only 36 per cent of pupils reached level 6. Attainment in art, music and physical education is in line with similar schools. There is some under-achievement at Key Stage 3 in religious education when compared with other selective schools.

6. Since the previous inspection, attainment at GCSE has remained consistently very high when compared to all schools. Over recent years, there has been a slightly downward trend in the school's GCSE results, but this trend has been reversed by the 1999 results.
7. In the 1998 GCSE examinations, the proportion of students who achieved 5 or more GCSE grades A\* to C was 96.5 per cent. All students gained at least 5 A\* to G grades. These figures were very high compared to all schools and were well above average when compared to grammar schools over previous years. In 1999, the overall level of performance of the students at GCSE was markedly higher than it was in 1998 with 99 per cent gaining 5 or more grades A\* to C. In 1998, the proportion of candidates gaining grades A\* to B was 69 per cent compared with an average of 75 per cent for grammar schools. In 1999, the school figure rose to 80 per cent. The 1999 GCSE results represent a significant achievement for the students and the school and are a result of target setting and monitoring.
8. In 1999, all students gained at least a GCSE grade C in English language and 92 per cent gained the higher grades A\* to B. Overall attainment in English language in 1999 was similar to that in 1998 which was close to the average for grammar schools. Results have been very similar in English literature. The school has identified the need to increase the number of higher grades A and A\* in both subjects.
9. Attainment in mathematics rose significantly between 1998 and 1999. In 1999, 96 per cent of students gained GCSE grades A\* to C compared with 92 per cent the year before. The proportion of students gaining the higher grades A\* to B increased from 59 per cent to 84 per cent. The policy of establishing a smaller top ability group to focus on higher levels of mathematics was very successful. In this group of 16 students, 10 gained the highest grade of A\* while the remainder achieved an A grade. The group also studied GCSE statistics and 13 pupils gained grades A or A\*.
10. The performance of pupils in science improved markedly between 1998 and 1999. The proportion of candidates gaining grades A\* to C rose from 91 per cent to 99 per cent. Between 1998 and 1999, the proportion of candidates gaining the higher grades of A and A\* almost doubled to nearly 42 per cent, bringing the school in line with other grammar schools. This improvement reflects a significant success for the school.
11. In 1999, all candidates for geography gained grades A\* to C. About 80 per cent of these gained the higher grades. Overall attainment in geography rose significantly in 1999. It was below average when compared to other grammar schools in 1998, but the recent results represent a significant improvement in standards. In history, attainment has risen markedly over recent years. In 1998, 96 per cent of candidates gained grades A\* to C, compared to the average of 93 per cent for grammar schools. In 1999, the very high proportion of candidates who achieved a grade B or above resulted in a good overall performance at the highest levels for grammar schools.
12. In 1999, only 17 per cent of pupils were entered for GCSE religious studies, although this figure is not untypical when compared with other schools. Most gained at least a grade C. Overall attainment in religious studies is average compared with other grammar schools and has been consistently above the national average in recent years.
13. Attainment is varied in information technology. In 1999, 40 students were entered for GCSE. While nine students gained the highest grades A and A\*, there were eight candidates who only achieved a grade D. In 1998 results were above the national target and in line with similar schools.



14. In modern foreign languages, all students study French or German and some do both. In 1999, all candidates for French and all but three of the candidates for German gained at least a C grade. In both subjects, the overall performance of pupils rose significantly between 1998 and 1999. In 1999, nearly a quarter of candidates in French and German achieved the highest grade A\*. This represents a considerable success for the school.
15. In 1998 and 1999, almost all pupils who were entered for the examination in art and design gained grades A\* to C. In 1998, attainment was above average compared to other grammar schools. However in 1999, the proportion of students achieving the higher levels A\* and A fell from around 60 per cent to nearer 40 per cent.
16. In design and technology, the overall attainment of pupils is generally in line with that of pupils at other grammar schools and has improved since the last inspection. In 1998, 94 per cent of candidates gained grades A\* to C, compared with an average for grammars of 89 per cent. In 1999, attainment was highest in food technology and lowest in graphics. In 1999, there were 11 candidates for GCSE sports/physical education studies. All of them achieved at least a grade C with most gaining a grade B. In 1999, all 12 candidates in music achieved at least a grade C.
17. Over recent years, there has been a steady increase in the numbers of students studying two or more GCE A levels at the school. From 33 candidates in 1993, the number climbed to 69 last year. The most popular subjects at A level are English Literature, biology, business studies, geography and chemistry. Some subjects are taught in partnership with the neighbouring boys' grammar school.
18. During the period 1996-98, attainment at A level was close to the national average. In 1998, attainment rose to slightly above the national average. The average points score per candidate at the school in 1998 was 18.3 compared to 17.6 nationally. In 1999, the points score for the school dipped sharply to 14.9 partly due to some students studying only two A level subjects. In 1999, the overall A level pass rate was 94 per cent. In many subjects the pass rate was 100 per cent. The average grade per entry was above the 1998 national average for all schools. In 1999, about 15 per cent of all entries gained an A grade, which was about average for all schools in 1998. Raising A level attainment particularly at the highest grades is identified as a major priority in the school's development plan.
19. Attainment at A level is above average in English Literature and physical education. It is generally good in mathematics and geography. Attainment is unsatisfactory in history.
20. Pupils make good progress throughout the school in most subjects. Progress is particularly good in design and technology at Key Stage 3; in art and design, design and technology, history and modern foreign languages at Key Stage 4; and in English literature, geography and physical education in the sixth form. Pupils make very good progress in personal and social education.
21. Progress is good or better in 80 per cent and very good or excellent in 28 per cent of lessons. It is very rarely unsatisfactory. The progress of pupils is better at Key Stage 4 than at Key Stage 3. In 75 per cent of sixth form lessons, progress is good or better. Progress in information technology at Key Stage 3 and some aspects of A level history is unsatisfactory.
22. A key factor that contributes to the good progress is the high proportion of good, very good and excellent teaching. Teachers work very hard, using their high levels of expertise to interest and challenge their pupils. A second key factor is the extremely good behaviour of the pupils. They are very well motivated and keen to learn. The regular setting, completion and marking of homework provides a good example of how effective the partnership is between teachers and pupils. In a number of subjects, there is very effective developmental planning that has identified the action needed to improve standards. Good use of target setting in many subjects has promoted higher standards. In Key Stage 4 and the sixth form, there is supportive monitoring of pupils by senior staff.

**24. Attitudes, behaviour and personal development**

23. The previous inspection report refers to a ‘very well ordered community’ and this continues to be the case. Behaviour of pupils in and around the school is very good and movement between the two main school sites is disciplined and purposeful.
24. In lessons pupils’ behaviour and their attitudes to learning are almost always exemplary. They settle quickly to their work and show commitment and enthusiasm for their studies. Where pupils are given challenging work they respond with a determination to succeed. There is overwhelming evidence that pupils study with confidence, sustain concentration and enjoy their lessons.
25. Pupils collaborate well on group tasks and are mutually supportive. They listen well to one another and respect each other’s points of view showing an increasingly mature attitude to the opinions of others. They are prepared to take the initiative in organising their work with greater independence as they progress through the school.
26. Relationships throughout the school are excellent and staff and pupils treat one another with mutual respect and courtesy. An ethos of caring is a strong feature of the school with older students having a particularly important role in nurturing and supporting the younger pupils. Staff go out of their way to help individual pupils and this is much appreciated by them. In most lessons teachers use praise regularly to encourage and motivate their pupils.
27. Pupils participate in a number of extra-curricular activities including school drama and musical productions, sport and clubs as well as theatre and museum visits and foreign exchanges. In addition there is a strong tradition of charitable activities with each class having its own charity representatives.
28. The high quality of pupils’ personal development continues to be a particularly outstanding strength of the school. Through the systems of school and class prefects, house captains and class representatives, pupils undertake a broad range of important responsibilities which support the smooth running of the school. Many of these roles have written job descriptions and pupils value highly the opportunity to contribute. Younger pupils appreciate very much the caring approach and willingness of older pupils to help them with their life in school.
29. Pupils take initiatives through a range of school and community activities. In a school assembly for example, sixth form students prepared an amusing yet powerful presentation which held the attention of the audience. Senior students organise litter duties and manage school council meetings, liaising closely with senior staff through oral and written reports. Prefects undertake sensitively a number of daily duties to ensure an ordered and disciplined environment. House captains work with class charity representatives and form captains to organise a range of sporting and charity events.

**31. Attendance**

30. Attendance is very good in all year groups and has improved since the previous inspection. The consistently good attendance of almost all pupils is clearly having a positive impact upon improving attainment. Pupils arrive punctually for morning school and registration periods are brief and efficient. Lessons begin promptly during the day. Subject teachers are consistent in registering pupils at the start of lessons.

## 32. QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED

32.

### Teaching

31. Overall the quality of teaching is good. It is good and often very good in almost three quarters of lessons and in a quarter it is satisfactory. Exceptionally, a very small number of lessons are unsatisfactory. At Key Stage 4 the quality of teaching is especially high and over eight out of ten lessons are good or better, with four out of ten very good or excellent. In the sixth form, teaching is good in three quarters of lessons and often very good. However, at Key Stage 3 there is a greater proportion of teaching which is only satisfactory. Teaching is good in all subjects apart from religious education where it is only satisfactory. Since the last inspection the school has improved the existing good teaching standards. Planning is better and there are more strategies to address the different needs of the pupils.
32. Throughout the school most teachers are very knowledgeable about their subjects, well qualified and enthusiastic. At Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form they use their expertise effectively to ensure that the requirements of the external examinations are fully met. In Year 12 for example, studying Shakespearean texts, high quality questioning improved students' analytical skills and appreciation of language. The deployment of teachers outside their subject specialism at Key Stage 3 in some lessons, is a contributory factor in teaching and progress being satisfactory rather than good.
33. Teachers have very high expectations of their pupils and often set challenging tasks for them. In a Year 11 science lesson pupils made very good progress in their understanding of concepts and development of high level thinking skills, as a result of clear expectations and effective questioning by the teacher. Practical experiments advanced their learning successfully and discussion between pupils was used very well to overcome any difficulties in their understanding. In a geography lesson, there was evidence of very high attainment, where pupils explained the contrasts between weather patterns in different climate zones and made detailed evaluations about the impact of tourism on Kenya. Some pupils were able to explain the interrelationships between physical geography and population distribution in Kenya with real understanding. In religious education expectations of the standards that pupils can achieve are too low at Key Stage 3.
34. Most lessons are well planned and organised, with a good match of activities to the ability of pupils supported by a variety of teaching methods and good pace. Some unsatisfactory teaching occurs with lower ability groups where the work is not at a level appropriate to their abilities. This leads to a lack of concentration and focus. Resources are well organised and there is a range of appropriate activities provided in lessons. Where planning is particularly effective teachers set very clear aims for the lesson, use questions and instructions skilfully and employ good quality resources to support learning. In a Year 13 food technology lesson, students made excellent progress in their practical projects and design folders due to challenging teaching which was very carefully matched to individuals needs. Teaching skilfully probes and reinforces their knowledge and skills, whilst promoting independence and responsibility. In a minority of satisfactory lessons, planning lacks clarity and detail about objectives for learning and is not always well matched to the ability of pupils, or shared explicitly with them.
35. The match and variety of teaching methods to the needs of pupils and the demands of the examination syllabus is particularly effective at Key Stage 4 and this results in pupils developing good study skills including the use of information technology in some subjects. In a Year 11 French lesson pupils made brisk progress in developing their vocabulary, knowledge of grammar and speaking and listening skills through role-play, use of audiocassette recording and oral work. In the sixth form, teaching methods in some lessons whilst sound, lack variety and restrict opportunities for students to carry out investigations

and engage in practical activities and collaborative work.

