

INSPECTION REPORT

THE ARCHBISHOP'S SCHOOL

Canterbury

LEA area: Kent

Unique reference number: 118898

Headteacher: Mr A. Hogarth

Reporting inspector: Gulshan Kayembe
2901

Dates of inspection: 24th – 28th January 2000

Inspection number: 187685
Inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Secondary
School category:	Foundation
Age range of pupils:	11 - 18 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	The Archbishop's School St. Stephen's Hill Canterbury Kent
Postcode:	CT2 7AP
Telephone number:	01227 765805
Fax number:	01227 768535
Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Rev. M Stace
Date of previous inspection:	February 1996

© Crown copyright 2000

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

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

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Mrs G Kayembe	Registered inspector	English additional Language	The characteristics and effectiveness of the school The school's results and pupils' achievements Teaching and learning Leadership and management
Ms S Smith	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development Pupils' welfare, health and safety Partnership with parents and carers
Mrs A Axon	Team inspector	Mathematics	
Ms K Barrett	Team inspector	History Equal opportunities	Quality and range of opportunities for learning
Dr J Harvey	Team inspector	Music	
Ms L Kauffman	Team inspector	Information technology Design and technology	
Ms C Runyard	Team inspector	Physical education	
Mr H Davies	Team inspector	Geography	
Mr D Innes	Team inspector	English Special educational needs	
Mr M Miller	Team inspector	Art Religious education	
Mr C Simmonds	Team inspector	Science	
Mr R Bulman	Team inspector	Modern languages	

The inspection contractor was:

Bench Marque Ltd
National Westminster Bank Chambers
Victoria Street
Burnham on Sea
TA8 1AN

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

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

REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	5
Information about the school	
How good the school is	
What the school does well	
What could be improved	
How the school has improved since its last inspection	
Standards	
Pupils' attitudes and values	
Teaching and learning	
Other aspects of the school	
How well the school is led and managed	
Parents' and carers' views of the school	
PART B: COMMENTARY	
HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?	10
The school's results and achievements	
Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development	
HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?	14
HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS OR STUDENTS?	16
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?	19
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?	21
HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?	22
WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?	25
PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS	27
PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES	32

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

The school is a mixed comprehensive for boys and girls aged between 11-18. It is set in an area which operates a system of selection into grammar schools based on ability at the age of 11. The overall attainment on entry to the school is below average. Results of non-verbal reasoning tests suggest that there are fewer higher attainers than usual in a comprehensive intake, but equally there are fewer lower attainers. However, standards of literacy are generally low. The school has been allowed to select 15 per cent of its pupils by ability since 1997. As a result the attainment on entry to the school is improving and is close to average in the current Key Stage 3. It is below average in Key Stage 4 and the sixth-form. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average. The number on roll is growing and currently there are 770 pupils registered at the school. Relatively few pupils have English as an additional language, and only one requires support. However, a higher proportion of pupils than nationally have special educational needs. The school has a special needs unit on site catering for 23 pupils with visual impairment or specific learning needs.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

The school is effective in enabling pupils to reach standards which are above the national average by the end of Key Stage 4 and well above those found in similar schools. Given pupils' prior attainment, their achievement in Key Stage 3 is satisfactory and good in Key Stage 4 and the sixth-form. The quality of teaching and learning are good overall enabling pupils to make good progress, particularly at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth-form. There are some strengths in the leadership of the school, but also some weaknesses in management. Overall, however, the school has more strengths than weaknesses and provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- The school provides good quality of teaching overall. It is very good in the sixth-form
- Pupils achieve high standards at the end of Key Stage 4
- The headteacher provides strong leadership. This inspires staff and pupils to work hard and give of their best
- The quality of relationships is very good and leads to good behaviour and positive attitudes to learning
- There is good provision for pupils' personal development and very good provision for extra-curricular activities
- Parents have very high regard for the school and its work, and rightly praise its very caring approach to education
- The support provided for pupils with special educational needs is good enabling them to make good progress

What could be improved

- Improving the effectiveness of the governing body in fulfilling its responsibilities, as too many legal requirements, including those for the National Curriculum in information technology, are not being met
- Improving the quality of teaching in physical education and music
- Putting in place effective procedures for assessing pupils' work and making comprehensive use of assessment information to help them improve it
- Developing the managerial roles of the senior staff and heads of department, especially in relation to raising attainment at Key Stage 3

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has continued to improve its results at both Key Stages 3 and 4. At Key Stage 3, the improvements have been in line with improvements nationally. At Key Stage 4, results tend to fluctuate, partly as a result of variations in the quality of the intake. Nonetheless, the school usually enables pupils to achieve results which are above those found nationally by age 16, and has maintained the high standards found at the time of the last inspection.

A-level results have tended to remain well below average, although more pupils are obtaining university places now than at the time of the last inspection in February 1996. The most significant improvement has been in relation to the accommodation and a successful building programme has led to the addition of several new and well-designed teaching blocks. The overall quality of teaching has also improved significantly, although weaknesses persist in music and physical education. Not enough progress has been made in tackling the weaknesses in the use of information technology, which continue to lead to low standards of attainment. The school is closer to meeting the requirements for a daily act of collective worship, but does not fully meet this yet. Little progress has been made in improving strategic planning. Overall, the school has made satisfactory progress in improving itself since the previous inspection.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1997	1998	1999	1999
GCSE examinations	B	D	B	A
A-levels/AS-levels	E*	E	E	N/a

Key	
well above average	A
above average	B
average	C
below average	D
well below average	E
very low	E*

Pupils' performance in the end of Key Stage 3 tests in 1999 were broadly average in mathematics and science, but well below average in English. There have been greater improvements in mathematics and science at the end of Key Stage 3 tests than in English, where results have been declining over the past three years. Standards of work in lessons and from examination of pupils' work reflect the results of tests, although in mathematics, the standards of work seen were higher, reflecting the improvements in the intake. In English, pupils' skills in listening and speaking and reading are better developed than in writing. Standards of work are high in art but below average in geography, information technology and physical education and well below in music.

The table above shows that the average points score at GCSE was above the national average in 1999 and well above that of similar schools. The proportion of pupils gaining 5 or more GCSEs at grades A*-C has been in line with national averages over the last three years. There has been good improvement in the proportions gaining 5 or more GCSEs at grades A*-G and one or more at grades A*-G and results here were well above average in 1999. Results in English, art and drama were above average. In design and technology, history, information technology and physical education they were significantly below. At A-level, the well below average results achieved by pupils mask the good progress they make given their relatively low prior attainment. Many start A-level courses without strong GCSE grades in these and achieve creditable results which enable them to move on successfully to higher education.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils have good attitudes to school. They enjoy coming to school and are well motivated to learn.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour in the majority of lessons is good and in many it is very good. However, some poor behaviour was seen in a minority of lessons in physical education and music. Behaviour is good around the school and pupils are polite and helpful.
Personal development and relationships	The quality of relationships is very good. Pupils are mature and behave responsibly. They appreciate the efforts made by others and have a clear sense of what is right and wrong.
Attendance	Good. Unauthorised absence is very low and lessons begin punctually.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

The quality of the teaching observed was satisfactory or better in 95 per cent of lessons. In 69 per cent of lessons it was good or better and in 27 per cent it was very good or excellent. Whilst the majority of teaching at Key Stage 3 is good, about 10 per cent is less than satisfactory. Most of this was seen in physical education or music and reflects weaknesses in planning, the management of pupils, use of time and expectations.

The quality of teaching was very good in science and often very good in English. Overall, the quality of teaching was good in mathematics and English. There is satisfactory teaching of the skills of literacy and numeracy in subjects but not enough use is made of information technology.

The quality of learning closely matches the quality of teaching, with the majority of pupils demonstrating good progress in the development of new skills, knowledge and understanding. They work at a good pace maintaining good concentration and perseverance. However, pupils' knowledge of their own standards of work and how to improve it is limited, particularly at Key Stage 3. This reflects inconsistencies in marking and on-going assessment of pupils' work by teachers.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum provides satisfactory breadth and balance. However, legal requirements are not met in design and technology and information technology. There is no provision for sex education in the sixth-form. A very good range of extra-curricular activities is provided for pupils. Provision for careers education is good.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Pupils with special educational needs are well supported in lessons, with planned support to help improve their literacy skills being particularly good. Management of the provision is generally good. However, targets in individual education plans are not precise enough and governors' monitoring of provision and outcomes is weak.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Provision for spiritual, moral and cultural development is good and very good for social development. Assemblies contribute well to pupils' moral and spiritual awareness. The wide-ranging trips and visits abroad make a particularly good contribution to pupils' social and cultural development.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school provides a very caring and secure environment where pupils are nurtured and their individuality is highly valued. However, health and safety risk assessments are not carried out as legally required. Overall there are weaknesses in the assessment procedures at Key Stage 3 and in the use of assessment to inform provision or to set targets at both Key Stages 3 and 4. Little use is made of data on attainment at entry.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The strong leadership provided by the headteacher is well-focused on high expectations and creates a positive climate where staff and pupils feel valued. This in turn facilitates good teamwork and a shared understanding of the school's main aims and values. The two deputies make a good contribution to these aspects of the leadership of the school and in providing valuable, informal support to middle managers. The school is well run on a day-to-day basis as a result. However, the roles of heads of department and senior staff have not been developed effectively enough with respect to monitoring and evaluation and strategic planning.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors are highly committed and supportive of the school. They meet regularly and have set up a number of useful committees. Their input into financial planning has been good. However, the governors' role in ensuring that legal requirements are met is not well developed. Their role as critical friends to the school is restricted by the lack of a wide enough range of methods for finding out about what the school does well and where it needs to improve.

The school's evaluation of its performance	The school evaluates its performance in a number of useful ways. For example, GCSE results are analysed in order to identify how well individual teachers have performed. However, much of the school's evaluation is informal and, whilst this has been effective in improving performance in some cases, it has not in others. The range of methods for monitoring and evaluating the school's work is narrow and not systematic enough.
The strategic use of resources	Good overall, especially in relation to financial resources. Financial planning for the school's extensive building programme was well managed. The small class sizes make a significant contribution to the quality of teaching and learning. However, the school needs to review the deployment of its senior managers who spend a considerable amount of time teaching. Whilst this is seen as positive leadership by the school, it gives them little time to attend to management issues.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents are pleased with the standards of work their children are reaching • They find it easy to approach the school • They feel encouraged to play an active part in the life of the school • That the values and attitudes have a positive effect on their child(ren) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A few parents were concerned about the way in which the school handles complaints • At the meeting, parents were concerned that the school would not be able to sustain its small class sizes or continue its building programme due to changes in its status from a grant maintained to a foundation school