36. Relationships fostered by teachers with their pupils and sixth form students are of a very high quality, demonstrate mutual respect and are a strength of the school. Teachers manage behaviour very well and this ensures that a positive and productive ethos for learning is promoted both in lessons and around the school. This is valued by the pupils. However, a major factor in those very few lessons with unsatisfactory teaching, concerned weaknesses in the management of some pupils, leading to a significant reduction in concentration and consequently unsatisfactory progress. In the best lessons teachers provide appropriate opportunities for pupils to exercise responsibility for their work and to be self-motivated which leads to enthusiastic learning. Particularly good progress was observed in lessons where the teachers were able to harness this enthusiasm through active learning that challenged the pupils' reasoning. For example, where a pupil's understanding of a topic was questioned by a request for an explanation ('Tell me why?' or 'How do you know?') or when a teacher asked for a demonstration of skills and knowledge at the board ('Show us!').
37. The use of homework in support of learning in class is very effective throughout the school. A good variety of tasks is provided by teachers which is well matched to the needs of work in class or as an extension activity. In many lessons homework extends the opportunities available for pupils to develop and extend their skills in research and investigation or to reinforce their understanding and knowledge of the subject learnt during the school day.
38. Marking in lessons and for homework is regular, appropriately recorded and generally effective in identifying for pupils their successes and areas for improvement, with some very good practice in many subjects of the curriculum. In some books the written commentary on work lacks sufficient detail for pupils to readily identify how to make progress. Individual feedback and encouragement to pupils in lessons is effective, particularly at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form and this dialogue helps them to understand clearly how they can advance their learning and is influential in promoting good standards of attainment. In the best lessons teachers use a good repertoire of assessment methods to encourage pupils and students to be involved in the review of their own learning and that of other members of the class. This strategy has proved particularly effective in some subjects to aid the sharing of ideas and alternative views as well as opportunities to exercise responsibility for self-improvement.

#### 40. **The curriculum and assessment**

39. The school aims to develop girls into confident, independent, well qualified and caring young women, equipped to fulfil themselves personally and professionally and to contribute positively to their community. These aims are well met by the education provided by the school.
40. The school curriculum is good. A broad and balanced range of subjects is linked with extra-curricular activities to support these aims. The curriculum promotes pupils' intellectual, physical and personal development and prepares them well for the next stage of their education, training or employment. The provision for special educational needs (SEN) pupils is good.
41. At Key Stage 3 the curriculum is good and includes all subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education. A valuable programme of personal and social education (PSE) meets statutory requirements and includes health and sex education and draws attention to the misuse of drugs. However, information and communication technology (ICT) is not taught in sufficient depth during the key stage. There are too few opportunities for pupils to use ICT in many subjects. The previous inspection report indicated that the school should extend ICT across the curriculum, which it has failed to do in any consistent way.
42. At Key Stage 4 the curriculum is good and meets statutory requirements. All pupils study a core of English, mathematics, science (double science), French or German, technology, physical education, religious studies and PSE. They can also choose two further examination courses to broaden their subject coverage and give them the opportunity to take two foreign languages.

43. Whilst the requirements of the National Curriculum are met, the breadth of activities covered in physical education at Key Stage 4 is restricted owing to poor accommodation and the limited time available. The quality of careers education and guidance in the school is very good and all statutory requirements are met. A very strong partnership with the local careers adviser ensures that the needs of pupils in Key Stage 4 and sixth form students are met effectively. The careers library is a valuable resource to complement this guidance and it is used widely by pupils.
44. The programme of personal and social education is detailed and operates on a rotating system of topics. It is well coordinated and has been reviewed and amended recently following discussion with staff and an evaluation by pupils. Lessons cover a broad range of topics including sex education, drugs awareness and personal management and are appropriate to the age and maturity of the pupils. These lessons are well taught and pupils make good progress. The documentation used is of good quality. Pupils participate well in lessons and are encouraged to voice their views. Good use is also made of outside agencies and guest speakers.
45. The school has a strong sixth form offering a good range of A level subjects. Good detailed planning is underway to incorporate the proposed changes in September 2000. The breadth of subject choice is enhanced as a result of the collaborative arrangement with Wilmington Grammar School for Boys. Sixth form students are fully involved in the life of the school, are loyal to the school and show respect for each other. Prefects take their responsibilities seriously and mirror the strong school ethos.
46. Students have some opportunities to enrich their curriculum beyond academic study, but are not able to undertake sports and leisure activities as part of their programme, mainly because of lack of accommodation. This restriction was identified in the last report. Many students continue with sporting activities through clubs and house and school teams.
47. Careers education and guidance in the sixth form is of high quality and taught effectively. The statutory requirements in respect of the provision of religious education in the sixth form are now fully met and it is a valuable experience for many students.
48. The school curriculum is enhanced by a range of extra-curricular activities which, in general, take place at lunch time and include competitive sports. Participation rates are good. In addition to sports, choir, orchestra, Duke of Edinburgh Awards, Christian Union, French and German clubs and dance, there are also mini-enterprise in Year 10, Years 7 and 8 end of year activities, a Year 9 production and various charity- fund raising events. The school also has a major musical production each Easter directed by the headteacher, involving many pupils of all ages.
49. The school has an appropriate and very detailed policy on reporting and assessment, which includes very clear guidance on the role of the subject teacher, head of department, form tutor and heads of school. Subject departments maintain their own records of pupils' attainment. Whilst these are in different formats they meet the requirements of the National Curriculum. The use of assessment to track pupils' progress is underdeveloped in some subjects in Key Stage 3, but effective in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form. Procedures for assessing pupils' attainment are good at both key stages and in the sixth form.
50. The marking of pupils' work is good in most subjects and many teachers write comments to help them to improve. Marking and day to day assessment procedures are good in technology, mathematics, modern foreign languages, business studies, physical education, geography and science. Teachers' use of assessment to help them when planning future lessons is good.
51. Parents receive formal reports from the school at the end of the summer term each year except Years 11 and 13 who are sent a full report in the spring term. Reports meet statutory requirements, are detailed, very informative and include all aspects of the pupils' work, attendance and behaviour. Parents also receive a record sheet each term. A comprehensive and valuable Record of Achievement is completed in Year 11. Pupils' contact books give parents the opportunity to know what homework has been set on any

given evening and write comments. These are valued by parents who feel they are well informed about progress and attainment.

### **53. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development**

52. The previous inspection report highlighted the school's success in promoting personal values and a sense of responsibility. This remains a strength. The school presents itself as a caring, cohesive community where pupils are courteous and have a genuine concern for one another.
53. The school places a strong emphasis upon the spiritual development of pupils. Since the last inspection it has dealt with the lack of provision of religious education in Year 13 and now provides a comprehensive programme for these students. There is a daily act of collective worship for all pupils and the quality of these occasions is high, with evidence of mature contributions by pupils. In religious education, lessons promote the idea of community in religious teachings and the spiritual messages upon which they are based.
54. The provision for pupils' moral development is very good. There is strong evidence of moral themes permeating both subject lessons and the school assemblies. In business studies for example, students appreciate the moral implications of business activity and teachers address the ethical issues. In history lessons, pupils are encouraged to understand the moral values and attitudes underlining specific historical events. In personal and social education pupils are able to discuss issues of teenage morality and pupils' questions and comments are treated sensitively. In religious education at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form there is formal teaching of the principles of morality and moral codes.
55. Pupils' social development is excellent. They are extremely courteous to adults and fellow pupils alike and collaborate particularly well in lessons. In physical education for example, individual pupils lead others through particular activities. Older students in the junior dance club encourage younger pupils to explore their ideas and develop their self-awareness. In music, opportunities for group composition and performance are promoting very good cooperation between pupils. The range of whole school responsibilities that pupils adopt and the mature way in which they carry out these functions, serve to emphasise the strength of pupils' social development. Pupils are well-known and valued by all teachers and non-teaching staff and there is an implicit expectation that pupils will be polite and helpful in return.
56. Although some individual subjects are promoting awareness of other cultures this is not widespread. In a few subjects there is a planned focus upon other cultural traditions, for example in French, where a Year 12 student from Mauritius was encouraged to talk about her native culinary traditions as part of an A level topic. Display, including interesting millennium time lines in a range of subject areas, highlight relevant cultural developments, but there is little explicit emphasis in many subject schemes of work upon the contribution of other cultures. A number of pupils are from a range of ethnic backgrounds, but the school does not build upon the richness of this cultural diversity sufficiently or encourage the wider multi-cultural community to be more directly involved with the school. This continues to be an area for development since the last inspection.

### **58. Support, guidance and pupils' welfare**

57. The provision for the support and guidance of pupils is in all respects very good indeed. The commitment of the heads of school and form tutors to pupils' curriculum progress, social development and well-being is a particular strength. Teachers have a detailed knowledge of their pupils and respond immediately and sensitively wherever there are problems. The assigning of older students to form tutors and their classes, provides additional support to younger pupils.
58. The system of monitoring individual pupils is particularly comprehensive and the documentation provides

a very detailed profile of not only how well pupils are doing in lessons, but how they are developing as rounded individuals. Through this system, problems are quickly identified and remedial action taken which often involves the setting of personal targets. Pupils appreciate the in-depth knowledge that the school has of them. There is also a very close link with the careers service to ensure that pupils are well prepared for the world of work.

59. The school promotes firm discipline and good behaviour. There are detailed behaviour and anti-bullying policies and clear procedures on dealing with any problems. These policies are reviewed regularly. Effort and achievement are recognised through a reward system and pupils respond to the high expectations of their good behaviour around the school.
60. There are very good systems for promoting and monitoring attendance and punctuality. Attendance is checked through accurate daily completion of school registers. Where instances of non-attendance are identified these are dealt with effectively. Punctuality to lessons is very good and teachers are quick to check any unexplained lateness.
61. Staff are aware of a detailed child protection policy and there are clear lines of communication through the heads of school, senior management and outside agencies to deal with any protection issues. There is detailed guidance to staff on procedures for conducting school visits.
62. The detailed health and safety policy is good and the school has done all that it can to deal with the issue of road safety between the two sites identified in the last inspection. Despite representations to the county council the situation at the beginning and the end of the school day remains a matter of concern. The school has written to parents to encourage parking away from the school gates and the staff and prefects play a strong part in ensuring that pupils arrive and leave in safety. There are no other health and safety concerns.
64. **Partnership with parents and the community**
63. The school's partnership with parents and the community is very good and has improved further since the previous inspection.
64. At the pre-inspection meeting for parents and in response to questionnaires, a number of parents expressed concerns about excessive homework. These concerns were not substantiated in discussions with parents and pupils during the inspection, but some girls may require more guidance from subject teachers about how much time they spend on working at home and the best ways to do this. No other significant concerns were raised by parents.
65. The quality of information provided for parents is very good. The school handbook is very attractively designed and conforms with legal requirements. The most recent governors' report to parents has a number of deficiencies and does not conform to legal requirements.
66. Teachers' annual written reports to parents are supplemented by graded termly reports. The current report format is good and the revised version for Year 2000 is very good. Parents confirm the accuracy of subject teachers' observations and the clarity of their guidance about how their daughters' attainments can be improved. Parents receive detailed newsletters each term and frequent supplementary information about school events. Occasional questionnaires are sent to parents and replies are carefully evaluated.
67. One consultation evening is arranged each year and parents contacting the school at any time are confident of prompt, sensitive responses. They confirm very good relationships with teachers and other members of staff.

68. Parents of primary school children are very well informed about the school. A thoughtful and detailed induction programme prepares children for transfer and teaching staff and Year 12 students support them fully until settled in Year 7. Parents of Year 9 pupils are fully involved in the choice of GCSE options.
69. Parents have very good involvement in their children's learning. Contact books are used very effectively in all year groups to sustain the home-school link. Subject teachers generally comply with homework timetables and parents and pupils confirm that homework requirements are reasonable, although stringent.
70. An active association of parents and friends organises regular social and fundraising events and contributes significantly each year to the school's budget. Recent purchases have included physical education equipment, a video camera and a fume cupboard. The association co-operates very effectively with the school's governing body. Some families have been active on both committees.
71. The school has good links with the community, including primary and secondary schools, industry and commerce. Varied and imaginative work experience is provided each year for pupils in Year 11 and employers confirm their abilities and commitment. Year 12 students are encouraged to use work-shadowing opportunities to broaden their experiences and enhance their university applications. This is very valuable.
72. The school has some good links with the local and wider communities, although multicultural and multi-ethnic links are underdeveloped. Guest speakers are invited to contribute to the curriculum for personal, social and health education. Day visits are arranged to galleries, museums, theatres and places of local and national interest. Exchange links with schools in France and Germany are effective, but have not developed to stimulate personal contacts between tutor groups or year groups.
73. Each year the school participates enthusiastically in a number of local engineering challenge competitions. Many pupils are involved in the Duke of Edinburgh award scheme and in local history projects. Close links are established with the local parish and the headteacher is chairing the organising committee for local millennium events. Some rental income is received from occasional community use of the school grounds and buildings.
74. Charitable collections are an important feature of school life. Very large amounts of money are collected by pupils throughout the year and harvest parcels are distributed to over 100 senior citizens. Transport is provided for senior citizens to attend special matinees of school musical productions. A carol service is held each year at the parish church.
75. The school is greatly valued and respected by parents and the local community. Partnership with the community is greatly beneficial to students' educational attainment and personal development.