Whilst parents' positive views are generally well supported by inspection evidence, inspection findings do identify that there is scope for the school to improve academic performance at Key Stage 3. There was little evidence to confirm the concerns of some parents that complaints are not well handled. The school is managing its finances well and is currently able to maintain its small class size. It is beyond the remit of the inspection team to examine how the school's financial position is altered, if at all, by the change in its status. Governors are keeping a close eye on finances. The income the school receives from the local education authority is broadly average when compared to schools nationally.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1. Attainment on entry to the school is below average overall, particularly at Key Stage 4 and in relation to the standards of pupils' skills in literacy. Whilst there is a wide spread of prior attainment reflecting in many ways a comprehensive intake, there are relatively fewer pupils with high and particularly very high prior attainment. This is the result of the presence of grammar schools locally and the impact of selection by ability. Given this context, the school does well to achieve above average results at GCSE. However, results of non-verbal reasoning tests indicate that there are also fewer pupils of low attainment than nationally at both key stages. The attainment on entry to the school is improving and is close to average for pupils currently in Key Stage 3. Indeed the distribution of the results of the non-verbal reasoning scores for pupils in Year 9 are better than the distribution nationally, although literacy skills are weaker.
2. The results of National Curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 3 for 1999 were in line with the national average in mathematics and science but were well below average in English. Taking the results of the last three or four years, the school's Key Stage 3 test results are improving at a similar rate as results nationally. Improvements in the mathematics and science test results have been better than in English, where in fact results indicate a declining trend. This is largely due to weaknesses in pupils' writing skills which the school's literacy provision has not tackled as well as other aspects such as reading.
3. Pupils' performance in GCSE examinations is above average overall, and well above average in relation to the proportion of pupils gaining at least one GCSE at grade A*-G or five or more GCSEs at grades A*-G. A similar proportion as nationally achieve five or more GCSEs at grades A*-C. Over the last four or five years the school's results have been improving, but at a slower rate than nationally. This is partly owing to a sharp drop in results in 1998 when the group of pupils taking GCSEs contained a higher proportion than is usual of those with special needs. However, the previous report noted that there were fluctuations in GCSE results and this continues to be the case. In 1999, the proportion of pupils gaining a grade A*-C in English, double science, art and drama was above national averages, however, performance in mathematics, design and technology, history, information technology and physical education was below average. Results in the remaining subjects were broadly in line with national norms in relation to the percentage of pupils gaining a grade A*-C. This broadly reflects the pattern of results over the last three years, although results in the weakest subjects are gradually improving. However, fluctuations are evident in a number of subjects. The best performance at GCSE in many subjects was in 1997.
4. Results at A-level are well below average, however, results are in line with pupils' prior attainment and a good number gain sufficiently adequate results to gain a place in an institution of higher education. Also numbers in many subjects are too small to make statistically valid comparisons with national averages. However, A-level results in art, English literature, geography and physics have been consistently good over the last three years in terms of the proportions of pupils gaining a grade A-E. In art, English literature and geography, results at A-level between 1997 and 1999 compare favourably with national averages in relation to the proportion of pupils gaining the

higher grades A or B, and overall results in these subjects are above average, significantly so in English literature in 1999.

5. The standards of pupils' work as seen in lessons and from analysis of written work, largely reflects their performance in national tests and examination at Key Stages 3 and 4 but with some significant improvements in mathematics at Key Stage 3 and for those pupils taking GCSE information technology at Key Stage 4. In English, standards of work are below average at the end of Key Stage 3, but above by the end of Key Stage 4. Standards in speaking and listening are better than in writing, where, at Key Stage 3, there are common errors of punctuation, spelling and pupils are not always sure about how to structure sentences. Standards of creative writing are good, but spelling and punctuation errors persist into Key Stage 4. A-level standards match national norms.
6. In mathematics, standards of work are above average in Key Stage 3 and broadly average in Key Stage 4 and the sixth-form. At Key Stage 3, pupils acquire good techniques in applying mathematics and algebra and good work was seen where pupils were investigating problems. Numeracy skills and standards of mental arithmetic are sound. Where there are high expectations in the sixth-form, students are stimulated into thinking mathematically, giving reasons for their procedures. In science, pupils' attainments are broadly average at Key Stages 3 and 4 and in the sixth-form. Skills in experimental and investigative methods are well developed at both Key Stages 3 and 4. However, a significant proportion of pupils have difficulty retaining information at Key Stage 3 as do many of those taking single science at Key Stage 4. Overall, pupils' scientific knowledge and understanding are sound at Key Stage 4. The quality of work in A-level physics is particularly good.
7. In other subjects, standards of work broadly match expectations with regard to pupils' ages, with high quality work seen on a regular basis in art throughout the school and in religious education at A-level. At Key Stage 3, standards are below average in drama, geography, information technology and physical education and well below average in music. They are also below average in design and technology, in information technology for those pupils not taking a GCSE in this subject and physical education by the end of Key Stage 4.
8. With the exception of music at Key Stage 3 and information technology and physical education at both key stages, pupils achieve results that are in line with their prior attainment, frequently exceeding these in English at Key Stage 4, science at both key stages and in art throughout the school. Overall, pupils' achievement is satisfactory at Key Stage 3 and good at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth-form.
9. In physical education and music, the low standards of work of many pupils are a direct result of weaknesses in teaching and indicate underachievement. In drama, Year 9 pupils lack sufficient experience to shape their ideas into performance as they do not study drama in Years 7 and 8. Many pupils are underachieving in information technology, with low standards arising from lack of regular use of computers in subjects of the curriculum. Pupils make sound progress in information technology in Year 7 when they have regular lessons in this subject. After Year 7, however, they do not have regular opportunities to use computers through other subjects and, therefore, do not develop their skills and knowledge sufficiently to reach the expected standards. The school is putting in place measures to rectify this, but overall, there has not been enough improvement in this area since the previous inspection, even though pupils taking the GCSE course in information technology make good progress and demonstrate sound skills in using a variety of programs. The information technology co-ordinator, who took up post about a year ago, is having a good impact

on improving the quality of provision in information technology and has produced a useful development plan to tackle the weaknesses, but this is at the early stages of implementation.

10. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress and sometimes very good progress when they are withdrawn for intensive literacy work. The GCSE results of pupils with specific learning difficulties are better than expected given their prior attainment, particularly their reading ages when they started the school in Year 7. Good progress is made in reading through developing a wider range of words that pupils can recognise instantly. Pupils' knowledge of sounds and how to use this to help them read is also developing well. In mathematics, good progress is evident in the basic skills of numeracy. However, there is scope for further improving the progress of pupils with special educational needs through the use of more precise targets in their individual education plans and by analysing examination and test data. The school has not established a criteria for identifying gifted and talented pupils or identified provision for such pupils. One or two pupils show great aptitude in information technology and they show good levels of achievement in this area, for example, in designing and developing the school's website, which has won two prestigious national awards.
11. Development of pupils' literacy skills is increasingly supported in the lessons of other subjects by the introduction and correct use and spelling of appropriate technical language. There is inconsistency in the frequency and quality of help given to pupils on how to organise their work when writing at length and in some subjects there are too few opportunities for extended writing at Key Stage 3. In several subjects, pupils are unable to organise and express in writing the full quality of their knowledge and understanding and no whole-school policy has yet been established. Pupils' skills of speaking and listening are encouraged by opportunities to work in groups in many subjects including drama, although this is offered only in Year 9 at Key Stage 3.
12. Levels of numeracy are in line with the standard expected. The mathematics department liaises well with the science department to ensure that there is a cohesive approach to numeracy. Although pupils' numeracy skills are adequate to cope with the demands made in subjects across the curriculum, there are no whole-school strategies in place for improving these skills through other subjects.
13. The school has set itself a high target for improvement at GCSE for 2000 and expects to enable 50 per cent of pupils to attain at least 5 GCSEs at grades A*-C. Whilst this is a challenging target, it is also within the scope of the school to achieve it given the high levels of motivation of pupils, the positive impact of small class sizes and the high quality of teaching. However, weaknesses in the use of performance data for setting targets, tracking of individual pupils' progress to identify late developers and shortcomings in auditing the provision made by individual subjects for able pupils are potential obstacles to the school's progress in improvement.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

14. Pupils' attitudes to school and their learning are good overall and have improved since the time of the last inspection. In the sixth-form the attitudes of the large majority of students are a strength. Pupils are proud of their school, they usually enjoy their lessons, try hard and want to do well. This results in a very positive environment for learning and makes a major contribution to the good quality of teaching and learning seen during the inspection. In most lessons they are very well motivated and show interest, enthusiasm and the desire to achieve high standards. This leads to good levels of concentration and perseverance, sometimes with difficult

tasks, to complete work set. In a few lessons, mainly at Key Stage 3, attitudes are less positive and pupils do not remain focused on their work. This is usually related to weaknesses in classroom management and organisation or pupils not having the skills needed to do their work. The large majority of pupils are able to talk about their work with confidence. They are proud of their achievements and show pleasure in the successes of their peers.

15. Pupils enjoy their practical work. Many show lively curiosity and steadily developing skills of observation and the ability to explore independently as they move through the school. They progressively develop independence in their learning and the ability to organise and take responsibility for their work. This is particularly so where the development of these skills is included in lesson planning and pupils are encouraged to discuss their views and ideas and to work collaboratively. In these lessons pupils respond well to encouragement to debate and are confident about raising and answering questions. In a few lessons teaching is over directive resulting in a passive response and little opportunity to think and work independently. The extra-curricular opportunities provided are valued and supported well. Residential visits which support classroom learning are available to all pupils. They are very popular and have a positive impact on learning and personal development. At Key Stage 4 pupils particularly appreciate the support of their teachers in providing help with homework and the clubs linked to specific curriculum areas. This has a positive impact on learning.
16. Pupils respond well to high expectations for good behaviour and clearly expressed school rules. This contributes to high standards which have a positive effect on learning and on the life of the school. In the dining room they queue sensibly, are polite and well mannered whilst eating and interact confidently and effectively with other pupils, teachers and visitors, showing good social skills. This, together with the care for others usually shown when pupils move around the buildings, contributes to the sense of a family community which permeates life at the school. In the playground most pupils socialise effectively. A few less mature pupils in Key Stage 3 indulge in horseplay which, although usually good-natured, sometimes results in minor injuries. There are usually high levels of respect for school property. Pupils use equipment with respect, putting it away carefully after use. There is no graffiti and minimal litter. Bullying is not tolerated. Incidents are rare and usually dealt with quickly and effectively. Consultation with pupils led to the current system of awards. It acknowledges all aspects of life and work at the school and provides good motivation. Sanctions are usually effective in dealing with everyday problems. Parents are involved at an early stage where behaviour causes real concern. There have been 19 fixed term exclusions involving 17 pupils and no permanent exclusions. However, the school has not classified all the fixed term exclusions as such, referring to them as suspensions, and has not followed the appropriate procedures. A high proportion of pupils modify their behaviour after being excluded and do not re-offend as a result of the care taken to support them and to liaise effectively with parents. In lessons behaviour is usually good and contributes effectively to learning. As at the time of the last inspection, lack of interest and discourteous behaviour in a few lessons slows learning. This is usually where pupils are not sufficiently challenged and where organisation and management is not effective.
17. Relationships throughout the school are very good as are pupils' responses to opportunities for personal development. They grow in confidence through responsibility for personal organisation, involvement in assemblies and the high expectations for them to be concerned for the needs and feelings of others. Respect and goodwill towards others is a strong feature of the school community. This enables constructive relationships to develop where pupils help and support each

other and where they are confident to approach staff with problems. They feel able to express their own views and listen with tolerance and respect to what others have to say, rarely interrupting. The school council has a positive impact on the life of the school with pupils being consulted about issues that concern them, such as security, the environment and behaviour. Pupils respond well to the expectation for them to take responsibility for aspects of school life, these are seen chiefly in Key Stage 4 and more particularly in the sixth-form. Prefects carry out their duties in a mature and responsible manner and are usually treated with respect. Sixth-form students set good examples and their role in supporting Year 7 is valued by pupils. Personal independence, confidence and social skills are developed well through the many residential and other visits. Pupils grow in understanding of the lives of others and compassion for those less fortunate than themselves through the strong support they give to charities. There is good response to the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme in which the use of initiative is fostered successfully.