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

### 77. **Leadership and management**

76. The school has developed an excellent ethos in which all pupils and staff are valued and respected. The influence and vision of the headteacher is a key factor in the success of this school. There is shared vision for the future, the educational direction is clear and it is embodied within the aims of the school.
77. The governing body is supportive, conscientious and has the best interests of the school at heart. However, governors do not have any formal strategies to monitor the work of the school, consequently they are not able to evaluate the effect upon school improvement of their decisions. The governing body generally fulfils its statutory duties and has established appropriate committees to support management



and ensure that the school is a safe and secure educational community. However, there are a number of omissions of statutory requirements in the annual governors' report to parents.

78. Day to day management and organisation are very good and enable the school to function as a happy, orderly and purposeful community. Staff and pupils know where they should be and lines of communication are effective. Non-teaching staff are an important element of the community and make a significant contribution to the success of the school. The quality of teamwork amongst all staff is high.
79. Data relating to pupils' performance in the school, county and nationally is disseminated to staff and generally well used to set targets for achievement. Individual target setting and mentoring at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form is good and is valued by the pupils. There has been an improvement in academic performance as a result. The monitoring of teaching and learning to analyse factors which bring about good progress and identify areas for improvement by senior managers and heads of department has begun, but is inconsistent and underdeveloped. Where it is good as in modern foreign languages and design and technology, results have improved and the progress of pupils accelerated. In some other subjects such as religious education, mathematics, science and advanced level history there are elements of teaching and departmental management that should be improved. The good practice should now be formalised and undertaken by all managers within a whole school strategy.
80. Overall the provision for pupils with special education needs, including the most able is satisfactory and they make good progress in their work and personal development. Management of this provision is satisfactory with the role of co-ordinator being shared between the head teacher and the heads of lower and upper school. Teachers are well briefed on the needs of pupils in their classes and account is often taken of this in lesson planning and in teaching. Form tutors monitor the progress of pupils with special educational needs on a regular and frequent basis. Communication with the parents of pupils with special educational needs is good.
81. This is a school where people matter. It meets its aims which focus upon high achievement, personal development and concern for the individual. There are appropriate policies relating to all the aspects of school life and the school prospectus is an informative, quality document. Development planning at all levels is good and in some departments for example mathematics, English and modern foreign languages, good quality planning is bringing about real improvement. The school development plan focuses upon how the school is to improve in a realistic and practical way.
82. Good progress has been maintained since the last inspection in reviewing and monitoring departmental policies and planning. In general the standard of subject documentation is good. Some schemes of work show how the learning needs of different levels of ability will be met for example in modern foreign languages. However, in science, English, art, geography, music, religious education and information technology, they do not address the issue of quality of learning sufficiently, by not indicating how pupils will learn and make good progress. The management of and provision for pupils with special educational needs (SEN) is good and these pupils make good progress.
83. The use of accommodation is constantly evaluated and when funds permit, improved. Although it is inadequate in a number of areas, the school makes good use of what it has. The management of the two sites is good. The school meets all its statutory requirements relating to curriculum and organisation. The management of the school has remained at the high level identified in the last inspection report. New appointments have been integrated successfully and make a significant contribution to the school and the management team.
85. **Staffing, accommodation and learning resources**
84. The provision and quality of staffing, accommodation and resources are satisfactory overall and standards have been maintained since the previous inspection.

85. Teaching staff are very well qualified and experienced and almost all departments are staffed with specialists. The lack of some specialist teaching in art and design is affecting attainment. Support staff are well qualified, work hard and make a valuable contribution. However, there are too few support staff in design and technology, information technology and science. Staff responsible for administration and for the maintenance of premises and grounds are very good and contribute significantly to the smooth running of the school.
86. The programme for staff development is good. Numerous training opportunities are available each year for teachers and ancillary staff, related to the needs of individuals, departments and the school. Ancillary staff are encouraged to participate in the training programme. A mentoring system provides effective support for newly appointed and newly promoted teachers. Detailed job descriptions for all personnel are updated regularly. The system for teacher appraisal is very effective.
87. Learning resources are satisfactory overall and are good in business studies and science. Resources for information and communications technology are unsatisfactory in most departments. Although the number of computers available to students is below the national average for similar schools, modern, high quality machines have been installed recently in a computer suite. The library is a good resource and is used intensively by students in all year groups. Two modern computers are available in the library, but students have poor access to the Internet.
88. The school buildings occupy two sites. Whilst the accommodation is satisfactory overall, it is poor in business studies, physical education and some aspects of design and technology. It is unsatisfactory in music. In all departments, but particularly in physical education, staff minimise the effects of serious inadequacies successfully. The standard of interior decoration is generally satisfactory and good in some areas. The buildings and site are free of vandalism, graffiti and litter.
90. **The efficiency of the school**
89. The money is used well to support a curriculum which is broad and balanced and provides all pupils with an appropriate educational experience. The curriculum has developed well since the last inspection to address local and national changes and requirements. The school has received good financial support from the parent teacher association and money has been spent wisely on audio-visual resources and books to enrich learning.
90. The basic budget is supplemented by money from the Standards Fund to support staff development and training and over the last 2 years, the school has received additional capital grants to improve the accommodation. Prudent financial planning over the last three years has enabled the school to add to these grants from its delegated budget. The school continues to allocate finances to subject departments based upon detailed submissions linked to development plans. However, as identified in the last report, there is no formal process by which departments evaluate their own cost effectiveness.
91. The budget planning process is appropriate and whilst the accounting systems are still not computerised, financial administration and monitoring are excellent. There is a good finance policy which is to be modified to reflect the change from Grant Maintained to Foundation School status. The most recent external audit report states that financial systems continue to operate soundly and that there are no weaknesses. The governing body monitors spending carefully to ensure that the priorities identified in the school development plan are met within any financial constraints. Day to day financial management is excellent. The balance carried forward from previous years has been identified to support improvements in accommodation and the development of information technology.
92. The amount spent on staffing, accommodation and resources is appropriate and in the upper quartile for similar schools. The income per pupil is also within this range. The amount spent on books is at an

appropriate level and provision for computers has improved significantly, supported by monies from the National Grid for Learning project. The library and sixth form study rooms are used well. The school occupies two separate sites, but by good management, overall spending is not adversely affected to any significant degree. The school manages its staff well and makes good use of the accommodation and resources available.

93. Overall, financial planning is good, administration is excellent, teaching is good and the school makes good use of its resources, accommodation and staff. Support for pupils and concern about their welfare is very good. Non-teaching staff make a valuable contribution to the school and give good support. Attainment is well above the national average and almost all pupils make good progress. The school gives very good value for money.

**95. ENGLISH, MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCE**

**95. English**

94. Attainment on entry is well above average when compared with other schools nationally and about average for grammar schools. Levels of attainment at the end of Key Stages 3 and 4 are well above the national average and above the national average in the sixth form.
95. The 1998 results of the national tests at the end of Key Stage 3 were very high compared to all schools and high when compared to other grammar schools with 99 per cent of pupils attaining level 6. However, this percentage dropped significantly in 1999 to 83 per cent and although the 1999 results are very high compared to all schools nationally, they are below average when compared to other grammar schools. The English department's teacher assessments did not predict the 1999 results at Key Stage 3 and there was a significant discrepancy between the teachers' own assessments of their pupils and the test results. The school and department are well aware of the urgent need to re-establish higher levels of attainment. Measures are already in place following a careful analysis of pupil performance.
96. Attainment at GCSE has remained consistently very high when compared to all schools. In both 1998 and 1999, 100 per cent of pupils entered for GCSE English and English Literature attained A\* to C grades. The 1998 school results were close to the national average for grammar schools and well above those of all schools nationally. In both English and English Literature, the number of pupils attaining the highest grades is low compared to other grammar schools and this is a concern for the school. Setting in Years 10 and 11 has been introduced as one strategy in seeking to raise the number of pupils attaining the highest grades.
97. Attainment in A level English Literature has shown a marked increase when comparing the school's results from 1998 to 1999 with a significant rise from 15 per cent to 41 per cent of candidates achieving an A grade. In 1999 all candidates achieved A to C grades in the examination. The school's results of 97 per cent of passes in 1998 were above the national average of 94 per cent. Since the last inspection the school has introduced the A level English course in addition to English Literature.
98. Pupils consistently make good progress in both key stages and the sixth form and in some lessons make very good progress.
99. Pupils attain high standards in each of the three attainment targets of speaking and listening, reading and writing and progress in these attainment targets is good. In lessons, speaking and listening skills are encouraged and well developed. In discussion, pupils speak confidently in a range of contexts using language appropriately. Pupil responses to poetry are particularly good. They demonstrate knowledge and understanding of literary terms at both Key Stages 3 and 4. In a study of war poetry, Year 11 showed well developed oral skills, sensitivity and ability to analyse and appreciate poetry.
100. Reading aloud is a feature of many lessons and generally pupils read well with expression. Pupils in Key Stages 3 and 4 are encouraged to read widely and regular curriculum time is allocated for supervised private reading in the library. However, the department uses only a limited number of teaching strategies during this time.
101. The presentation and content of written work throughout the school is good. Pupils are provided with opportunities for drafting and redrafting work and progress is particularly good when pupils are able to reflect on their work and write their own targets for improvement. This was evident from observation of Year 7's work on descriptive writing.

102. The girls respond well in class to teachers, show respect and are courteous. They listen attentively, are co-operative and well-behaved. They are enthusiastic with sustained concentration. Pupils in Key Stages 3 and 4 and the sixth form enjoy their work generally and participate well in lively, relevant discussions.
103. The quality of teaching is never unsatisfactory and it is often good or very good throughout the school. Where teaching is very good, the planning is thorough with clearly identified aims, objectives and specified outcomes and a variety of strategies are employed effectively. The teachers have high expectations of their pupils and secure subject knowledge. They use praise effectively and relationships in class are very good. In Year 12, for example, studying Shakespearean text, high quality questioning improved students' analytical skills and appreciation of language.
104. At both Key Stages 3 and 4, there is limited allocated time to use the computer network, but during the time available, word processing skills are developed and pupils familiarised with different software. Units of work such as the Year 8 project to produce a school brochure for new pupils, provide excellent opportunities for research and for writing for different audiences.
105. The marking policy is clearly set out in the departmental handbook and this is adhered to by staff. Teachers use a number system marking out of twenty-five which equates to National Curriculum levels at Key Stage 3 and the quality of written comments usually provides sufficient guidance for pupils to evaluate and improve their written work.
106. Representative sampling of higher, average and lower attaining pupils' work and agreement trialling is addressed at departmental meetings. Homework is used effectively to reinforce and extend topics studied in class. Statutory requirements are met by the English curriculum. The department of English specialists is managed informally, but effectively by an experienced head of department. The department has a clear action plan for development within its handbook and agreed targets for improvement in standards of attainment in Key Stages 3 and 4 and at A level. However, the departmental schemes of work are underdeveloped, lacking sufficient detail, timescales and guidance to ensure consistency across the department and between classes. Overall there has been satisfactory progress since the last inspection and strategies are now in place to ensure this progress is accelerated.
107. Since the last inspection, the head of department has purchased some additional resources for the sixth form and Key Stage 4 and workbooks to develop literacy skills at Key Stage 3. Levels of book resources are satisfactory.
108. Accommodation is adequate with lessons being taught in two buildings. However, drama is not specifically timetabled because of the restricted availability of the hall. Consequently, provision of drama is ad hoc. There has been no progress made in this area since the last report.
109. The annual drama productions are well received and contribute significantly to the school's extra-curricular provision and to the cultural development of pupils.

#### 111. **Mathematics**

110. The mathematical attainment of the present Year 7 pupils on entry to the school was very high in comparison with all schools nationally and was about average compared to grammar schools.
111. In the 1999 Key Stage 3 national tests, 98 per cent of pupils reached level 6 compared with 92 per cent in 1998. The 1999 figure was very high when compared with 38 per cent for all schools nationally. It was also above average when compared with other grammar schools. Between 1998 and 1999, the proportion of pupils reaching level 7 rose from 42 per cent to 57 per cent which was very high compared to all

schools, but was still below average when compared to other grammar schools.

112. Attainment in the present Year 9 reflects a continuing rising trend. Over the last two years, adjustments have been made to the Key Stage 3 teaching programme in order to accelerate pupils' learning. For example, Year 9 pupils across the ability range are confident in the use of trigonometry and geometry. They can manipulate algebraic expressions when solving problems. Pupils are now better prepared for the Year 9 tests. This year, the school has introduced setting by ability in Year 9 mathematics lessons to promote higher standards.
113. Generally, pupils have good numeracy skills and are well equipped to deal with the mathematical content in other subjects. In many lessons, pupils are given mental arithmetic activities to help them develop their number work. Occasionally, pupils turn to written methods or the calculator when a mental strategy would be more appropriate. For example, a Year 7 pupil chose a written method for calculating  $4 \times 16$  and a group of Year 10 girls struggled to work out  $180 - 124$  in their heads.
114. At Key Stage 4, attainment in mathematics rose significantly between 1998 and 1999. In the 1998 GCSE examinations, 92 per cent of the pupils gained a grade A\* to C. While this figure was well above the national average of 44 per cent for all schools, it was below the average of 96 per cent for all grammar schools. In 1999, 96 per cent of students gained GCSE grades A\* to C. The proportion of students gaining the higher grades A\* to B also increased from 59 per cent to 84 per cent, although too few gained an A grade. The policy of establishing a smaller top ability group to focus on higher levels of mathematics was very successful. In this group of 16 students, 10 gained A\* grades while the remainder achieved A grades. The top group also studied GCSE Statistics and all of them passed, with 13 gaining grades A or A\*. Attainment in the present Year 11 is similar to last year. The highest ability group is working at very high levels covering topics such as the Sine Rule and the Cosine Rule. The lower ability groups are on course for gaining a grade C at GCSE and are able to tackle problems related to topics such as cumulative frequency.
115. In 1998, 10 students were entered for A level mathematics and they all passed. Two of the students gained A grades and four achieved B grades. These results were above average compared to all schools. In 1999, the school maintained its record of success in mathematics with 13 candidates of whom three gained A grades. In the present A level groups, students, including some from the neighbouring boys' grammar school, continue to perform well both in class and through assessed work, such as their homework assignments. The small number of pupils who study at A/S level in mathematics were very successful in their examination.
116. Overall progress in mathematics is good. The good progress is linked to the very effective work of a team of specialist, dedicated teachers. In many lessons, there is strong empathy between the teacher and the pupils that promotes very positive relationships. Teachers are very supportive and encourage pupils to ask questions and seek help. This develops pupils' understanding and helps them gain in confidence. In a lower ability Year 11 class, the teacher expertly identified and supported a group of pupils who shared a concern about a new piece of work. There was a strong sense of mutual respect generated by this incident.
117. The good progress is closely linked to the extremely positive attitudes of the pupils. Most are keen to contribute in lessons by answering or asking questions. Particularly good progress was observed in lessons where the teachers were able to harness this enthusiasm through active learning that challenged the pupils' reasoning. For example, where a pupil's understanding of a topic was questioned by a request for an explanation ('Tell me why?' or 'How do you know?') or when a teacher asked for a demonstration of skills and knowledge at the board ('Show us!').
118. Overall, the pupils work very hard in class and at home. Particularly impressive is the quality of the homework assignments of sixth form students. Pupils are interested in learning and are able to sustain concentration for long periods. Many enjoy responsibility and are developing greater self-reliance in organising their work. Most take great pride in their work. Pupils are extremely keen to contribute in lessons mainly through question and answer activities. However, some pupils have difficulty describing their mathematical thinking using the appropriate technical language. Occasionally, there is some noisy

behaviour in the lower ability sets that hinders progress.

119. Overall, teaching is very good. It is satisfactory or better in 90 per cent of lessons. Teaching is good in about 30 per cent of lessons, very good in around 40 per cent and excellent in 10 per cent. It is consistent throughout the key stages. The teachers plan extremely thoroughly and are able to teach pupils in a challenging and sympathetic way. They have very good subject expertise that allows them to direct and support their pupils. For example, in one Year 7 lesson, the teacher had produced three excellent worksheets to support the new learning. In all lessons, a significant proportion of the time is devoted to direct teaching to the whole class. There is some extremely effective exposition used and teachers use resources well. In the best lessons, there are also strong elements of interaction between the teacher and the whole class. For example, in marking a mental arithmetic test, the teacher asked pupils to explain to the class how they arrived at their answers. However, at times teachers use a limited range of teaching strategies. There are missed opportunities to use visual aids. For example, a sixth form mechanics group may have enjoyed and appreciated actually seeing and handling a block on an inclined plane. There is limited evidence of practical or investigational work being used to introduce or develop concepts. For example, finding out what happens to the tangent of an angle as the angle gets bigger or investigating the different angles formed by lines on two intersecting planes. However, in a very good Year 10 lesson, pupils worked in pairs investigating the properties of congruent triangles. Also, in an excellent A level lesson, students were given the freedom to develop and extend their collaborative thinking and they managed to generalise some quite sophisticated ideas. The unsatisfactory teaching in the subject is linked to a failure to deal with some pupils' noisy and sometimes silly behaviour, in lower ability sets.

120. The leadership and management of the department are very good. Much credit goes to the head of department for being prepared to question the work of her team and to innovate. The mathematics department has become particularly adept at analysing performance data and using it to inform target setting and developmental planning. Adjustments to the Key Stage 3 curriculum have been made to accelerate learning. Setting arrangements have been chosen to maximise pupils' progress. Raising attainment has a very high profile in the department's development plan and the actions agreed are impacting positively on the attainment and progress of pupils. The department has recognised the need to develop systems further for monitoring the quality and diversity of learning in lessons. There has been good progress in the subject since the last inspection.

## 122. Science

121. In the 1999 national tests (SATs), at the end of Key Stage 3, the percentage of pupils attaining the national average of level 6 or above (83 per cent), was very high when compared to all schools, but just below that of other grammar schools. However, only 21 per cent of pupils reached level 7 which was well below the grammar school average of 34 per cent. In 1998, the proportion reaching level 6 was 88 per cent.

122. At Key Stage 4 all pupils study for the GCSE double award co-ordinated science examination. Attainment rose markedly between 1998 and 1999. The proportion gaining A\* to C grades rose from 91 per cent to 99 per cent and those gaining the higher grades (A\* or A) almost doubled. In 1998, the latest year for which comparable information is available, the percentage of pupils obtaining A\* to C grades was similar to that of other grammar schools and well above those for all schools. Standards at GCSE in 1999 were very similar to those at the last inspection.

123. In 1998 at GCE A level, all candidates achieved an A to E grade in biology and physics and 92 per cent in chemistry. These results were above the national average. In 1999 there was a decline in the average points score in all three subjects, but attainment was still above the national average

124. By the end of Key Stage 3 attainment is well above average and pupils have a good knowledge of the subject. They can carry out investigations and other practical work effectively though they have insufficient opportunities to plan and complete the whole process themselves. Following a class

experiment on preserving milk they could explain their findings and link this with what they know about microbes and the effects of lactic acid. However the practical work observed was often over- directed by the teacher and did not challenged pupils' thinking.

125. At Key Stage 4, lesson observations, examination of pupils' work, test results and other evidence, indicate that the proportion of pupils likely to gain an A\* to C grade this year is high and similar to 1999. Attainment overall is well above the national average. The current Year 11 are taught in sets which allows teachers to pitch the work to match the ability of the pupils. Recently, class sizes in Years 10 and 11 have been reduced and this too has helped teachers give pupils the support they need. Pupils show good investigative skills and a good knowledge of the work which they are doing. When questioned, they can for example, explain how to find the resistance of an electrical component and test how this might change with temperature. Pupils can also plan a simple investigation, record their observations and evaluate their results though few practical examples were seen during the inspection. Attainment in Key Stage 3 has risen slightly since the last inspection. In Key Stage 4, the performance of pupils has improved and there was a marked improvement from 1998 to 1999.
126. In lessons most Year 12 and Year 13 students are attaining the levels expected at this stage in their courses. In Year 12 in biology, for example, students can recall information from previous years and apply it to explain how different characteristics are passed down through generations of fruit flies. In chemistry they can carry out investigations to test the "equations of motion". However, within these groups there is a wide range of attainment with some students finding their course difficult, but working hard to improve.
127. Although pupils' progression is good at both key stages, including pupils with special educational needs (SEN), progress is markedly better when they are given tasks which challenge them and when they are really made to think, as for example when Year 11 pupils were asked to research topics on which they were later to give a presentation. Similarly in another class, pupils were asked to produce from their own research a diagram of the Carbon Cycle. Whilst progress is generally good, on some occasions insufficient provision is made to stretch the more able pupils.
128. At A level, students are very attentive and have good learning skills. Though early in their courses Year 12 pupils have made good progress and have gained in terms of knowledge and skills. They have matured and are now learning to put their ideas in writing and being critical about their judgements. Year 13 students are also making good progress.
129. Pupils' attitude to their work is always very good. They come into the laboratory expecting to work. Levels of concentration are very good and pupils settle down quickly. The general ethos of learning is very good. Pupils co-operate well in groups and share out practical tasks amicably. They are rarely distracted and take care over their written work.
130. Overall the quality of teaching is consistently good in both Key Stages 3 and 4. It is good or very good in 80 per cent of lessons and never less than satisfactory. Forty per cent of teaching is very good. Teachers have a good knowledge of the subject which they are teaching. Working relationships between staff and pupils are very good. Teachers have high expectations of their pupils in terms of work, but at Key Stages 3 and 4 do not give them sufficient opportunities to sort out problems for themselves. Teachers use questions well to check understanding and to develop ideas. They know their pupils and classroom management is good. At Key Stages 3 and 4 the three sciences are taught separately. Sometimes, due to a lack of a common scheme of work, opportunities for linking ideas across subjects are lost. Teachers plan their lessons well. Suitable homework is set regularly.
131. Day to day assessment is satisfactory and sometimes good. Pupils' written work is well marked with teachers often adding extra comments to help pupils to improve. Procedures for assessing pupils' attainment are generally good and common tests are used across year groups. However, the use of these results to monitor pupils' progress needs further development.