18. Almost all pupils enjoy coming to school and attend regularly resulting in good levels of attendance being achieved overall. The rate for the last school year was 93.6 per cent, which is above average for similar schools. Unauthorised absence was low at 0.2 per cent. Very few pupils are late and where this occurs it is often related to public transport. Movement between lessons is usually accomplished in a purposeful manner minimising time lost. Statutory requirements for the completion of registers are fully met. The school does all it can to reduce levels of unauthorised absence and uses the services of the education welfare officer effectively.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

19. Pupils are taught well with teaching in 95 per cent of lessons being satisfactory or better, 70 per cent being good or better and 27 per cent being very good or excellent. There has been a significant improvement in the overall quality of teaching since the last inspection. As a result, the quality of learning has also improved with high levels of engagement and interest in the majority of lessons. Pupils were making good gains in their knowledge, understanding and skills in the lessons seen.
20. The quality of teaching is best in the sixth-form, where it is very good overall. From the lesson observations, no teaching in the sixth-form was less than satisfactory and a high proportion, 39 per cent, was very good or better. At Key Stage 3, about 10 per cent of teaching seen was less than satisfactory. Most of this occurs in physical education and music and brings down the overall quality of teaching at this key stage. There was less teaching of good or very good quality at this key stage than in Key Stage 4 or the sixth-form.
21. The quality of teaching is very good in science, and often very good in English. In the majority of other subjects, the quality of teaching is good. In geography, it is satisfactory and often good. Although, in physical education and music the overall quality of teaching is judged to be satisfactory, it is unsatisfactory in both subjects at Key Stage 3. In physical education, good and very good teaching was also seen but this is not consistent across the department.
22. Strengths in teaching include good subject knowledge. This is well used in most subjects to help pupils understand key ideas and to extend their knowledge across a wide range of specialist subject information. In the best lessons, the use of a wide range of teaching strategies ensure good pupil involvement in lessons and help to develop their skills as learners. For example, very good use of questioning in English and science helps pupils to think for themselves and to develop their own ideas further. Good planning in most subjects ensures that pupils are building steadily on

what they know, understand and can do already. In science, clear objectives for learning are identified and shared with pupils. Expectations are high and reflected in the generally good match of work to pupils' needs and a brisk pace. In the majority of lessons, the quality of relationships and the management of pupils are very good. These factors help to sustain high levels of motivation, perseverance and concentration.

23. Pupils often put good levels of creative and intellectual energies into their work, this is noted particularly in art, English during creative writing, and in science and mathematics when carrying out problem-solving and investigative type activities. These creative and analytical skills are promoted well through teaching which actively aims to ensure that pupils have the opportunities to develop and make use of such skills.
24. Where teaching is less than satisfactory, poor management of pupils and organisation of learning, lack of suitable challenge and poor planning result in time being wasted and insufficient progress being made by pupils. These key weaknesses were seen mainly in music and physical education lessons.
25. Occasional shortcomings in other subjects include a narrow range of teaching strategies in some subjects. In mathematics, for example, this leads to insufficient involvement of pupils in their own learning. In English, a minority of lessons were teacher dominated and whilst this does not impact on the attainment of pupils, it does restrict the opportunities for their involvement in discussions. In mathematics, planning was not a strong feature of teaching.
26. The teaching of basic skills of literacy and numeracy are broadly satisfactory, but there is scope to develop these areas further, particularly the teaching of writing skills which are a significant weakness in English. Not enough use is made of computers in most subjects. Other resources are well used although in some mathematics lessons, worksheets are poorly organised where teaching is less effective.
27. There are examples of good and very good ongoing assessment. In art, for example, a key strength is the quality of verbal feedback pupils are given along with the advice on how they can improve their work. Some marking in English is of very good quality. However, these positive examples are not consistently seen in the majority of lessons or pupils' books. Marking often does not provide sufficient guidance on what a pupil needs to do in order to improve. Some marking in English, for example, is too brief to be helpful. In geography, the quality and amount of helpful comments and targets to help pupils raise the standard of their work varies considerably between teachers. In modern foreign languages, marking is thorough but does not always inform pupils on how they can improve their work. There are weaknesses in the ongoing assessment of pupils' work in music and physical education also. Overall, pupils do not really know well enough how they are doing or what they have to do to improve.
28. The quality of teaching for pupils with special educational needs is good and examples of very good teaching were also seen, particularly when pupils are taught in withdrawal lessons. The majority of subject teachers are aware of the specific needs and difficulties and provide good support and help to those with special needs. Learning support assistants are well used in the majority of lessons. As a result, pupils with special educational needs make good progress in lessons and are very keen to do well.

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

29. The school offers an appropriate curriculum in Key Stage 3. Languages are a particular strength, all pupils take at least one modern foreign language and from Year 8 some have the option to study two. All pupils in Year 7 learn Latin, and continue to study it in subsequent years if they show aptitude. In recent years this provision has expanded during Key Stages 3 and 4, so that some higher attaining boys and girls have progressed for the first time to GCSE level this year. The subject is formally taught, using translation techniques and involving grammatical analysis. In addition to developing pupils' linguistic skills, the course gives pupils additional insight into the influence of Roman culture in local and national history. However, there are weaknesses in the curricular provision at Key Stage 3, for example in design and technology where pupils do not study control technology and there is insufficient provision for cross-curricular use of information technology in Years 8 and 9. These represent statutory breaches. In Key Stage 3 pupils study drama for only six weeks in total, consequently their attainment is below expectation for their age. The music curriculum is not balanced and pupils are not doing enough performing and composing across Key Stage 3, resulting in low attainment in both. The curriculum is not monitored reliably and there is no audit to enable accurate judgements to be made about breadth and balance across or within subjects.
30. Curricular provision at Key Stage 4 is satisfactory. However, a minority of Key Stage 4 pupils do not take a design and technology subject and have not been legally disapplied from this element of the curriculum, though the alternative courses they follow are in most cases a suitable alternative. No suitable provision is made for pupils who do not opt to take a GCSE in information technology. This together with the lack of regular use of computers in subjects of the curriculum means that the school is in breach of legal requirements with respect to the National Curriculum. Also pupils in Key Stage 4 taking three science subjects have less time in religious education than others. Religious education lessons rotate with the programme for personal and social education, thus further reducing the allocated time and causing a break in the continuity of pupils' learning. There is no specific vocational curriculum at Key Stage 4, such as GNVQ courses, although elements of the work-related education are covered through the programme for personal and social education and careers.
31. There is a comprehensive personal and social education programme for pupils in Years 7 to 11 which gives effective guidance on, for example, citizenship, relationships, health and personal effectiveness. Sex education is suitably in place for pupils in Key Stages 3 and 4. Preparation of pupils for making choices about the next stage of their education in Years 9 and 11 results in raised awareness of the issues involved. Careers education is well planned and supported by an effective work experience programme.
32. The school offers a satisfactory and varied curriculum in the sixth-form to meet the individual needs of students. This provision has improved since the last inspection. Seventeen subjects are offered at A-level with some subjects offering the alternative of AS-levels. Currently no General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) courses are available. They are however offered in other local post-16 institutions. The school does provide a one-year National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) course in information technology. This is part of the Certificate of Sixth-form Studies which also includes a number of useful GCSE courses. Students also have the opportunity to undertake courses in computer literacy and sports leadership. Complementary studies enrich the opportunities available to students. Personal and careers guidance

is provided through a personal and social education programme and via the tutorial system. There are good opportunities to undertake work shadowing in Year 12, to be involved in the Duke of Edinburgh Awards Scheme and to engage in a wide range of sports and extra-curricular visits and activities. There is a well-organised community work placement scheme involving all students during the course of their sixth-form career. Statutory requirements to provide sex education are not met.

33. Provision for careers' education for sixth-form students is good. Opportunities for work shadowing in the sixth-form enable students to make connections between their school studies and their future lives. Appropriate use is made of the local careers service, and the school's library has good quality resources for students to explore. A good proportion of pupils stay on at school for A-levels or move into further education elsewhere. Many of those who remain at school move on to higher education, indicating good links with universities and other institutions of higher education. Sixth-form science students are mentored by staff from a local company and have good links with a local hospital for exploring the importance of physics in medicine.
34. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good overall, although targets in individual education plans are not specific enough. There is a good balance of support in class and intensive teaching on a one-to-one basis, particularly of literacy. Pupils from the special educational needs unit are well integrated into mainstream classes for most of their subjects. For pupils with special educational needs there are good links to further education, but not all such pupils have transition plans to support them into the next stage of their education or training, and this is a statutory breach. The school reports that it has fulfilled its part in producing transition statements and is awaiting their completion by the local education authority.
35. Provision for gifted and talented pupils is not particularly developed and the school has not highlighted specific criteria to identify gifted or talented pupils. Curricular provision for able pupils is at the early stages of development. In some subjects, there is scope for higher attaining pupils to be stretched more, for example in history, a wider range of teaching strategies are needed to take account of the needs of high attaining pupils. Setting arrangements are good, however, at both key stages and meet well the needs of all pupils. The arrangements are also very flexible so that movement between sets is easy and ensures that pupils are able to work at the right level for their needs.
36. The school makes good provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils. This is underpinned by the quality of relationships within the school community and by an ethos of mutual care and respect which is valued by parents.
37. A number of subjects contribute to the spiritual development of pupils. The scheme of work in science refers to the awe and wonder of the universe and awareness of the beauty and power of the landscape is implicit in the geography syllabus. A life class in the art department promotes appreciation of the human form. History staff contribute to a Remembrance Day Assembly with its themes of Sacrifice and Grief. The music department makes a good contribution through the singing of hymns and spiritual songs. Pupils attend four assemblies each week and these effectively promote their spiritual and moral development. Pupils have a form period on the fifth day and the school provides a programme of thoughts to foster reflection. Several good examples of form periods were seen where, for instance, pupils in Year 10 discussed how 'Revelation' can change lives and in Year 9 when a spiritual context was effectively given to a careers lesson due later in the day. However, the school does not fully comply with the statutory requirements for collective worship. Several

form periods and one house assembly observed did not contain an act of collective worship, although the remaining assemblies and tutor periods did do so.