132. The use of ICT is developing and some good examples of pupils' work were available for inspection. Further and regular use of ICT by pupils needs to be built into schemes of work to raise standards at the higher levels.
133. In many aspects leadership is good, but the monitoring of classroom practice and the curriculum is underdeveloped. Day to day management of the department is satisfactory. Resources are adequate and well managed by hard pressed laboratory technicians. Science accommodation is sufficient and in good condition. Good use is made of display material and laboratories are interesting and stimulating places in which to learn

**135. Art**

134. At the end of Key Stage 3, attainment in art and design is above the national expectation in both National Curriculum attainment targets and progress is usually good. The department has made sound progress in improving standards since the last inspection. At the end of Year 9 many pupils' draw well from observation and imagination, but their skills in painting are less well developed. They use colour effectively in graphic media. The standard of preparatory work and research into the work of other artists is high.
135. At the previous inspection attainment at Key Stage 4 in art was above average for all schools nationally. Since then the art and design department has maintained this position consistently as well as improving the percentage of passes gained at the higher grades in both GCSE and A level examinations. Over the last three years GCSE results at grades A\* to C have been consistently good, well above average compared with all schools nationally and above average compared with similar schools. In 1998, all pupils achieved grades A\* to C, with the percentage awarded A\* and A well above the national average for all schools and for selective schools. In 1999 the examination results at grades A\* to C were broadly in line with the previous year with a pass rate of 97 per cent. The department has improved the proportion of pupils gaining a pass at A\*, but the proportion of A grades has declined compared with 1998.
136. Advanced level results in 1998 were good, with all students achieving a pass at grades A to E, above average when compared with all schools nationally. Results at the highest grades A and B were also above average, but well below in respect of grade A. In 1999, the examination results continued to be good, with all students successful at grades A to E. The percentage gaining an A grade was significantly better than the previous year due to the department's focus upon raising attainment at the higher grades. There was however, an increase in the proportion of grades D and E which now needs to be addressed.
137. At Key Stage 3, progress is usually good, particularly in Year 9 where teaching is supported by good subject knowledge, but earlier in the key stage progress in some lessons is only satisfactory because of limited challenge and continuity in the schemes of work and a shortage of specialist teachers. In Year 7 most pupils join the school with diverse experiences in art and attainment on entry is often about average. They develop good skills in visual and written research and are increasingly knowledgeable about aspects of art history, but do not use sketchbooks as required by the National Curriculum programmes of study. Pupils' writing about art and the use of specialist vocabulary is good, but they have few opportunities to discuss their ideas and opinions. The emphasis upon writing in the schemes of work makes a positive contribution to the development of literacy and in some lessons encourages pupils' spiritual development through art. For example, in a Year 9 project on Surrealism, pupils speculated in their writing about the meaning contained in examples of artists' work and in their own paintings. This enriched their knowledge and understanding of art and the relationship of their own to the work of other artists. Progress in the use of information and communications technology (ICT) and in three-dimensional work is restricted by inadequate facilities in the department.
138. At Key Stage 4, progress in art and design is very good and in the sixth form it is good. Students rapidly improve their practical skills and some achieve an excellent standard of work in drawing and imaginative painting, often on a large scale. Preparatory studies are of a high standard informed by conscientious visual research and effective presentation. The integration of practical work and art historical study is a positive strength and the quality of writing about art is very good. Some pupils lack confidence in generating a variety of creative ideas within their projects and too few pupils use sketchbooks regularly to support their work in art
139. In the sixth form students continue to improve their practical skills, knowledge and understanding in art and design in order to produce drawings, paintings and mixed media work of a good and often very good standard. They experiment with a variety of media and different approaches to making art and are

increasingly able to develop personal ideas informed by in-depth research into art history. Preparatory work is comprehensive and well researched.

140. Pupils enjoy their art and design lessons, take pride in what they do and work hard. The take-up of pupils on GCSE courses is good. Recruitment onto the A level course has been good until this year when numbers in Year 12 have dropped sharply as students have moved from the school to pursue their sixth form courses elsewhere. Pupils' behave well in lessons and relationships are positive. Homework is diligently completed and pupils and students give freely of their time to continue with their work outside lessons. As they mature pupils are increasingly independent learners and self-motivated. Many make effective use of their own ICT resources to support their research and presentation of written work in art.
141. The quality of teaching in art is good overall and never less than satisfactory. At Key Stages 3 and 4 teaching is usually good. In the sixth form teaching is good. The subject knowledge of teachers at Key Stage 4, the sixth form and in some Key Stage 3 lessons is very good when subject specialists are deployed and consequently pupils make good progress in art. However, in some lessons when specialist staff are not available lower expectations of pupils and limitations in challenge of the tasks provided, results in pupils making satisfactory rather than good progress in art. Teachers consistently foster positive relationships with pupils and create a purposeful ethos for learning.
142. In the best lessons teachers' planning is detailed and the aims for learning are clear and shared with pupils. Introductions provide a clear focus for learning. Expectations of pupils are high and lessons well paced to ensure that they make good progress in their practical work and learning about other artists. Lessons are ended with a clear evaluation of what has been achieved and information about the next stages of learning. In those lessons where teaching is satisfactory the teacher's use of these strategies is less well marked and this impacts upon pupils' progress. When teaching is sharply focused and challenging, pupils make very good progress in improving their practical skills. Pupils are supported very well by their teachers through individual guidance, practical advice and the quality of feedback on the progress of their work and this is a particular strength in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form.
143. Homework is used well to support class projects and marked regularly. Marking is not always consistently informative about pupils' achievements and how to improve. Pupils are involved in the assessment of their own learning, regularly evaluate their work and set broad targets for improvement in line with the sound departmental policy. Teachers regularly monitor and record pupil progress appropriately and meet frequently to agree standards. Reports to parents are informative. Assessment procedures at Key Stage 3 are not fully matched to the National Curriculum statements for the end of the key stage.
144. The art and design curriculum meets the requirements of the National Curriculum and external examinations with the exception of the use of ICT in Key Stage 3. Some pupils use ICT for research using CD ROM, but few have access to the Internet for research when compared with many similar schools. Some improvement has been made since the last inspection in increased opportunities for three-dimensional work, but the provision remains barely adequate. Displays of pupils' work in the art rooms and around the school are of a reasonable standard.
145. The department works well as a team and the head of department provides good support to colleagues deployed outside their subject specialism. Departmental documentation is satisfactory, but the schemes of work at Key Stage 3 are not sufficiently challenging and do not build clearly upon prior learning. At Key Stage 4 and A level the schemes of work lack detail beyond that provided by the examination boards. Planning for the future development of art in the school is sound and goals for improvement have been identified. The head of department has introduced a routine of monitoring, but as yet there is limited analysis of strengths and weaknesses in the subject and few strategies for achieving improvement. Resources are soundly organised and used well by teachers and pupils in lessons.
147. **Design and Technology**

146. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is above that in all schools nationally and in line with similar schools. Attainment in lessons throughout the key stage is above the national expectations and in a third of lessons it is well above. By the end of the key stage pupils' skills and knowledge of designing and making enable them to design independently and in teams. Inventive food products are finished to a high standard and evaluated well. Pupils construct fabric hats from a range of patterns and decorate them to match a chosen theme. Clocks are designed in resistant materials to meet particular contexts and needs. Pupils in Year 7 undertake short skills building activities, which quickly build confidence and basic skills using hand and machine tools. Structured design folders are completed successfully in all year groups. These help ensure consistency of standards between teachers. Pupils' revision notes are in good order and help consolidate understanding.
147. In 1998, GCSE examination results were above those for all schools nationally and in line for similar schools. Results in all four subjects within design and technology have improved since the last inspection with more pupils taking the examination. Results in food technology have improved at a fast rate. 1998 Advanced level results were high against national norms, but results have fluctuated over the last four years and need to be more consistent. Results in 1999 were below the national average. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 is above the national level and on a par with similar schools. In Years 10 and 11 attainment is excellent in 40 per cent of lessons and good in 60 per cent. By the end of the key stage pupils can analyse a task related to a context outside school and develop a solution considering a very wide range of possibilities. The attainment and coverage of GCSE course requirements in both attainment targets, designing and making, are very good. Pupils select their own materials and components for tasks and complete complex, but often small, constructions to a high standard.
148. Attainment in A level lessons is good in 60 per cent and very good in 40 per cent of lessons. Students produce extensive design folders covering the full range of assessment criteria, many with great imagination. They construct high quality textile garments, food and resistant materials products. Products in resistant materials are often restricted in scale and complexity by the rooms and limited facilities.
149. In Key Stage 3 all pupils including those with special educational needs make very good progress. Pupils make good progress using tools like food processors, sewing machines, pillar drills and saws. Pupils draw accurately and with appropriate use of colour to illustrate three-dimensional products. Information technology is used in lessons, but needs to be developed further. Year 10 pupils use information technology to produce coloured brochures for graphic products, but this also needs development and improvement
150. In Key Stage 4 all pupils opt for specialist GCSEs within design and technology and progress is very good in all areas. Practical work progresses at a high pace in all design and technology subjects. Pupils' progress in GCSE design folder development is very good and is supported by efficient homework completion. Insufficient designing space and facilities hinder pupils in all year groups who have lessons in the Manor technology room. This restricts progress at times in some projects and leads to some pupil frustration.
151. Design and technology is a successful and popular subject in the school. In both key stages, pupils' attitudes to learning and behaviour are excellent in lessons as well as club activities. Pupils show a very keen interest and application in practical, problem solving activities. Pupils are eager to complete practical tasks yet work very safely with a concern for others. Concentration rates are very high in teacher-directed lessons, as well as periods of independent study. Tools, equipment and accommodation are well cared for and respected.
152. Overall the quality of teaching is good. In Key Stage 3 the quality of teaching is very good in 50 per cent of lessons and the remainder is good. In Key Stage 4 teaching is excellent or very good in 40 per cent of lessons, good in 40 per cent and satisfactory in the others. At A level, teaching is good or very good with some excellent teaching. In excellent lessons, the level of activity and pupils' involvement in solving a complex range of design tasks is very high. Lessons are always very well planned and structured which contributes to high achievement and high pupil motivation. Teachers' expectations are always high, both

in technical and design aspects. The teachers are always fine tuning their work to suit the pupils and changing curriculum demands. This has been particularly successful in food where grades have improved as a result of these changes. Targets are set for individual pupils and work is marked against clearly published criteria. Assessment feedback to pupils is concise and criteria referenced against the National Curriculum and GCSE levels which supports achievement very well.

153. Relationships in the department are very good, providing a secure and stimulating environment for learning. There is much evidence in lessons and on display of pupils' sustained application in practical, theoretical and design work. Display is very good. However, despite the high quality finishes on practical work, little is displayed outside the department. There is a good match of number and qualifications of teachers to the demands of the curriculum. Training opportunities are used wisely. The part-time technicians make a good contribution to the department. They give good support to teachers and designing and making activities within the limited time available.
154. The requirements of the National Curriculum are met and all pupils have equal access to a broad and balanced curriculum with many very positive features. However, few pupils have opportunities to apply control technology in Key Stage 3 due to a lack of development in this area. Assessment and marking of work are excellent, pupils are set targets to point them in the right direction. Industrial links and external visits are strong features of the pupils' experiences and finished work. Pupils consider design problems with associated moral and cultural issues and this contributes to their personal development. In food technology, pupils consider foods from around the world and their impact on diets. In textiles, multi-cultural images are used to good advantage in designs for garments. The staff make items for school productions and teach on mini-enterprise activities as well as Year 8 end of year projects. This contributes to the positive ethos in the school and department. There is a thriving textile club and other clubs for finishing coursework. The history department contributes positively to design and technology skills through its successful project on Tudor houses.
155. Leadership of design and technology is good and the staff work well as a team. The department has made good progress in many aspects since the previous inspection. There are clear aims and objectives and the ethos in which the subject is taught reflects the school's positive aims. The subject development plans are clear and link with whole school issues such as information technology and links with outside agencies.
156. The accommodation is good for three quarters of the lessons, but poor for the others. This limits design work and the processes available to the pupils and consequently restricts some progress. Learning resources are well cared for by the staff, technician and pupils, but limited in some aspects. Funding has been spent wisely and prudently on new equipment.

## **Geography**

157. Standards at the end of Key Stage 3 are above the national expectation as at the time of the last inspection. However, standards are not yet consistently high enough when compared to similar schools. This is because in both fieldwork and classroom based research, work is not structured for pupils to develop the investigative aspects of geography fully, although the majority are capable of doing this. Standards vary across teaching groups because of teachers' different expectations.
158. There is some evidence of very high attainment, for example where pupils explain the contrasts between weather patterns in different climate zones or make detailed evaluations about the impact of tourism on Kenya. Some can explain the interrelationships between physical geography and population distribution in Kenya well. Where pupils are not attaining highly enough they are largely describing features or processes rather than explaining them or using the analysis from the data to explain the reasons for patterns, for example as shown by graphs. Pupils can produce extended writing when given the opportunity.
159. At Key Stage 4 attainment is well above the national average for all schools with 94 per cent of pupils

- gaining A\* to C grades in 1998. This is average when compared to similar schools. Less pupils attain the highest grades (A\* to B). Attainment at the time of the previous inspection was very high, but has fluctuated with an overall decrease in A\* to C grades since 1995. However, the 1999 results indicate a reversal of the decrease with very good results. All candidates gained A\* to C. The number of pupils obtaining the A\* and A grades improved significantly and was high for the school, although A\* grades are not yet high enough when compared to similar schools.
160. At A level the results of students achieving grades A to E matched the national average in 1998, although the number of highest grades attained was below those in similar schools. 1999 results have improved with no E grades and a better percentage of the highest grades, although this is not yet high enough.
  161. Pupils' progress in Key Stage 3 is good overall. However, in some teaching groups it is only satisfactory because teachers' expectations and understanding of the pitch of National Curriculum geography are too variable, so pupils are not challenged sufficiently.
  162. Pupils make very good progress in Key Stage 4. They learn to tackle examination examples integrated into their work and deepen their knowledge of coastal and river processes. From an initial low knowledge base about industrial processes they understand the impact of a range of factors in the food industry very well. Coursework enquiries relating Dartford to a particular urban model are often of very high quality using a very good range of techniques.
  163. Progress in the sixth form is usually very good. Students make significant gains in knowledge about the technical vocabulary and processes of glaciation and clearly understand the need to validate their observations and expectations of patterns through the application of statistical techniques. They broaden their range of knowledge of data collection and representation techniques well. They are then well equipped to choose from a range of methods for their personal studies, some of which are very well planned, carried out and analysed.
  164. Pupils' attitudes to learning geography are good overall. They concentrate especially well in GCSE and A level classes. Here they discuss and clarify ideas really well, responding to the teacher and working well with each other. All pupils are very enthusiastic about fieldwork. Year 7 for example, completes teacher organised tasks reliably in the school grounds, working in independent groups. Year 11 pupils demonstrate well orally and through field work projects what they have learned about the natural processes which affect coasts as well as human attempts to control them. Pupils usually behave very well and are courteous and helpful to each other and staff. Sixth form students have particularly good relationships with staff. Homework is reliably completed. Work in books is usually neat and well organised.
  165. Teaching is good overall although it does vary widely. The strengths of teaching lie in Key Stage 4 and A level, where teaching is very good. Here teachers use their high levels of specialist knowledge to challenge pupils very well with probing questioning using the technical vocabulary of geography which pushes their pupils' progress and gives good feedback to them. Teaching in Key Stage 3 is less effective although satisfactory overall. This is because of inconsistencies in expectations about the degree of difficulty of lesson content or too long spent on talking through one aspect.
  166. Teaching in all key stages does provide for a wide variety of approaches so that pupils learn geography in a good range of ways. They are able to develop their social and geographical skills through the use of videos, fieldwork, computers, examination questions and research investigations. Although lessons are usually carefully planned teachers do not clearly share with pupils what they want them to have learned by the end of the lesson. They do work with individuals during lessons to clarify understanding and do on occasions have extra tasks ready, but insufficient detail is paid to organising work in different ways to extend all pupils as greatly as possible, particularly in Key Stage 3.
  167. Work is usually meticulously marked and teachers are very good at working out what pupils are grasping or failing to understand in lessons and modifying their teaching in current or forthcoming lessons

accordingly. Pupils' progress is particularly well tracked in Key Stage 4 and at A level. Examination questions are well integrated into those courses. Teachers have worked hard to produce examinations for Key Stage 3, which train pupils and provide some confirmation of standards, although the fieldwork and research enquiries have better potential to do this. Currently these are not finely enough targeted on the four national aspects of geography and end of key stage level assessments are not accurate enough. The documents evaluated as schemes of work at the time of the last inspection do not provide enough detail to support effective planning for consistent teaching, particularly in Key Stage 3. Pupils' use of computers in geography in Key Stage 3 is being developed in a planned way through network use, although it is not systematic enough in Key Stage 4 and A level in school time. Existing school laptops are not yet used to improve geography classroom access. Resources are adequate. The department makes good use of expensive resources, for example a digital camera and some physical geography instruments, sharing them with other departments. It lacks sufficient up-to-date maps, photographs and overhead projectors to enhance the quality of teaching.

168. Staff and National Curriculum changes have increased the need for management structures since the time of the last inspection and departmental management is good. There is clear evidence that monitoring of standards and teaching takes place and effectively informs how staff are deployed and supported.

## **History**

169. By the end of Key Stage 3, pupils achieve at levels that are well above the national targets. The GCSE results are well above the national average and above the average for similar schools. In 1998 96 per cent of pupils achieved grades A\* to C with 45 per cent of pupils gaining the highest grades, A\* and A. Compared with the national averages these results are very good and have improved since the last inspection.
170. At A level the results of students achieving A to E grades is well below the national average. This pattern has been consistent over the last four years. Few students gain the higher grades. These results have not been systematically analysed so that the strengths and weaknesses of the teaching and learning can be identified.
171. Pupils enter the school with levels of attainment that are well above the national expectations. At the end of Key Stage 3 good progress has been made by all pupils. For example, in Year 9 pupils consider the history of slavery during the nineteenth century. Their work is sensitive to the issues and displays a critical awareness of changing attitudes over time and between different societies.
172. Good progress is made by pupils in a variety of different spheres of historical investigation by the end of Key Stage 4. For example, all pupils have the opportunity to study local history, a depth study covering the reign of Queen Elizabeth, a modern world study and a study in the development of medicine over time. The work of many pupils is very sophisticated. For example Year 11 pupils are able to discuss trends and important turning points in the history of medicine. They are able to support their opinions with carefully selected evidence and show an awareness of the problems of the reliability of sources from different periods of history.
173. At A level students make satisfactory progress overall. However, the lower attaining students require more support and do not receive a sufficiently varied range of teaching and learning strategies particularly in some aspects of the course.
174. Pupils are enthusiastic and show a keen interest in the subject. History is a popular choice in Key Stage 4. In class pupils are attentive and concentrate on their work. Behaviour is very good in all lessons and relationships with the teaching staff are positive and characterised by good humour. Pupils work purposefully and collaborate well. For example, in one Year 8 class pupils moved quickly between individual study, group work and working in pairs. In all classes pupils answer questions enthusiastically although many pupils do not initiate their own questions and a substantial minority lack confidence in

oral work.

175. Pupils at all levels from Year 7 to A level, persevere with difficult work and enjoy historical investigations and problem solving. For example, in Year 7 pupils use computer simulation programmes to investigate archaeological sites. At A level students are encouraged to analyse the different interpretations of the motives and attitudes of people in the past and come to their own conclusions. Sensitive issues are dealt with carefully by the department. Values and attitudes are taught and pupils are required to make their own informed judgements. For example, issues such as revolution raise complex moral issues in the context of nineteenth century history in Year 9.
176. Teaching is always satisfactory and often good in Key Stages 3 and 4. Overall the department has maintained the high standard of teaching highlighted in the last report. However, there are aspects of A level teaching that should be improved. The whole range of the ability of students is not adequately catered for in a number of lessons and some of the lower attaining students are not progressing as quickly as they should. Limited use is made of study skills and there are too few strategies that encourage active learning. In Key Stages 3 and 4, there is an emphasis on enquiry and encouraging pupils to think about complex issues. Where the teaching in the department challenges pupils and offers pace and variety the standard of pupil work is often very high. In all the lessons observed good feedback was given to pupils both in class and in most of the marking. Homework is set regularly and extensive use is made of written tasks. Pupils of different abilities and strengths are catered for through the preparation of a balanced range of activities. Discussion and some study skills are used to assist and develop the strengths of pupils. The department is sensitive to the needs of pupils of all abilities.
177. The requirements of the National Curriculum are met in full. There is some good cross-curricular work that develops a fuller appreciation of art and literature. For example, students at A level focus on the artistic and architectural developments in the period that they study. In Year 9 pupils study The First World War and poetry from the war years. Study visits are an important part of the curriculum for all year groups. For example Year 7 visits the Tower of London as part of its work on the development of castle architecture. Homework is most effective where it extends the work pupils have been studying in class.
178. The department is well managed. There is some monitoring of teaching within the department. The curriculum is well planned and the schemes of work are detailed and practical. An extensive selection of resources is used with a clear sense of purpose. Considerable emphasis is placed on presenting challenging work to the pupils using a variety of well established teaching strategies. The staff in the department are well qualified and enthusiastic historians. Meetings are held regularly and there is very good informal contact on a day to day basis.
179. Assessment is well managed and integrated into the daily work of the department. Marking is done conscientiously and is most effective when pupils are given positive feedback followed by the highlighting of strengths and weaknesses. This is regular, but not systematic. Pupils' work is standardised in Key Stage 3 and for GCSE, but the results at A level have not been systematically analysed. The teachings and learning at A level needs to be monitored more effectively so that strengths and weaknesses can be highlighted.
180. The department has not taken full advantage of the opportunities available for professional development. Some consideration should be given to a planning and development programme that will support the areas highlighted in the department development plan. Accommodation is adequate although the storage of resources and equipment is somewhat limited. Both the history rooms are well decorated with pupil work and posters.
181. The department uses a very old network of computers that has no printing facilities. These are used mainly for computer simulation activities. The department has not developed activities using word processing and data handling. There is no multimedia computer within the department and the use of the modern computer suite is limited.



## **Information technology**

182. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 in 1999, was better than the national target. All pupils were assessed at level 5 or above with 36 per cent reaching level 6. However, from lesson observation and extensive discussions with pupils, attainment is lower than that expected in similar schools and is below average for a significant proportion in Years 7 and 8. Attainment overall at the end of Key Stage 4 is in line with national expectations, but below that expected in similar schools.
183. In 1998, GCSE examination results were above those for schools nationally and in line for similar schools. In 1999, the pass rate for grades A\* to C was only 80 per cent, which is very low when compared to other subjects in the school and in need of improvement. There were no advanced level information technology or computing results in the past two years.
184. The majority of pupils in Key Stage 3 are not being stretched in the development of information technology (IT) skills, in line with their capability. Some IT skills have improved since the last inspection, but not at the same rate as those nationally. Whilst pupils have a broad experience of the statutory programmes of study, much of that is limited in depth and is not sufficiently progressive across year groups to raise and consolidate achievement. In English, pupils produce an informative brochure in Year 8 yet only a similar level of IT skills is demanded in Year 10. In mathematics, the situation is being reviewed, but the use of IT is weak at present. Overall, attainment is not high enough
185. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 is above the national average for the pupils who opt for the specialist IT GCSE subject. Pupils who do not, are working only at the national average and are not being stretched sufficiently. Most pupils have started to use industry standard software programmes such as word processing, databases, spreadsheets and desktop publishing and standards achieved in GCSE courses are often good. Attainment is not currently improving with each successive year group due to limited involvement of some subject specialists and temporary staffing problems. Consequently the programmes of study in art and design, design and technology, modern foreign languages and music are inadequately covered.
186. In Key Stages 3 and 4, pupils use computers to complete science investigations and standards are good in these projects. Spreadsheets are used to help pupils in science to interpret experimental data quickly and accurately. Pupils are confident in the basic use of spreadsheets and graphs, but are in the main, unfamiliar and lack confidence with more advanced software features. In design and technology, pupils design parts of their coursework with computer-aided design and word processing software. Only a minority of Key Stage 4 pupils use manufacturing software and small scale computerised engravers and sewing machines. Pupils enter Key Stage 3 with a wide variety of computer skills. At the end of the key stage pupils have had patchy experiences, consequently skills are not consolidated or extended sufficiently. Teachers usually offer a short course to Year 7 pupils, but current Year 8 pupils found this inadequate for their needs and present Year 7 pupils have still not had the opportunity two months into the year.
187. Progress anticipated at the time of the previous inspection has not been forthcoming. Progress in Years 7, 8 and 9 is unsatisfactory, even though attainment is above the national target. Pupils receive very short courses introducing word processing, graphics, spreadsheets, databases and control and these are good, but the opportunities to apply and develop knowledge and skills in other subjects are too limited. Progress in the IT GCSE groups is good. The rest of the groups make only satisfactory progress through a rotational system involving science, design and technology, history, English and personal and social education. Additional and extended projects in many subjects are undertaken using information technology, but much of this is mainly developed through the use of computers at home. The progress of pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory. Access to information technology in the sixth form is very limited, except for those pupils undertaking business studies and design and technology A level, consequently core skills are not being developed for the majority.