38. The school provides a secure moral framework for pupils' personal development while offering opportunities for pupils to explore contemporary issues. One assembly seen presented a role-play on issues of domestic violence and several subjects also contribute to awareness of contemporary problems. Sixth-formers discussed ethical issues regarding the environment in business education and of crime and deviance in a sociology lesson. Subject staff promoted aspects of moral behaviour in several lessons, for example in a Year 8 physical education lesson where cheating and sexist behaviour were discouraged and in modern foreign languages where honesty and integrity were promoted as outcomes of peer appraisal. The school successfully establishes values such as loyalty, through the House system, and co-operative behaviour as seen in most lessons and generally around the school.
39. The school makes good provision for the social development of the pupils. There is a wide range of extra-curricular activities including residential experiences in the United Kingdom and abroad. Other extra-curricular provision is also very good. Over 50 per cent of pupils are regularly involved in competitive sport. Inter-house competitions are a major part of school life and valued by staff and pupils, as are sporting fixtures with other local schools. There are clubs for science and information technology, many chamber groups in music, and pupils with special educational needs can attend clubs before and after school as well as in the lunch break. Theatre trips enhance learning, as do e-mail links for the modern linguists. Musical links to other schools include shared concerts, offering good performing opportunities for the higher attaining musicians. These opportunities for extra-curricular activities make a significant contribution to the development of pupils' social skills and cultural development.
40. There are many opportunities for pupils to take responsibility. The school council is well established with a notable commitment shown by sixth-form students. The House system fosters collaborative relationships as does the participation of staff in music and art clubs. There is very good involvement by sixth-formers in the Community Programme and the Duke of Edinburgh Scheme is popular. Some lessons seen promoted collaborative working, for example in modern foreign languages and history, while others dealt with social issues, for example the development of tourism in a geography lesson and drug-related issues in a science lesson. There was, however, the use of very bad language in a physical education lesson.
41. Provision for cultural awareness is good and particularly regarding pupils' knowledge of cultures outside the United Kingdom. Since the last inspection the school has significantly developed its programme of foreign visits, and all visits are supported by a payment scheme which ensures equality of opportunity for participating pupils. The school is justly proud of its international curriculum, having recently won an International School Award in recognition of this dimension of its curriculum, its welcome to students from destinations as far afield as Hong Kong and Mexico, and encouragement to pupils to see themselves as members of a world community. The numerous visits and overseas trips are a particular strength, contributing to learning in many subjects. Field trips in geography, history and modern foreign languages are often to international destinations, for example the Year 9 history field trip is a four-day visit to Normandy, making the study of the D-Day landings more relevant and real for pupils. A-level modern language students are encouraged to pursue work experience in the relevant country. Pupils have travelled to Africa and India and made links with schools there. Visits to countries such as India have considerably

raised awareness of not only material disparity with the West but also inspired respect for the people met on such visits. Pupils speak positively about the foreign students currently on roll. Cultural breadth was seen in several lessons, for example in music where pupils learned about the racism faced by black musicians in America in the 1950s, in art with work on African masks, and in science with discussion of the value of nutrients from different diets around the world. All these opportunities add valuable social and cultural dimensions to the school. The curriculum does not, however, explicitly acknowledge the cultural diversity of Britain, a point which was also noted in the previous inspection. Consideration should be given to the mapping of the spiritual, moral, social and cultural provision currently made in order to build upon present strengths and to identify opportunities for development in the curriculum.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

42. At the last inspection there was no consistent implementation of assessment policies across the school and this continues to be the case. Thus, there has not been enough improvement in this area since the previous inspection. Assessment information is not being used sufficiently to set targets for all pupils, though there are some pockets of good practice in subject departments, notably English, also at the lower end of the ability range, and in the sixth-form. There is some good practice in mathematics, physical education, and science at Key Stage 4. However, across the school assessment procedures and use of assessment information are unsatisfactory.
43. The school does not use the non-verbal assessment data it has for pupils to predict outcomes or measure the value it adds as pupils progress through the school. Nor is this information available to departments. Analyses of examination results are carried out mostly by the headteacher, though some subjects carry out their own analyses. For example, the English scheme of work is evaluated at the end of every unit, outcomes are matched against predictions for boys and girls and by teacher. This has been linked to professional development and in-service training, in turn leading to strategies and resources to improve performance, especially of boys. Similar analysis is done in mathematics, and to a certain extent in science, but this good practice is isolated within these departments. There is no consistent analysis of results across the school by gender or social groups and analyses of end of Key Stage 3 results and teacher assessments is weak, with little use being made of this information. Pupils identified as potential higher achievers are monitored to ensure they are not underachieving by comparison with the rest, but not to ensure that they are actually achieving to their maximum potential. The list of able pupils is not subject to change so those pupils not identified at the first screening in Year 7 are not picked up and monitored subsequently.
44. The school has a clear assessment policy. Its main focus is intended to improve pupils' performance through feedback, however feedback to pupils varies in quality from subject to subject. In physical education pupils are monitored against fortnightly targets and the outcomes are publicly displayed, leading to increased motivation of pupils. However, feedback given to Key Stage 3 pupils in science is only as percentages in tests at the end of each unit of work. Pupils do not know their level of attainment in relation to the National Curriculum, and this is also true in other subjects.
45. There is reluctance to the use of target setting and tracking as a means of raising achievement in case it leads to under-performance. The school does not carry out any value-added analysis. There is insufficient shared understanding of how to use

data to set targets which encourage all pupils to perform to the highest standards of which they are capable.

46. Concern for the health, safety and welfare of pupils at the school is a high priority and all members of staff are vigilant in their care. Within this context some procedures have not been fully developed and are unsatisfactory. There are suitable arrangements for dealing with first aid emergencies. The statutory requirement for annual testing of equipment and appliances is fully met. Emergency evacuation procedures are practised regularly. Staff are aware of safety issues relating to lessons and take suitable steps to ensure that pupils follow safe procedures. Risk assessment procedures are fully in place in science and design and technology. The lack of their development in other subjects and the school premises as a whole has resulted in some issues not being routinely identified. In addition, it means that the school is not fully meeting legal requirements. The serious deficiencies reported during the inspection were dealt with at once by the school. The named person responsible for health and safety has not been trained in risk assessment and has insufficient awareness of the issues involved. The governors take an active interest in health and safety matters and regularly check the premises but do not have a specific named person with overall responsibility. There is a suitably trained person who is designated to deal with child protection issues. Staff have high levels of awareness and the school's procedures, which follow local guidelines, have been highly praised locally. The school liaises with, and uses, support services effectively to meet the needs of its pupils.
47. The school has a well-written policy and effective procedures for dealing with behaviour and discipline problems and these are consistently applied resulting in pupils knowing what is expected of them. An anti-bullying culture is promoted effectively through the personal and social education programme. Procedures for dealing with the few incidents occurring thoroughly address the needs of all parties involved. The awards system is valued and motivates pupils to achieve across the age range. Although routine sanctions to deal with minor misdemeanors are usually effective, in the few lessons where there is poor behaviour teachers do not always have the behaviour management strategies to deal with this. The involvement of parents in dealing with more serious behaviour concerns helps to identify and deal with underlying problems effectively. The school often uses the term suspension instead of exclusion resulting in it not reporting, as required, the number of occasions that pupils have been sent home from school pending discussion with both them and their parents about future behaviour expectations. Arrangements for pupils returning after being suspended or excluded are very effective resulting in few re-offending. Routines involve immediate arrangements for a meeting with parents and agreement with them and the pupil about future behaviour. This often takes place before formal notification of what has happened has been sent to parents, resulting in the statutory requirement to inform parents about their legal rights and fixing an exact number of days being omitted. Parents are made aware of the need for good attendance and it is promoted effectively through the system of awards, resulting in good standards being achieved. Monitoring of attendance levels is detailed and given high priority by senior managers in the school.
48. Arrangements for the guidance and personal development of pupils are good overall. Well-planned induction arrangements ensure that they settle happily into Year 7. The very effective house system provides high levels of pastoral support. Form tutors and heads of house know pupils well and very positive relationships ensure that problems are shared with confidence and dealt with effectively. Form tutors monitor the achievements of pupils effectively to ensure suitable contributions to their 'Records of Achievement'. The range of opportunities provided to develop initiative,

responsibility and personal effectiveness, for example residential visits, Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme, School Council and the appointment of prefects, have a very positive impact on personal development.

49. The informal support which individual pupils receive in lessons is effective and has a positive impact on learning. Annual progress reports to parents do not adequately inform parents and pupils about relative strengths and areas where further effort is needed. They do not always include targets and those that do are often too general to be of real help. There are some good examples of marking that helps pupils to understand what they need to do to improve their work, but these high standards are not consistent across the school.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

50. As at the time of the last inspection there are high levels of satisfaction amongst parents regarding what the school provides and achieves. A high proportion returned the pre-inspection questionnaires. These, together with comments made at the meeting held for parents, show that almost all find it easy to approach the school with concerns. They feel encouraged to be involved in the life of the school, are pleased with the standards of work their children are reaching and believe the values and attitudes promoted have a positive effect on them. A few parents are unhappy about the way in which the school responds to their concerns, however, no evidence to support this view was found during the inspection. At the parents' meeting concerns were expressed about the school's change of status from a grant maintained school to a foundation school. Their main concern was about the school's funding and its capacity to maintain small class sizes and the building programme. A few parents would like more information about what their children are learning and inspection evidence supports these views.
51. The effectiveness of links with parents is compromised because a range of information which the school is legally required to provide is not given. The school prospectus does not include attendance levels, routes taken by pupils over 16 years, end of Key Stage 3 test results and the national comparisons for GCSE and A-level results. The governors have overlooked including in their annual report to parents a statement on progress in implementing the action plan drawn up following the last inspection, this has also been omitted from previous reports following the inspection. Other information required includes arrangements for pupils with disabilities, the success in implementing the governing body's policy for pupils with special education needs and details of professional development undertaken by teaching staff. Reporting on test and examination results omit the same features as the prospectus. Parents receive their children's end of Key Stage 3 test results but national comparisons for these are not included. All of these omissions are statutory breaches.
52. Annual progress reports provide very positive information about pupils' attitudes to school. In other respects they do not meet required standards. Few effectively inform parents about what their children know, understand and can do. Targets are not always set and, where they are, they are usually too general to help parents understand what needs to be done to improve or how they can help their children at home. The art department has produced a proposed format that provides a satisfactory basis for future reports in this subject. Information technology is not always reported and personal and social education is not reported. There are suitable arrangements for parents to discuss the annual progress reports and a very high proportion take advantage of these.

53. Parents have good opportunities to find out about the school and meet staff before their children start in Year 7. During the first term they visit the school to discuss with form teachers how their children are settling in. Regular newsletters give useful information about school news and events and diary dates where appropriate. Where any aspect of their children's life and work at school causes concern they are contacted as soon as possible, this results in a strong working partnership that usually solves problems successfully. Parents are regularly consulted about policies and procedures, for example the sex education policy. The school arranges information evenings about a range of issues involving their children, for example drugs awareness, sex education and residential visits.
54. The involvement of parents with the work of the school has a good impact on pupils' learning. There is a strong parent and teacher association that organises many successful social and fund-raising events. Funds raised have a significant impact on the work of the school, for example in providing mini buses and computers. Pupils' planners include good basic information about their children's life and work at school and usually enable them to keep up to date with work set for them to do at home. Parents are strongly represented on the school's governing body and they take a very active interest in its work, ensuring that their views are suitably considered.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

55. There are some strengths in the leadership of the school but there are also some weaknesses. The headteacher provides strong leadership which has a clear focus on raising achievement and future life opportunities for pupils. He is highly respected by staff, governors and parents and inspires enormous commitment and loyalty from staff. This results in a school where the majority of staff is conscientious and maintain demanding expectations of themselves and their pupils. Working relationships flourish and a high value is placed on developing pupils as individuals, not only academically but also in terms of their personal growth and development. The school's aims and values are widely understood and shared. These features of the leadership of the school go a long way towards promoting good teaching and learning. The senior management team provides good support to the headteacher in order to uphold the high standards of pupils' work, however, their role in managing and developing individual staff, especially at middle management level, is somewhat limited when compared to other schools, particularly in relation to monitoring and evaluation and strategic planning.
56. Governors are very supportive of the school and assiduously attend meetings. There are a range of committees of which the finance committee is perhaps most successful. Governors have made a good contribution to the school's key priorities of improving the school buildings and reducing class sizes. Overall, governors fulfil satisfactorily their statutory duties in helping to shape the direction of the school. However, there are many legal breaches and governors' roles in ensuring that the school meets statutory requirements is weak. Although parent governors feel that they receive a good deal of information about the school through their parental involvement, governors are on the whole rather reliant on the headteacher and senior staff for information. They do not have wide enough methods of finding out for themselves more about the school's strengths and weaknesses. Examples of what governors might do in order to become more actively involved with the school's work include: forming a curriculum committee to consider or research into curriculum issues in order to report to the full governing body; making regular contact with the co-ordinator for special educational needs through a designated governor; individual governors becoming attached to specific departments or members of staff in order to enable governors to explore how the department carries out its work. Although the

headteacher and the chair of governors have assumed responsibility for overseeing special educational needs, the chair of governors does not meet with the special needs co-ordinator and there is no reference to the special educational needs provision in the headteacher's reports to governors nor in the minutes of governors' meetings. Discussion during the inspection with governors and the special needs co-ordinator also indicate that it is not widely known that the headteacher and the chair of governors are responsible for overseeing the special needs provision. As a result governors' monitoring of the provision is not strong.

57. The following list identifies the areas where the school is not meeting legal requirements:
- National Curriculum requirements for information technology, design and technology and music are not being fully met.
 - The requirement for a daily act of collective worship is not being fully met.
 - The school is not following correct procedures for the exclusion of pupils.
 - Health and safety requirements are not being fully met, particularly with respect to risk assessments.
 - Not all the information required in pupils' annual reports, the school prospectus and the annual governors' reports to parents is provided.
 - Governors are not meeting the requirement to report on the success of the school's special educational needs policy to parents in the annual governors' report to parents.
 - There is no sex education for pupils in the sixth-form.
 - Transitional plans are not in place for all pupils in with special educational needs, although the school reports that it has fulfilled its responsibilities and is awaiting response from the local education authority.
58. The school's procedures for monitoring its strengths and weaknesses are informal. Senior managers keep a look out for potential problems and are readily available to middle managers. This leads to support being provided and action being taken when there is a problem rather than a more proactive approach. The support provided is not always effective. For example, the issues in music which were evident at the time of the previous inspection and the problems in teaching which have arisen since in the physical education department remain unresolved despite support being available. Development planning continues to be a weakness, and expertise in development planning at departmental level is unsatisfactory. These were identified as areas for improvement at the time of the last inspection. The school has set itself a challenging target for improvement in the 50 per cent of pupils it wishes to achieve at least 5 GCSEs at grades A*-C, but no school-wide strategies have been identified as to how this will be achieved. Staff and governors are unsure as to how the target will be met. Whilst there is determination and a strong will to raise pupils' standards of attainment, insufficient analyses have been carried out on the tests taken on entry to the school to inform future developments and ensure that expectations of pupils are raised in accordance with the improving academic standards of the intake.
59. The overall roles of heads of department in monitoring and improving the quality of the work in their departments is underdeveloped and there is no structure or mechanism for systematically developing their roles in relation to either development planning or monitoring and evaluation. Whilst some heads of department are able to manage their areas reasonably well in spite of these limitations, others are struggling with management difficulties. Limited non-contact time, especially for members of the senior management team, restricts the extent to which the school can effectively monitor its performance, diagnose its strengths and weaknesses and secure improvements. Whilst the school has done well to maintain high standards at GCSE

and to improve the quality of teaching and the accommodation quite significantly since the last inspection, the standards of work at Key Stage 3 are not as good. In addition, some of the key issues from the previous inspection have not been tackled effectively enough and continue to require attention, as do a number of the minor weaknesses identified in the body of the previous report.

60. The school budgets systematically for all of its expenditure and has, in recent years, developed effective methods of calculating and meeting the cost of its development. The most recent financial audit approves the effectiveness of the school's financial strategies. Through careful planning and in consultation with teachers and parents, the headteacher and governing body have been able to sustain an impressive programme of building and maintenance. They have further improved the curricular opportunities available to pupils through creating new laboratories and extending the computer network. A gradual reduction in class sizes contributes to the positive ambiance of the school and the quality of learning, although the resultant pressure on teachers' time reduces their ability to plan formally for development and monitor their own effectiveness.
61. The systems for financial administration and control are sensible and unobtrusive. They are efficiently handled by the school bursar and regularly monitored by the governors' finance committee. Details of the allocations to departments and their expenditure are available to all concerned. Particular features of the school's curriculum, such as the provision for the sixth-form, pupils with special needs and international students are appropriately financed without impinging on other areas.
62. Recent developments have occurred in the use of new technologies including electronic mail, research using CD-ROM and Internet applications. The involvement of departments is inconsistent, however. However, teachers are to receive further training in this important area in the near future.
63. The school makes good use of the best value principle in planning and administering its finances. Comparative data are used to ensure that good value for money is being obtained in relation to similar schools. Appropriate tendering arrangements and safeguards are always put in place where major spending is concerned. The teaching commitments of staff, the wide range of extra-curricular activities they provide, and the school's strong links with parents provide a considerable challenge. The school's investment of resources to promote its policies and priorities meet with the general approval of parents, staff and governors.
64. The school has not, however, devised or adopted sufficient ways of analysing its performance and outcomes statistically, nor of relating these to the deployment of resources. In consequence, the quality and focus of much of its future planning is based on intuitive rather than demonstrable priorities. The lack of detail in whole-school development plans is reflected at departmental level, where insufficient attention is paid to evaluating outcomes to date and setting clearly defined targets for the future.
65. The match of teachers and support staff to the demands of the curriculum is good in most subject areas. The lack of sufficient technician support in art, design and technology and information technology has a considerable impact on standards and the efficient use of the teachers' time. Some staff are not confident in the use of computers and this hampers the cross-curricular development of information technology. In-service training is mapped but still not closely monitored in relation to departmental development plans, a weakness identified in the previous inspection report. The accommodation has greatly improved since the previous inspection and

is now good. There are now only two huts and the new buildings provide a stimulating environment for the pupils. However, the gymnasium floor is in a poor state of repair and is not suitable for bare footwork. Music rooms are too small for practical work and the information technology and design and technology rooms are cramped. The science preparation rooms have insufficient work-top surfaces. The school's learning resources are, for the most part, satisfactory. However there is a deficiency in the provision of information technology equipment which impacts on standards of attainment in mathematics, geography, music, design and technology and art.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

66. In order to tackle its weaknesses and raise standards further, particularly at Key Stage 3, the headteacher, senior management team and governors should:

- Improve the effectiveness of the governing body in fulfilling its legal responsibilities by:
 - ensuring that all the National Curriculum requirements in information technology are fully met;
 - either legally disapplying pupils from design and technology at Key Stage 4 or ensuring that all take a valid design and technology subject;
 - fully meeting the requirement for a daily act of collective worship;
 - ensuring that health and safety legislation is fully implemented;
 - providing parents with the required information in pupils' annual reports, the annual governors' report and the school prospectus;
 - ensuring that legal requirements are met in the exclusion of pupils and that parents are informed of their right to appeal;
 - encouraging the local education authority to complete transitional statements for pupils with special educational needs.
(Paragraph nos. 29, 30, 34, 37, 46, 47, 51, 52, 73, 87, 105, 114, 128, 165)

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning in music and physical education by:
 - improving the management and control of pupils;
 - ensuring that lessons are rigorously planned to meet the needs of pupils and to ensure that pupils are taught skills, knowledge and understanding as outlined in the National Curriculum Programmes of Study.
(Paragraph nos. 21, 146, 149, 157, 159)

- Put in place rigorous assessment procedures in all areas and making comprehensive use of assessment information to help improve standards of work by:
 - improving procedures for assessing pupils in Key Stage 3 against the National Curriculum targets and levels;
 - analysing data from teacher assessments in Key Stage 3;
 - analysing examination and test data by gender;
 - ensuring that all heads of department are able to analyse data to the same high standards as in the best cases;
 - developing suitable criteria for identifying pupils who may be gifted and talented;
 - using assessment data, including data on entry to the school, effectively in target setting;
 - improving the quality and precision of targets for pupils with special educational needs;

- using assessment data to inform curricular planning and provision for able pupils and using it to drive their progress not just to ensure that they are not underachieving;
 - ensuring consistently good quality of marking and feedback to pupils on how they can improve their work.
(Paragraph nos. 13, 27, 42-45, 71, 97, 104, 111, 114, 119, 121, 126, 135, 141, 142, 149, 159, 165)
- Further develop the roles of senior managers and heads of department in monitoring and evaluating and strategic planning to improve attainment, especially in Key Stage 3 by:
- ensuring that there are well-outlined plans for school and departmental development, especially in relation to raising attainment;
 - considering how the teaching loads of senior staff, particularly the headteacher and deputies could be reduced to facilitate the performance of wider management responsibilities;
 - widening the strategies for monitoring and evaluating the work of the school and using the results to inform whole school development as well as departmental development;
 - improving the quality of monitoring, especially monitoring of teaching, so that it is an incisive tool for improvement;
 - ensuring that all heads of department have the skills of the best to analyse and make use of test and examination data;
 - ensuring that support to departments or teachers who are encountering difficulties is effective in resolving these so that the educational provision for pupils is not compromised over a long period of time.
(Paragraph nos. 58, 59, 87, 98, 113, 120, 126, 136, 142, 151, 159, 165)

Minor weaknesses identified in the report:

- Improve the curricular provision in design and technology at Key Stage 3. (Paragraph no. 114)
- Enable governors to monitor effectively the provision for pupils with special educational needs. (Paragraph nos. 56)
- Widen the role of governors within the school so that they are in a position to hold the school to account for what it does. (Paragraph no. 56)
- Develop and implement a policy for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. (Paragraph no. 41)
- Develop a better awareness amongst pupils of the cultural diversity of Britain. (Paragraph no. 41)
- Improve the accommodation for music. (Paragraph no. 152).

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	191
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	65

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
3	24	42	26	3	2	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll

	Y7-Y11	Sixth-form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	652	121
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	63	10

Special educational needs

	Y7-Y11	Sixth-form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	43	4
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	208	4

English as an additional language

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	9

Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	7
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	11

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	6.2
National comparative data	7.9

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.2
National comparative data	1.1

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	1999	72	50	122

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	28	47	42
	Girls	35	36	26
	Total	63	83	68
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	52 (51)	68 (67)	56 (63)
	National	63 (65)	62 (60)	55 (56)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	8 (26)	37 (37)	7 (15)
	National	28 (35)	38 (36)	23 (27)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	31	39	47
	Girls	38	33	31
	Total	69	72	78
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	57	59	64
	National	64 (62)	64 (64)	60 (62)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	20	43	13
	National	31 (31)	37 (37)	28 (31)

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4

Number of 15-year-olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	59	62	121

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	23	58	60
	Girls	30	60	61
	Total	53	118	121
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	44 (41.9)	98 (90.6)	100 (100)
	National	46.3 (44.4)	90.7 (89.6)	95.7 (95.1)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	40.4 (33.6)
	National	37.8 (36.8)

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

Attainment at the end of the sixth-form

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A-level or AS-level examinations	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	25	29	54

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	7.6	9.5	8.6	4	6	5.2
National	17.7	18.1	17.9 (17.6)	2.7	2.9	2.8 (2.8)

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

Vocational qualifications	Number	% success rate	
Number in their final year of studying for national vocational qualifications in IT and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	7	100
	National	Not available	Not available

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	
Black – African heritage	2
Black – other	
Indian	3
Pakistani	
Bangladeshi	
Chinese	2
White	766
Any other minority ethnic group	

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage		
Black – African heritage		
Black – other		
Indian		
Pakistani		
Bangladeshi		
Chinese		
White	19	
Other minority ethnic groups		

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

Teachers and classes**Qualified teachers and classes: Y7-Y13**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	51.6
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	15.1

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y7-Y13

Total number of education support staff	19
Total aggregate hours worked per week	545

Deployment of teachers: Y7-Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	80.0
---	------

Average teaching group size: Y7-Y11

Key Stage 3	20.5
Key Stage 4	18.5

Financial information

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

	£
Total income	2208511
Total expenditure	2188817
Expenditure per pupil	2857
Balance brought forward from previous year	(5679)
Balance carried forward to next year	14015

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	773
Number of questionnaires returned	352

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I feel the school encourages parents to play an active part in the life of the school	36	58	5	1	0
I would find it easy to approach the school with questions or problems to do with my child(ren)	55	41	4	0	1
The school handles complaints from parents well	35	43	16	6	1
The school gives me a clear understanding of what is taught	29	56	11	4	1
The school keeps me well informed about my child(ren)'s progress	35	53	8	3	0
The school enables my child(ren) to achieve a good standard of work	52	44	4	0	0
The school encourages children to get involved in more than just their daily lessons	48	44	6	1	0
I am satisfied with the work that my child(ren) is/are expected to do at home	36	53	8	3	1
The school's values and attitudes have a positive effect on my child(ren)	59	33	7	1	0
The school achieves high standards of good behaviour	54	38	6	2	1
My child(ren) like(s) school	49	38	9	3	1

Other issues raised by parents

At the meeting, concerns were expressed about the impact on the school's finances of the recent change of status from a grant maintained school to a foundation school. Parents were worried that the school would not be able to sustain its small class sizes or continue its building programme.