188. Pupils' attitudes to the subject are very good in both key stages. Pupils want to use computers more. When opportunities arise pupils apply themselves to concentrated study and enjoy the challenges and opportunities the use of computers offer. In English, pupils write for different audiences and produce brochures and pamphlets. They find this exciting and rewarding. Year 8 pupils were observed at lunchtime, consolidating spreadsheet work started in Year 7.
189. The quality of teaching at Key Stage 3 in specialist IT lessons is good in 95 per cent of lessons and satisfactory in the rest. There are missed opportunities to teach through the use of IT in many subjects due to the lack of staff confidence. This affects progress across the key stage. The quality of teaching in Key Stage 4 is very good in all specialist IT lessons. Information technology GCSE lessons are well planned and resourced. In GCSE lessons pupils are given exciting challenges to solve and they produce good, detailed coursework projects. More staff training is needed to build confidence and competence to enable teachers to apply IT skills at the higher levels in all subjects as appropriate for the pupils.
190. There have been significant and valuable curriculum developments such as subject working groups since the last inspection. A very recently introduced new network of computers still needs to be fully commissioned. Currently much of the curriculum is uncoordinated. For the majority of pupils the requirements of the National Curriculum are being taught and met, but not consolidated or extended sufficiently for the ability of the pupils. The use and application of computers across the curriculum has not grown since the previous positive inspection. This restricts improvements in attainment particularly at the higher levels. Few curriculum subjects make good use of the computer network rooms. There is very limited access to the Internet, which restricts research possibilities. Large databases (CD ROMs) are available and used in the library, which give pupils valuable access to recent and relevant specialist and multi-cultural information. Lunchtime and after-school access to the computers is encouraged, but take-up is low.
191. At present the head of department post is vacant, consequently leadership and direction are lacking. Much of the documentation needs updating to reflect current practice and statutory requirements. The specialist teachers are well qualified. One part-time computer technician works very hard to develop and maintain the use of computers, but more time is needed to keep older computers running efficiently.
192. The quality of learning resources is unsatisfactory. The ratio of computers to pupils is lower than national averages at 1:10. Many of the computers included in this figure need to be reinstalled and used in the curriculum. One quarter of the computers stock is modern and of high quality. Uses of new computers are already helping raise standards and contribute to the complexity of work. There are inefficiencies in the use of current accommodation with one network room used for only one third of the week and another for half. New opportunities are developing regularly for example, modern foreign language support material was installed on the last day of the inspection.

### **Modern foreign languages**

193. Results at GCSE in both French and German have shown continuing improvement over the last three years with significant success in the number of grades A\* and A achieved, nearly 60 per cent in French and 53 per cent in German in the 1999 examinations. GCSE results in 1998 were slightly above the average for similar schools. The GCSE results for sixth form students on the one-year Italian course are outstanding with 50 per cent in the 1999 examinations obtaining A\* and A grades. At A level, following improvement over the previous years, there was a decrease in the number of students achieving the highest grades in 1999. Most recent results therefore, are now somewhat below the average grades achieved by other schools.
194. Based upon lesson observation and the scrutiny of pupils' work, attainment in both French and German at Key Stage 3 is well above average particularly in speaking and listening and at Key Stage 4 is above average and often well above average in all skills, except in the lower sets where pupils are achieving

closer to the national average. Without exception pupils have little difficulty in understanding instructions in the foreign language. Sixth form students on A level courses are attaining in line with average expectations nationally.

195. Pupils make good progress at Key Stage 3 and often very good progress at Key Stage 4. In the best lessons pupils are developing a high level of oral confidence and a solid grasp of grammatical structures. Accurate writing and the use of more complex constructions in spoken and written language are features of the significant progress being made at Key Stage 4. Progress of A level students is good as they broaden their vocabulary base and speak and write with greater confidence and more diverse language. Progress of the GCSE students of Italian in Year 12 is outstanding.
196. Without exception pupils at all key stages have a very positive attitude to their work and their commitment is commendable. Behaviour is almost always exemplary and pupils listen attentively, clearly enjoying their learning in a relaxed yet purposeful atmosphere. In the best lessons pupils are very confident, willing to contribute ideas and to initiate the foreign language. In a minority of lessons pupils are a little passive and tend to respond only when prompted. Where teachers provide opportunities for group or paired activities pupils collaborate in a mature fashion and value each other's contribution. Relationships between pupils and their teachers are always extremely positive.
197. The quality of teaching is particularly high. There is no unsatisfactory teaching and in nearly 95 per cent of lessons observed it was good, very good or excellent. Without exception teachers present their lessons with confidence and clear knowledge of their subject and use the foreign language consistently for all classroom communication. Lessons are always well planned with a good balance of activities. Where teaching is particularly impressive pupils are set challenging tasks and teachers have high expectations of their pupils' performance. Invariably teachers have established a close and caring rapport with their pupils, offer support and praise and respond sensitively to their questions. The pace of lessons is always brisk with a crisp start and very good use of time. Homework is set regularly and appropriately reinforces the work of the class. Teachers use a range of techniques and resources to explain new material and motivate their pupils to respond, but there is as yet little evidence of the regular application of information technology.
198. Whilst the lack of the use of information technology restricts developments in some areas, the modern foreign languages curriculum meets statutory requirements and pupils can study up to three foreign languages. There is detailed recording of pupils' progress and work is marked regularly according to agreed criteria, although the detail of commentary upon pupils' work is of variable quality. The department undertakes an impressive analysis of examination results and has developed precise strategies for improving standards at GCSE and A level.
199. There are adequate resources for teaching and the department makes good use of the accommodation available. Display in classrooms is particularly good, but there is a lack of central storage which reduces opportunities for sharing resources easily. In classrooms where there are bare floorboards the poor acoustics do affect the definition of recorded material.
200. Overall, standards have improved since the last inspection and modern foreign languages is a strength of the school.

## **Music**

201. Overall, standards of achievement remain broadly similar to those reported during the last inspection. Standards of attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 are above average when compared to the national norm and generally in line with other selective schools. The lack of group rooms inhibits pupil achievement and at times results in underachievement, especially amongst the most able pupils. Pupils are able to work effectively in group and paired composing activities; they have a good working understanding of staff notation and compose well balanced and imaginative melodies; they demonstrate a good grasp of

graphic notation and specialist vocabulary and are able to sing with confidence and sensitivity; they show good keyboard skills in performances of compositions of imaginative Pavanés and are able to appraise critically their work and learn from the comments of others.

202. At the end of Key Stage 4 pupils reach levels of attainment which are above the national expectation for all schools, but below that of selective schools. Over the past five years, all pupils entered for GCSE have gained A\* to C grades. However, very few pupils achieve A or A\* grades whilst the majority gain a C grade. Staff recognise the need to raise standards of achievement at Key Stage 4 and have started to explore this issue. Numbers of pupils pursuing the GCSE music course have varied over recent years with generally low take-up. At Key Stage 4 most pupils demonstrate imaginative improvisation skills at the keyboard and perform with confidence and stylistic awareness; they demonstrate good keyboard and notation skills and show a good understanding of homophonic and polyphonic textures and features of Fugue.
203. Only two pupils were entered for A level music last year and achieved grades B and D. Pupils pursuing the course this year are achieving satisfactory levels of attainment. For instance, pupils demonstrate generally good aural discrimination skills and harmonic awareness.
204. 205. When pupils join the school in Year 7, attainment in music is very varied, ranging from below to above national expectations. In view of the current accommodation deficiencies, Key Stages 3 and 4 pupils make good progress, with the exception of the most able, who achieve only satisfactory progress. In the sixth form, students generally make good progress. Pupils make good progress over time in analytical skills, aural awareness and historical, stylistic and harmonic awareness of the Classical Period; they also make swift progress in understanding cadential and passing progressions and reflect their skills in related practical work.
206. Pupil progress over time has generally improved in both composing and choral work as a result of curriculum initiatives undertaken since the last inspection. It is now necessary to raise teacher expectations of all pupils and particularly the most able, to ensure that they are fully challenged through appropriately differentiated tasks.
207. Throughout the age range, attitudes to music range from good to very good. Pupils are well motivated, respond positively to practical work and are generally eager to answer questions and contribute to debate. Attitudes to homework are impressive with considerable research being willingly undertaken by pupils across the age and ability range. Pupils are very courteous, behave well and show respect for property. Working relationships are very good, enabling effective group composing and performing. Pupils listen well and show interest in the compositions and performances of others, apply knowledge effectively in appraisal and are sensitive to the feelings, values and beliefs of others. Since the last inspection, staff have sustained and built upon previous successes in this sphere effectively. Significant improvement of pupil motivation has resulted from the integration of music theory with practical work and the enhancement of time spent on composing within the curriculum.
208. Several important teaching deficiencies identified in the last inspection report have been addressed effectively. The quality of teaching is now consistently good. Music is taught with enthusiasm, good humour and generally swift pace. Teachers have good specialist knowledge and skills and provide an enthusiastic and encouraging learning environment for pupils. Lessons are carefully prepared to include a range of tasks and activities across the two attainment targets. At times, the lack of group rooms restricts teaching approaches, but every effort is made to minimise the impact of this deficiency. Lesson organisation, pupil management and working relationships are consistently good. High behavioural expectations contribute to pupil progress, achievement and enjoyment. Tasks are generally well matched to the needs and abilities of most pupils. However, further refinement of base-line assessment, planning and differentiation is needed in order to ensure that tasks set fully challenge the most able pupils. Staff are also aware of the need to redraft the schemes of work at Key Stage 4 in order to raise standards by enhancing curriculum continuity, progression and coverage. Assessment of pupils' work has improved since the last inspection, but further development is needed in order to ensure that systematic procedures are devised to link assessment with subsequent teaching.

209. Statutory requirements for music at Key Stage 3 are being met. Significant curriculum improvements have been achieved since the last inspection. For instance, class singing is now sustained as a regular activity, an improved balance of composing and performing has been established and equipment has recently been purchased to enable staff to improve and develop IT coverage within the curriculum. However, intended learning outcomes for lessons need to be clear and comprehensive and, where appropriate, differentiated. A range of useful assessment strategies exist, but systematic procedures need to be devised to link assessment with subsequent teaching. Departmental documentation is generally satisfactory, but now requires review in order to continue to improve music provision across the age and ability range. Some informal monitoring and support for teaching takes place, but is underdeveloped.
210. Resources are generally satisfactory, but there is no appropriate recording equipment. The recent acquisition of two computers and the installation of appropriate software should result in enhanced curriculum provision for pupils in the near future.

### **Physical Education**

211. By the end of Key Stage 3 pupil attainment overall is in line with national expectations. As identified in the previous inspection report, pupils have good basic skills and perform well in a range of physical activities. However, the areas of the curriculum addressed this time are different from those observed previously. In the small number of lessons where attainment exceeds expectations as in Year 9 netball, many pupils are refining complex skills and applying them in games situations. In the majority of lessons attainment is in line with expectations, as in Year 8 netball where most pupils can accurately perform a range of simple skills and have a good understanding of the basic rules of the game.
212. Results in GCSE physical education (PE) in 1998 were only slightly below average for grammar schools nationally and well above when compared with all schools. In 1999 there was an improvement when all pupils entered achieved A\* to C grades. In the lessons observed at Key Stage 4 pupil attainment is in line with national expectations. Pupils studying GCSE PE in Year 10 are still in the early stages of the course and standards are satisfactory. They are able to explore issues such as "sport and the media" and can make appropriate decisions linking theory to practical examples. Time allocated for core PE lessons at Key Stage 4 is very limited. This results in an emphasis on performance and limited opportunities for pupils to plan and evaluate aspects of their work.
213. In the 1999 A level PE examinations the pass rate was 100 per cent with the majority of pupils achieving A to C grades. This was a slight improvement on the 1998 results. In the A level lessons observed attainment is above average. Students are able to apply theoretical knowledge to practical situations, such as the importance of levers to increase power in particular shots in badminton. They are also using technical terms demonstrating increasing understanding of factors underpinning effective movement.
214. At Key Stage 3 most pupils make good progress. In Year 9 gymnastics, good progress is demonstrated by their ability to create partner sequences using a range of themes. Year 7 pupils make good progress in netball when they are given time to practise their dodging skills and they use information gained from teachers' feedback to improve performance. However, where Year 7 PE takes place during a single lesson, there is very limited time to develop aspects of games play and consequently progress is limited. At Key Stage 4, most pupils continue to make good progress as in Year 10 netball, where they are developing their umpiring skills and at the same time, acquiring greater understanding of rules. Year 13 A level students make considerable progress when they analyse each other's performances and begin to identify strengths and weaknesses of individual players.
215. Pupils enjoy their PE lessons. They are well motivated and work with commitment and enthusiasm. Behaviour in lessons and during changing times is generally good and pupils work sensibly and safely. They listen carefully, have good concentration and persevere in order to improve and develop skills. Relationships are usually very positive and pupils are supportive of each other and co-operative in all

aspects of lessons including moving apparatus, partner and group work. Most pupils enjoy taking responsibility for aspects of their own learning and, when given the opportunity, they are able to lead a group through an activity, for example by taking responsibility for the warm-up.