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

ENGLISH

67. Attainment in National Curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 3 in 1999 was below the national average of all schools and of similar schools. Taking the four years 1996 to 1999 together, results were below average. During that period, girls' results were better than those of boys but both were below average. The trend of improvement is below that which applies nationally. In 1999, results at GCSE were above the national average and well above average when compared with similar schools in both English and English literature. However, the proportion entered for English literature was below average. In that year, pupils gained significantly better results in both subjects than their average for other subjects for which they were entered. Girls attained more highly than boys by a margin similar to the national difference. Results at A-level in English literature were well above average in 1999 with all students achieving a grade A-E, and a high proportion gaining a grade A or B. Results in the previous two years have been above average.
68. Inspection evidence confirms that overall levels of attainment are below average at the end of Key Stage 3. At the end of Key Stage 4, they exceed expectations based upon age and previous attainment. Attainment in the sixth-form is broadly average. From the time of pupils' entry to the school, the quality of their learning is good. In all year groups, they listen carefully to teachers and, if unsure, ask for further explanation. Pupils speak confidently. From early in Year 7, they benefit from opportunities to contribute to discussion and explore literary and other texts when working in groups or as full classes. Such opportunities are frequent in the lessons of most but not all teachers and contribute greatly to pupils' gains in knowledge and understanding. The value of the early development of skills of group work is particularly evident at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth-form when pupils discuss the texts being studied for examinations. Attainment in reading at the end of Key Stage 3 is inconsistent. Most pupils read with satisfactory understanding of the main sense. They include many pupils who entered the school with very poor reading skills who have made very good progress. Only a small minority recognise significant detail, identifying different layers of meaning and comment on their significance and effect for themselves. They learn from each other when working in groups but most depend upon teachers' guidance to gain depth of understanding. Attainment in writing remains well below average, despite improvement from Year 7. All pupils take care with the presentation of their work and a significant minority can express their ideas effectively and accurately, when writing at length. The quality of written work of the majority, including some with otherwise good skills, is much reduced by the frequency of errors of spelling of words in common use, poor sentence construction and errors of basic grammar. The quality of creative writing is high in both prose and verse, often demonstrating imaginative use of language and understanding of how writers gain effects in texts pupils have read.
69. A similar balance of skills is evident at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth-form but the quality of reading and writing is improved and more closely matches course expectations. Good levels of skill, knowledge and understanding were observed in classes of higher attaining pupils in Years 10 and 11 working on challenging texts. These pupils and, even more so, students in the sixth-form read well enough to explore ideas in depth. They are able to express their opinions clearly both in group discussions and in writing. Accuracy of written work is much improved from Key

Stage 3, but errors in spelling of words in common use persist. Lower attaining pupils continue to need significant support from teachers to gain satisfactory understanding from their reading and with the organisation of their written work.

70. Development of pupils' English skills is increasingly supported in the lessons of other subjects by the introduction and correct use and spelling of appropriate technical language. There is inconsistency in the frequency and quality of help given to pupils on how to organise their work when writing at length and in some subjects there are too few opportunities for extended writing at Key Stage 3. In several subjects, pupils are unable to organise and express in writing the full quality of their knowledge and understanding and no whole-school policy has yet been established. Pupils' skills of speaking and listening are encouraged by opportunities to work in groups in many subjects including drama, although this is offered only in Year 9 at Key Stage 3.
71. The quality of teaching is good. Often it is very good, occasionally excellent and never less than satisfactory. Teachers are versatile in their knowledge and skills so that most can teach effectively through the age and ability ranges. Teachers link lessons to previous and future work so that pupils understand their relevance. They explain tasks clearly and most ensure that pupils demonstrate understanding and contribute to discussion from an early stage in lessons which are conducted at a crisp pace. In such lessons, teachers are skilful in asking questions which require pupils to answer in depth and, often, to explore ideas and provide evidence to support their views. Particularly good examples were noted in Year 11 classes preparing an article on emigration or identifying how atmosphere is created in 'Macbeth'; in a Year 10 class exploring the character of Lady Macbeth and in a sixth-form class working on 'King Lear'. Some lessons, however, are so dominated by teachers that pupils have a narrower range of opportunities to learn, but the teachers have good subject knowledge and pupils achieve appropriate standards in written work. All teachers have high expectations of pupils' effort, behaviour and attainment. Provision of challenging tasks to which pupils respond with enthusiasm and skill was noted, for example in the writing of sonnets from Oberon to Titania by Year 7 pupils reading 'A Midsummer Night's Dream'. Teachers set homework that is relevant to work being done in class. The quality of marking is mostly good and indicates to pupils how they may improve their work, but some comments are too brief to be helpful.
72. Positive relationships between pupils and with teachers result in good progress and effective learning. Confidence in relationships encourages pupils to contribute to discussion and, particularly in Key Stage 4 and the sixth-form, to explore literature with sensitivity and without inhibition. At all levels of attainment, pupils are well-motivated and respond positively to challenge and praise. They sustain effort and concentration. Lower attaining pupils are pleased with their successes and the highest attainers enjoy high intellectual challenge. The good and often very good quality of learning is particularly encouraged by pupils being expected to offer opinions based upon evidence from early in Key Stage 3. This experience develops into a significant strength at Key Stage 4 and is further developed in the sixth-form as is evident in both discussion and in written work. Particularly in Key Stage 3, the quality of learning of pupils with problems of basic literacy is increased by the very effective work of learning support assistants.
73. Since the previous inspection, the range of teaching strategies has been widened so that pupils are now given more opportunities to contribute to their learning. Pupils preparing for GCSE have good understanding of examination requirements and there are appropriate systems for assessment of pupils' attainment. Closer links with drama have not been achieved at Key Stage 3 since there is very little time provided for drama within the timetable. The curriculum matches the requirements of the

National Curriculum but the department does not make a planned contribution to the development of pupils' capability in information technology. It does provide opportunities for word processing and pupils in a Year 8 class were encouraged to use the internet to research the sinking of the 'Titanic'.

74. The department benefits from clear-sighted and supportive leadership and a shared determination to ensure the progress of pupils at all levels of attainment.

DRAMA

75. Drama is taught by members of the English department in Year 9 and as an option at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth-form.
76. GCSE results in 1999 were well above the national average as they have been consistently in recent years. A higher proportion of pupils is examined in drama than occurs nationally. At A-level, where numbers fluctuate considerably, results are below average. Pupils in Year 9 are enthusiastic but have insufficient experience to shape their ideas into performance and their overall attainment is below average. A class preparing a performance based upon the theme of horror demonstrated a willingness to experiment and an ability to improve. Pupils applaud each other's successes. However, they do not make efficient use of rehearsal time, have inadequate awareness of their audience and their general levels of skill are below expectation for their age. The provision of two six-week units in Year 9 with no structured experience in earlier years provides an inadequate quality of experience and result in the low standards of work seen.
77. Standards of planning, performance and evaluation at Key Stage 4 are broadly average with a wide range of individual skills. Good progress was evident in a class working on aspects of Russell's 'Our Day Out', resulting from confident working relationships and a developing awareness of presentational issues.
78. Standards of work in the sixth form are broadly in line with national norms. Sixth-form students showed good levels of interest in a summary of the main concepts of the Stanislavsky school of theatre and especially their relevance to their own presentation of character. In planning a performance of a scene from 'The Tempest' they demonstrated good understanding of details such as the importance of stage positions to emphasise social status and relationships. Their positive relationships and motivation support good progress. Quality of written work is sometimes reduced by poor organisation of content and frequent errors.
79. Teachers have good subject expertise including a good understanding of examination course requirements. They recognise the skills and difficulties of individuals and are supportive of all. They encourage pupils to make their own choices rather than receive direction so that understanding is encouraged. The pace sometimes falters because the target for lessons is imprecisely identified.

MATHEMATICS

80. In the 1999 National Curriculum tests, the proportion of pupils attaining the expected level or above was above the national average. The proportion of pupils attaining the higher levels was broadly in line with the national averages. The performance in mathematics matched the performance of pupils nationally and that of pupils in similar types of schools. From 1996 to 1999, there was an improvement that was greater than the national trend. Results in mathematics were above those of English.

81. The proportion of pupils achieving grades A* to C in the GCSE examinations in 1999 was below the national average but the proportion of pupils achieving grades A* to G were in line with the national average. The average points score for GCSE was broadly in line with the national average. There has been an improvement over the past three years broadly in line with the national trend. Compared with similar schools, the proportion of pupils achieving A*-C was below the average. Students gained results that were in line with those in their other subjects. In 1999, 24 pupils in Year 11 were entered for GCSE statistics. The proportions of pupils who achieved A*-C grades were above the national average. The proportions of pupils who achieved A*-G grades were broadly in line with the national average.
82. Results attained in mathematics at A-level in 1999 were far below the national average. However, the proportion of pupils was small and their prior attainment at GCSE was not high. In the present sixth-form, attainment is in line with course expectations.
83. By the time they have reached the age of 14, they are achieving standards above the standards expected of 14-year-olds nationally. Students acquire good techniques in applying mathematics and algebra. In solving problems, pupils generalise solutions when carrying through substantial tasks. They explain the solution in a structured way. High attaining pupils demonstrate good skills in analysing and interpreting graphs. For example, in a high ability Year 9 lesson, the majority accurately interpreted graphs showing objects travelling. The majority of pupils have good numeracy skills. Pupils' attitudes to work are good and they behave well in lessons. They listen politely to each other and participate well in class discussions. This has a positive impact on their attainment. Pupils with special educational needs progress at a rate similar to the rest of the pupils. They have good support from their teachers and learning support assistants.
84. By the time they are 16, pupils continue to progress satisfactorily and the majority achieve satisfactory results and most are entered for the GCSE examinations. Attainment is in line with that expected of pupils of the same age. Good work was seen where pupils were investigating problems. Pupils use symbols accurately to present results and they test the formulae they construct. High attaining pupils demonstrate a good understanding of trigonometric ratios and, in a Year 11 lesson, derived the correct formulae to use in order to find the areas of triangles making competent use of sine and cosine rules. Pupils are generally well motivated and the higher attainers in the key stage work at a brisk pace. Attention tends to lapse when teaching techniques are limited. The low attainers have a sound understanding of how to create and interpret graphs, but they have difficulty in identifying and recalling the averages of mode, mean and median. Pupils with special educational needs make sound progress in understanding handling data and their overall progress is in line with the rest of the pupils in the school. Those in a bottom set, for example, made good progress in learning how to calculate the perimeter and area of rectangles.
85. Standards of attainment by the time pupils reach Year 13 are in line with course expectations. In mechanics, pupils apply the laws of uniform motion correctly when solving problems and in pure mathematics, they confidently differentiate trigonometric functions accurately when learning how to integrate using trigonometric identities. Particularly good work is seen in the decision mathematics module. Students have a good understanding of critical path analysis. Students explain procedures clearly and readily answer questions. Contribution to class discussions is very good.
86. The overall quality of teaching is good, resulting in good learning. Teaching and learning is good at Key Stage 3 and in the sixth-form. There are a few examples of

very good teaching at Key Stages 3 and 4. Teachers demonstrate a good knowledge and understanding of mathematics in all three key stages. This is illustrated by clear explanation of tasks and the confident and appropriate use of mathematical terms. The use of information technology is limited at all key stages and this inhibits pupils' learning. In the most effective lessons, teachers set clear objectives and there is a good balance between explanation, demonstration and individual work. In the majority of lessons, teachers set high expectations and promote good understanding with challenging questions. Where there are high expectations in the sixth-form, pupils are stimulated into thinking mathematically, giving reasons for their procedures. In all years, homework is set regularly and extends and consolidates new work learnt in the lessons. Students generally concentrate well on their work and make good progress in consolidating new and previous work. In a minority of lessons where teaching is less effective, worksheets are poorly organised, teaching methods are limited and there are missed opportunities for discussion that would promote better learning. In a minority of lessons, the pace of learning is restricted by lack of concentration by a minority of pupils.

87. The department is well managed on a day-to-day basis and there are good aspects to the leadership. These include the role of the head of department in establishing good teamwork and placing a strong emphasis on raising achievement. Although there is a clear educational direction for the subject, there is a lack of structured development planning and insufficient rigour in the monitoring of teaching to ensure that pupils make the best possible progress. Although schemes of work at Key Stage 4 are well structured and follow the GCSE syllabus, they lack the helpful detail of those in Key Stage 3. Assessment procedures are good at Key Stage 3 where there is regular monitoring and recording of pupils' attainment and progress through the key stage. There is insufficient use of information technology to support mathematics effectively at all key stages. This aspect of the mathematics curriculum needs further development, including integrating information technology into schemes of work at all key stages, in order to enhance the learning of pupils. The subject provides good support to pupils and teachers work well together as a team. Relationships between teachers and teachers and pupils are very good.
88. Since the previous inspection, there has been a sound improvement in achievement and attainment at Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4. The quality of teaching and learning has also improved and is now good, being very good in a minority of lessons. Overall the school has made sound progress in mathematics since the previous inspection.

Numeracy

89. Levels of numeracy are in line with the standard expected. The mathematics department liaise well with the science department to ensure that there is a cohesive approach to numeracy. However, there are no whole-school strategies in place for improving standards of numeracy and little evidence of a co-ordinated approach to improving pupils' numeracy skills through the subjects of the curriculum. In most subjects, the use of numeracy is satisfactory and most subjects provide satisfactory opportunities for pupils to develop these skills further. In science, levels of numeracy are good. At Key Stage 3, for example, pupils measure distance travelled by a model car accurately. They plot line graphs with well-labelled axes and units. In the sixth-form, students' algebraic skills are good and this allows them to use the heat capacity equation and transpose the principle competently. The 'Mathematics for Scientists' lessons in Year 12 has a positive impact on the quality of learning for non-mathematicians in A-level science. In business education, sixth-form students use their numeracy skills confidently to produce a cash flow analysis and forecast profit

and loss. Pupils gain satisfactory numeracy skills, such as money management and personal budgeting, when running and using the school bank.

SCIENCE

90. The results of National Curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 3 in 1999 were in line with national averages and have improved over the last three years. The results match those of pupils in similar schools. The percentage of pupils gaining the expected level or above was in line with the national average, but the percentage of pupils gaining a higher level was well below.
91. At GCSE level, the results for double science have been well above the national average for the last three years, but there has been a downward trend in the number of pupils gaining an A*-C grade. In the 1999 GCSE examinations in double science the percentage of pupils gaining an A*-C grade was well above the national average. All pupils achieved an A*-G grade. The results for single science are well below the national average, but the percentage of pupils gaining an A*-C grade has risen over the last three years. All pupils entered for single science in 1999 gained an A*-G grade which is above the national average.
92. The department offers A-level courses in physics, chemistry and biology. The physics results have been above national expectations for the last three years, but there are few higher grades. The chemistry and biology results have fluctuated over the last three years and in 1999 both were well below the national expectations. The number of students taking A-level science courses has increased over the last three years and there are two physics groups in Year 13.
93. Pupils' attainment in lessons match that indicated by test and examination results. By the end of Key Stage 3, the standard of pupils' work is broadly average. Whilst many have good knowledge and understanding of various aspects of science, a significant proportion of pupils have difficulty in retaining such information over an extended period of time. By the end of Key Stage 3, pupils have developed good experimental and investigative skills. A group of low attainers planned and set up an experiment to show that white light was made up of more than one colour. A significant minority knew all of the colours of the spectrum, and the order in which they occurred. High attainers were comfortable with their knowledge of wavelength and understood why some colours were absorbed and others reflected. A minority could link this to photosynthesis. A group of pupils of average attainment when watching a demonstration experiment on thermal conductivity deduced that some materials could transfer heat more rapidly than others and immediately linked this with the use of aluminium or copper saucepans. There was no significant difference in the attainment of boys and girls.
94. The overall attainment of pupils at the end of Key Stage 4 is broadly in line with the national average. Pupils achieve well given their prior attainment. Attainment seen in single science lessons is sometimes better than that of examination results at the end of Key Stage 4 mainly because pupils remember work well when they have just done it, but do not have good recall over a longer period of time. By the end of Key Stage 4, high attaining pupils effectively design an experiment to test the hypothesis that the size of an exposed area of the body affects heat loss. These pupils competently tabulate results, identify anomalies and write a logical conclusion to the experiment. A group of low attaining pupils identify features or qualities in fruit and vegetables and say correctly which qualities are desirable in selective breeding. They understand how a wild species of animal might eventually be domesticated. A significant majority of the group write a readable, informative story about the benefits of selective

breeding. A group of average attainers produced a series of transparencies for an overhead projector and each sub-group gave a presentation to the rest of the group using their transparencies. They included in their presentations, how we get day and night, and natural and man-made satellites. There is no significant difference in the attainment of boys and girls.

95. Teaching is a major strength of the department and has improved since the previous inspection. Teaching methods are better involving more strategies, and generally teachers give less guidance in tasks which can be done in different ways. This stimulates the pupils to think more and develop their own line of investigation. Teaching overall is very good. It is good in Key Stage 3 and very good in Key Stage 4 and in the sixth-form where teachers teach their own specialisms. The qualifications and experience of the teaching staff contribute to effective learning. Strong features of teaching are the very good planning and regular sharing of objectives with the pupils so they know exactly what has to be done. The management of pupils is very good and contributes strongly to the very good behaviour and attitudes of the pupils in that there is mutual respect, firm ground rules and an established code of conduct. Teachers have high expectations of pupils. There is regular homework, which is a useful extension tool of classroom work. Exercise books are regularly marked, but in Key Stage 3 the quality of marking is too variable and there are not enough constructively critical comments to guide and support further improvement in pupils' work. The acquisition of skills and understanding is at least good by pupils of all prior attainment including pupils with special educational needs, but their retention of knowledge is less good, particularly in Key Stage 3. All pupils make good progress and this is particularly evident from Key Stage 3 into Key Stage 4. The quality of written work improves as does spelling. Pupils become more adept at the use of number despite the lack of a numeracy policy. They become more responsible, and relationships with their peers become strong in and out of class.
96. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress across both key stages. There are no students with special educational needs in the sixth-form science groups. In Key Stage 3 in particular, pupils with special educational needs develop manipulatory skills, improve their reading and writing, and develop confidence in speaking. Learning support assistants provide a very effective, if often unplanned, support and are pro-active in speeding up the progress of the special educational needs pupils. Individual education plans are used regularly and contain specific objectives, but fewer targets. Teachers in the special educational needs department produce enlarged science work-sheets for visually impaired pupils and this enables them to progress at the same rate as their peers. In Key Stage 4 teachers produce some extension work for pupils of very high prior attainment, but this provision needs to be more structured across both key stages.
97. Assessment procedures are good at both key stages. In Key Stage 4 pupils know which GCSE grade they are working at and are aware of departmental targets and the means by which to improve their grades. In Key Stage 3 pupils generally do not understand the ideas of levels and relate rather to percentages. Pupils should be made aware of what level they are working at and if appropriate what they have to do to reach their target level. There is a significant amount of data in the department and there is gender analysis of end of Key Stage 3 and end of Key Stage 4 results. Assessment is well used to inform planning at Key Stage 4, but this is less rigorous at Key Stage 3.
98. The department is generally well led and well managed with respect to establishing a good ethos and teamwork amongst staff and maintaining a strong commitment to improving pupils' attainment. The laboratory accommodation and resources are

good. There is some provision for monitoring and evaluation of the quality of teaching in that newly qualified teachers, new teachers and initial teacher training students have all been monitored and observed teaching. This is an improvement from the previous inspection and this good practice needs to extend across the department on a formalised and regular basis in order to tackle the few shortcomings seen in teaching and learning and to extend the best teaching more widely across the department. The departmental development plan lacks detail and does not provide a clear outline for how improvements will be brought about.

99. The provision and use of information technology has improved since the previous inspection and there is more hardware and software to support the increased use of computers. A folio of information technology work for both key stages is kept in the department and could be enhanced by annotating with levels or grades relevant to the work. The curriculum provides good breadth particularly in Key Stage 4 where single science, double science and triple science are now offered. Time allocation is adequate with the exception of insufficient time for triple science where pupils require more time in order to complete the extra scientific investigational work they need to do. Social and cultural awareness are well promoted, but there is little evidence of the development of spiritual and moral values. There are plenty of opportunities to map these into otherwise very good schemes of work. Texts have improved in number and quality since the previous inspection. The preparation rooms are too small with insufficient worktop space.

ART

100. The attainment of pupils at the end of Key Stage 3 is at least average and mainly above. Standards have been maintained since the previous inspection. Although voluntary teacher assessments are carried out at Key Stage 3, the school does not analyse the results. It is not, therefore, possible to compare these assessments with attainment observed in lessons. By the end of Key Stage 3, pupils' key artwork skills, for example composition and observational skills, are well developed. They are familiar with a range of media and are not afraid to experiment. For example, Year 8 pupils make their own brushes using natural materials in order to explore the textural qualities made by these tools. Through the teaching, there is a firm appreciation of the importance of sketchbooks and research work. For example, Year 7 homework on Kandinsky identified a good range of historical, biographical and artistic information about the artist and helped towards an understanding of his style. The use of colour for its own sake is emphasised from Year 7 and this is a foundation upon which pupils successfully build in subsequent key stages.
101. The overall attainment of pupils at the end of Key Stage 4 is above the national average. Since the time of the last inspection GCSE grades A*-C, at an average of some 71 per cent, have been consistently above average. However, they have not kept pace with the increase in the national trends and have fallen steadily since 1996 from being 18 per cent above the national average to only just over 8 per cent above in 1998 and 1999. In spite of this, pupils continue to do well in the subject and achieve higher grades in art than in other subjects taken at the same time. In the same period, pupils attaining the higher A*-A passes have averaged some 7 per cent above the national average. Attainment in lessons is in line with recent examination results. By the end of Key Stage 4, pupils have developed positive self-critical and analytical skills. In discussions with teachers, for example concerning their mock examination work, they are able to identify personal strengths and weaknesses. Consequently, they are able to successfully modify and refine work in progress.