216. Teaching is generally good and in a few lessons it is very good. It is very good in the sixth form. Very good teaching is evident when teachers use effective questioning to probe knowledge and move pupils on in their thinking as in Year 10 GCSE theory. Good teaching is observed when clear explanations and demonstrations are used to influence the quality of performance as in Year 9 gymnastics. Good teaching is also observed in Year 8 dance when pupils plan their own partner sequences, observe others and answer simple questions about the quality of work seen. The last inspection report stated that there were limited opportunities for pupils to be creative across the range of PE activities. This remains the case in the majority of games lessons where pupils are not encouraged to make decisions or evaluate the effectiveness of performance.
217. At both key stages, the curriculum meets statutory requirements. However, the range of activities covered, particularly at Key Stage 4 is very narrow owing to the unsatisfactory accommodation for PE. Curriculum time at Key Stage 3 is adequate, but at Key Stage 4 pupils have less than one hour's activity time per week. There is no timetabled PE for sixth form students due to the high demand placed on the limited facilities available. This was a weakness highlighted in the last inspection and although A level PE has been introduced, the vast majority of sixth form pupils still have no access to any form of PE in curriculum time. Pupils are offered extra-curricular opportunities in physical education and sport, currently netball, volleyball and dance. Many pupils rely on coaches for transport to and from school, so nearly all activities take place at lunchtime and the numbers of pupils attending vary. Netball fixtures take place after school and during weekend tournaments and teams have been very successful.
218. There is clear leadership and direction for the subject and the department works together as a team. Day to day organisation of the department is very effective and clear procedures have been established. Documentation is comprehensive and largely reflective of what is happening in practice. The department has developed an effective assessment scheme which is based on good practice and is linked to the end of key stage descriptions. The facilities for PE are unsatisfactory. However, the department has adapted the curriculum to make the best possible use of the spaces it has available. The changing rooms are adequate, but poorly lit since the building of the upper storey extension. There is an excellent range of display work including photographic evidence of work in PE, a "millennium line" depicting the history of sport and information on other aspects of the subject. There is also an interesting display relating to issues in PE and sport in the GCSE/A level classroom to which pupils are encouraged to contribute. These images help to stimulate ideas and promote a positive working environment for both staff and pupils.

### **Religious Education**

219. At the end of Key Stage 3 standards of attainment are in line with the expectations of the Agreed Syllabus, but often below expectations for a selective school. Pupils understand aspects of Christianity such as the life of Jesus, its major festivals and ceremonies, the importance of the Bible and the Orthodox church. They also know about the beliefs and practices of Hinduism, Islam and Buddhism. Pupils know about some features shared by religions such as rituals to mark birth and marriage and also the distinctive features such as the importance of fasting and pilgrimage in Islam. Pupils are able to reflect on issues which arise from their study of religions such as the responsibilities of adulthood or the idea of life as a journey.
220. At Key Stage 4 standards of attainment are in line with national expectations for most pupils undertaking compulsory religious education. Pupils know about the issues associated with religious and moral topics such as the existence of God, life after death or treatments for infertility and about religious and other responses to them. Pupils achieve good standards in GCSE religious studies. Examination results in recent years have been consistently above the national average for grades A\* to C and in line with schools of a similar type. There have been some outstandingly good results, for example in one year over two thirds of the students received an A\* or A grade. In the sixth form the majority of students achieve good

standards in core religious education and examination results at A level in philosophy in recent years have been satisfactory.

221. At Key Stage 3 the vast majority of pupils make satisfactory progress. Gains are made in a knowledge and understanding of different world religions and in the way these traditions affect human lives. Some make good progress, but others underachieve because teachers' expectations are too low, the pace of lessons is too slow and the work undertaken is not sufficiently demanding. Progress is limited in developing their knowledge and skills through the use of information and communications technology. At Key Stage 4 most pupils make good progress in their understanding of moral and social issues and religious responses to these issues and in learning to apply religious insights to their own lives. Pupils pursuing the GCSE course make good progress in their understanding of Christian belief and practice and Sikhism. In the sixth form most students make good progress although some taking the A level philosophy struggle to grasp some concepts. Religious education makes a particular contribution to pupils' cultural development as they learn about diverse ceremonies and ways of life in different religions.
222. Pupils behave very well in all lessons at all key stages. Most display a positive attitude towards religious education, an interest in the issues addressed and enjoy the lessons. Most are willing to respond to questions and some are willing to ask questions. They listen to the teacher and to each other and readily discuss issues in a mature fashion. There are some good responses, especially when pupils are challenged to think deeply. The vast majority are able to sustain their concentration on different tasks. Pupils work well together in groups and as whole classes and show respect for each other's views. Relationships between staff and pupils and between pupils are always good.
223. In all lessons, at all key stages, teaching is satisfactory and is sometimes good especially in examination classes. Good teaching is seen when pupils are challenged with probing questions which seek to elicit thoughtful responses and when there is a clear focus on developing an understanding of key religious ideas. Good teaching occurs when teachers patiently seek to explain difficult ideas, for example when one student found it difficult to grasp the idea of inductive thinking the teacher patiently sought different ways to explain it and checked if had been understood. It is seen when teachers ensure students are given opportunities to learn in different ways. Weaker elements are seen when planning lacks detail and especially when expectations are too low with direct teaching of new material not being taught at a brisk pace and at a level appropriate to the pupils' ability. For example, in a lesson on the parable of the prodigal son, too much time was spent on minor concerns relating to everyday life in Palestine which resulted in little time left to devote to exploring key religious teaching. A shortcoming in most lessons was the lesson ending without an effective summary.
224. The department is managed well, but subject leadership is underdeveloped. The schemes of work are weak and do not provide sufficient guidance. They are not linked clearly enough to the requirements of the Agreed Syllabus. The lack of focus on the use of the attainment targets was an issue in the last inspection which has yet to be fully addressed. The school now fully meets statutory requirements at all key stages. Some marking is good, especially in examination classes, but in a minority of classes at Key Stage 3 some books are not marked regularly. Marking does not consistently indicate to pupils what they need to do to improve. Staff are experienced subject specialists with good subject knowledge who work hard and are committed to the subject, but monitoring is weak. Planning for the future needs to be clearer about ways to raise standards at Key Stage 3. Resources have improved since the last inspection, but the range of artefacts is still limited.

### **Business Education**

225. Results in A level business studies in 1998 were well above the national average. All students passed and no student achieved lower than a grade D. Results in 1999 showed a slight decline in the average points score of A level business studies candidates, but, as in the previous year, no student achieved lower than a grade D and there was an increase in the proportion of candidates achieving a grade A. Module results to date for the current Year 13 students reflect a high level of attainment.

226. Attainment in lessons is above national expectations. Students have a very good general knowledge of the world of business and a secure understanding of business studies theory. Students have a good understanding of the key concepts in the subject and use the specialist terminology of the subject with confidence.
227. Students make good progress in business studies. In lessons, they show gains in knowledge and understanding and they develop learning skills. Over the duration of the course, students show an increasing ability to draw on a range of business concepts and theories when using case study material. Students' research skills are developing well, although their capacity to be critical in their use of information sources is developing more slowly.
228. Students' show very good progress in key skills in their business studies work. They are rapidly developing the facility to use information and communications technology to support their work in this subject. They are improving their written and oral communication skills as a result of some of the activities in which they are engaged, while the teaching of the quantitative methods enables students to progress in their application of number skills.
229. Students have a very positive attitude towards their work and they show a very high level of interest. They work hard in lessons and can often sustain concentration for long periods. They co-operate well when working together as a group or as a class. They support each other when working together and in group or class discussions, they show a genuine respect for the opinions of others.
230. The quality of teaching is good and sometimes very good. Teachers have a very good subject knowledge and maintain high expectations. They maintain good relationships with students and provide very effective and developmental feedback throughout the course. Teachers plan well and often plan collaboratively in a very effective manner. Teachers use different teaching styles and generally use a variety of approaches in individual lessons. They are very effective in preparing students for their various module assessments.
231. Teachers make good use of learning resources which are satisfactory. In two of the lessons seen, judicious and selective use of video material based on real business contexts was used to illustrate some of the work on organisational culture. The careful and selective use of the Internet in business studies lessons is helping to develop students' skills in information seeking and information handling. Specialist accommodation for the subject is poor, although teaching staff make very good use of the limited space. Displays are satisfactory, although insufficiently used to support student learning.
232. The business studies curriculum is appropriate to the needs of the students and curriculum planning is generally effective. The scheme of work is satisfactory, although it lacks detailed reference as to how each topic should be taught. Marking is accurate and members of the department have a clear idea of the standards appropriate to A level students. Oral and written feedback to students is well used throughout the course.
233. Subject leadership is good. The department has clear aims, linked to the aims of the school and departmental development planning is good. Teaching staff are well qualified and deployed very effectively so that students gain the maximum benefit from particular areas of staff expertise. Arrangements for professional development of staff are good.



234. **PART C: INSPECTION DATA**

234. **SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE**

<b>KEY STAGE</b>	<b>Key Stage 3</b>	<b>Key Stage 4</b>	<b>Sixth form</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
lessons seen	73	59	45	177
hours	55h 10m	44h 15m	37h 40m	137h 5m

235 The inspection team consisted of 14 inspectors. During the week, 177 lessons, 53 registrations, 4 assemblies and some extra-curricular activities were inspected. All full time teachers were seen teaching, many several times. Management meetings were observed and planned discussions were held with 21 members of staff and 8 non-teaching staff. The chairman of governors and other members of the governing body were consulted. Inspectors studied the written work of pupils in all year groups and discussed their progress with them. All available written work of a representative sample of pupils from each year group was inspected and planned discussions held with groups from Years 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12 and 13. Extensive documentation provided by the school was analysed before and during the inspection. The registered inspector held a meeting attended by 37 parents before the inspection and considered 263 responses from parents to a questionnaire about the school.

234. **DATA AND INDICATORS**

234. **Pupil data**

	Number of pupils on roll (full-time equivalent)	Number of pupils with statements of SEN	Number of pupils on school's register of SEN	Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals
Y7 – Y13	719	0	9	16

234. **Teachers and classes**

234. **Qualified teachers (Y7 – Y13)**

Total number of qualified teachers (full-time equivalent):	42.32
Number of pupils per qualified teacher:	16.99

234. **Education support staff (Y7 – Y13)**

Total number of education support staff:	7
Total aggregate hours worked each week:	136

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes:	83
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Average teaching group size:	KS3	29
	KS4	16

234. **Financial data**

Financial year: 

1999
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	£
Total Income	1,831,700.00
Total Expenditure	1,848,931.00
Expenditure per pupil	2,525.86
Balance brought forward from previous year	78,678.00
Balance carried forward to next year	61,447.00

234. **PARENTAL SURVEY**

Number of questionnaires sent out:	719
Number of questionnaires returned:	263

Responses (percentage of answers in each category):

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I feel the school encourages parents to play an active part in the life of the school	18.3	60.5	14.8	5.7	0.8
I would find it easy to approach the school with questions or problems to do with my child(ren)	37.6	53.6	4.9	3.0	0.8
The school handles complaints from parents well	18.6	46.8	31.6	2.3	0.8
The school gives me a clear understanding of what is taught	27.4	49.4	14.4	8.0	0.8
The school keeps me well informed about my child(ren)'s progress	44.9	45.6	6.5	2.3	0.8
The school enables my child(ren) to achieve a good standard of work	61.2	34.2	3.8	1.8	0.0
The school encourages children to get involved in more than just their daily lessons	26.2	54.0	14.4	4.9	0.4
I am satisfied with the work that my child(ren) is/are expected to do at home	37.6	49.0	5.3	7.2	0.8
The school's values and attitudes have a positive effect on my child(ren)	49.0	45.6	4.9	0.4	0.0
The school achieves high standards of good behaviour	54.0	40.3	4.6	1.1	0.0
My child(ren) like(s) school	49.0	44.5	4.9	1.5	0.0