102. The attainment of students in the sixth-form is above the national average. All candidates entered for A-level since 1996 have gained an A-E pass. Although mainly above the national average since the last inspection for grades A-B, results were below average in 1999. The school has an open access policy for the subject at A-level and a quarter of the candidates entered had not studied art at GCSE. Attainment in lessons indicates a recovery to above average standards for the students currently studying art. By the end of Year 13, students' portfolios and sketchbooks show depth and breadth in preparation and ideas work. They successfully provide themselves with a range of informed choices for final pieces. The use of photography and digital imagery, which is encouraged through the additional GCSE photography option in Year 12, is used to good effect. All sixth-form art students have access to life class work and this enhances their observational skills and work on form.
103. The quality of teaching is never less than satisfactory at any key stage. At Key Stage 3 the teaching is mainly good and sometimes very good or excellent. The quality of pupils' learning is consequently mainly good and sometimes very good. At Key Stage 4 teaching is good and learning is at least satisfactory and mainly good. In the sixth-form, teaching is mainly very good and learning is mainly good. Lessons are well planned and organised and resources properly prepared so that pupils make good use of practical artwork time. Lesson introductions and reviews are well focused on clarifying issues. The quality of advice offered on an individual basis is often very good or excellent, particularly in the sixth-form. Through effective questioning, the teaching focuses pupils on central issues and tasks in hand. Particularly at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth-form there is a positive emphasis on examination criteria. Pupils and students are consequently able to make good progress and become self-motivated. They are enabled to think through artistic problems and respond positively to the advice of their teachers. The development of creative and imaginative approaches is effectively encouraged. This is supported through the good quality of much of the pupil display work around the art rooms and in their individual portfolios. However, although some groups of pupils are more open in discussing their work on an individual basis, they can be reticent when doing so in open class debate. This is an area for further development. Pupils' attitudes towards the subject are mainly very good. High standards of behaviour in class are expected by teachers and pupils alike. Pupils show respect and value for each other's work and efforts. They value the personal knowledge and expertise of their teachers and there is a common commitment to the subject.
104. The head of department has successfully established a clear educational direction for the development of the subject which is shared by all art staff. There is good teamwork as a result of the departmental leadership. However, the role of the head of department is underdeveloped with respect to the analysis of examination results as this is currently undertaken by senior rather than departmental management. There is, for example, no effective monitoring of results by gender or specific use of analysis for curriculum development. Value added analysis is not undertaken. An annual review of the department's work is presented, as required, to senior management. However, the department has not been asked to produce a precisely targeted development programme which properly informs whole-school strategic planning. Although there is proper coverage of National Curriculum requirements at all key stages, schemes of work need to be more specifically referenced, for example to Programmes of Study at Key Stage 3, in order to check for appropriate breadth and balance.
105. Since the last inspection, whilst there have been some improvements to the art accommodation, problems relating to storage, lighting and some older furniture

persist. There is still no technician support for the subject. In this there has been insufficient improvement. Provision for the department's contribution to the information technology curriculum has improved. However, additional hardware is required if all pupils are to have proper access to computers, for example for image manipulation work. The department has recently built its own darkroom and this is enabling the effective development of photography options. Facilities for claywork have improved. However, although there is a new kiln, there is no cage around it, adequate warning lights or extraction equipment. These are urgent health and safety issues which were brought to the attention of the school. The standard of cleaning in the art rooms also needs to be improved to prevent dust problems.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

106. Attainment when pupils reach age 14 is in line with National Curriculum expectations, although pupils' skills in making products are stronger than their skills in designing. The majority of pupils demonstrate sound skills in their use of tools and materials when constructing products either in food technology or in resistant materials. Most pupils effectively brainstorm initial ideas, and work competently to produce a final design of sound quality, using information from research to modify their product design as they work on it. Pupils show due care and attention to health and safety matters and show good awareness of how they can protect themselves during practical sessions. However, during Key Stage 3, many have problems with the presentation of their work, in particular their skills in technical drawing are under developed and they are not good at annotating their graphical representations to provide explanations and commentary as to what these show. The attainment of pupils in these areas of work is improving. Over the past year modifications to the provision in Key Stage 3, such as a workbook for pupils in food technology and new design sheets with useful prompts, help pupils understand what they are expected to do. Improved assessment systems are also having a positive impact on learning.
107. Attainment at GCSE is below national averages when compared to schools nationally and similar schools. Although the 1999 results were below average overall, there was a significant improvement in the results for resistant materials. In food technology the proportion of pupils attaining a GCSE at grade A* was higher than the proportion nationally. Over the past 3 years, instability of staffing within the department has led to a lack of continuity and results have varied from year to year with low results achieved overall. Inspection evidence confirms the attainment indicated by the results of GCSE examinations and points to below average attainment by the time pupils reach Year 11. However, more stable staffing is now beginning to have a positive influence on standards of attainment which are rising at both Key Stages 3 and 4.
108. Pupils currently in Key Stage 4 have not fully benefited from the modifications to teaching and assessment that are now in place in Key Stage 3. Many in Key Stage 4 struggle when required to produce technical drawings and are not skilled enough in carrying out independent research. This has a negative impact on the quality of their final work. Most pupils, however, do gain a deeper understanding of the properties of materials and make informed choices about the solutions they intend to pursue in order to solve design problems.
109. In 1999 A-level results were overall in line with national averages at A-E. There is no design and technology course available for students this year because the take up figure was low and the class not viable.
110. Pupils make good use of information technology skills developed in Year 7 in word processing and spreadsheets. Many use home computers to present their work in

neat attractive folders. The department does not however deliver computer control and modelling which is part of the National Curriculum for design and technology, because of the lack of appropriate equipment. Hence statutory requirements are not fully met. Information technology is an area the department has identified for future development.

111. The quality of teaching in the department is good overall with an element of unsatisfactory teaching. Teachers have effective expertise in their specialism and this is well used to provide pupils with a good grounding in skills and techniques across food technology and resistant materials. However, teaching pupils how to evaluate the quality of products is weak at Key Stage 3. It improves in Key Stage 4 with the help of guidance notes and exemplar work provided by the examination board. Time is well used, for example most teachers give pupils a specific amount of time to complete a given task. This strategy effectively maintains pupils' pace of work and interest in the lesson. A wide range of well-chosen resources, both commercial and school-produced is available for lessons, including appropriate books from the library. These meet the needs of pupils well and help to improve their standard of work. In a small proportion of food practicals where more able pupils finished their work early there was limited prepared work to keep them gainfully employed and extend their learning. A variety of good teaching methods are used in the department. Good use is made of videos and techniques such as quizzes and group discussions to consolidate learning. One major difference between Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 is the lack of a framework guide in Key Stage 3. Although teachers use National Curriculum levels in planning there is no guidance for pupils which explains the quality of work expected at each level and which they could use to identify for themselves what they need to do in order to reach a higher level. At GCSE the examination board criteria provides that framework.
112. Pupil management is good and attention to lower ability pupils is effective. Good planned work is completed with the learning support assistants. The department makes good use of wall displays to support learning but the profile of design and technology in the wider school is limited, missing the opportunity to develop wider interest and understanding of the subject.
113. Satisfactory improvement has taken place since the previous inspection but development planning lacks structure. Limited use of comparative data misses opportunities to highlight targets for specific pupils. Members of the department now work more closely together and there is a settled team of teachers. These factors are having a positive influence on the spirit and cohesiveness of the department. Teachers see themselves as one unit despite the geographical spread of their rooms. Increasingly joint work is helping to develop good schemes and procedures within the department although there is no monitoring of policies and teaching. Staff have considered and acted on issues such as the lack of structured progression and this is now in place and there are improvements to the teaching of design. Issues that remain from the last report include technical support, which is still inadequate, the lack of computer-aided design and manufacture and the limited range of resistant materials available. These all continue to restrict the progress pupils are making. In Key Stage 4, the school does not make use of analysis of results by gender but in the work seen the standard of presentation and designing by boys has started to catch up with the standards of the girls, which is an improvement from Key Stage 3.
114. There are a number of weaknesses in curricular provision and assessment of pupils. Curriculum time at Key Stage 3 is very limited and significantly lower than in schools nationally. For a number of able pupils this is drastically reduced in Years 8 and 9 when some of their technology time is used for studying Latin. Furthermore, in Key

Stage 4, not all pupils are required by the school to take design and technology, or a suitable vocational alternative, hence, breaching legal requirements. Whilst there is some good assessment practice, procedures and use of assessment at Key Stage 3 are unsatisfactory. Exemplar work from high-grade candidates plus the examination marking criteria is guiding pupils at Key Stage 4 to see where their work needs to improve and how they can help to raise their standards. However, the lack of moderated marking across the subject leads to the erratic results that have been occurring over the last three years.

115. Some rooms in the department are cramped and hamper ease of movement around the rooms for pupils. This impedes independent learning. Dust extraction problems restrict the comfort and effectiveness of the working conditions and pose a health and safety risk to staff and pupils.

GEOGRAPHY

116. Overall attainment of pupils by the end of Key Stage 3 is just below national expectations. Higher attaining pupils, however, achieve above the national expectation for pupils in maintained schools. These pupils in particular display satisfactory mapping, graphical and diagrammatic skills. They use six-figure grid references confidently, understand scale and direction on maps and construct accurate climate graphs. The quality of learning and understanding of many other pupils is hindered by weaker literacy skills and difficulty retaining and recalling knowledge over time. Most pupils are developing independent learning skills and practical field study techniques. There was limited evidence of the use of information technology skills in lessons or in pupils' work. By the end of the key stage, higher attaining pupils have at least a satisfactory knowledge of the water cycle, river processes and landforms, factors influencing industrial location as well as issues associated with world economic growth in countries at different stages of development. Most understand the relationships between physical and economic geography. Pupils with special educational needs make at least satisfactory progress; good gains in learning take place when they are supported by learning assistants and where the tasks sets are planned with their particular needs in mind. Pupils with visual and hearing impairment needs make good progress and are well supported.
117. By the end of Key Stage 4, attainment in lessons and in books is in line with the national average for higher A*-C grades and above for overall A*-G grades. In 1997, GCSE grades were above the national average but they were below in relation to higher grades in 1998 and 1999. Observations of work in lessons and in pupils' books in the current Year 11, indicates an improvement in standards over the last two years. The performance of boys and girls has varied considerably across the last three years. Overall, pupils have a satisfactory knowledge and understanding of the advantages and problems arising from tourism in both less and more economically developed countries. They also understand the hydrological cycle and the nature of both renewable and non-renewable energy sources. As in Key Stage 3, pupils on the special needs register and those with visual and hearing needs are making good progress in learning skills and gaining knowledge and understanding of the topics covered; they are well supported by class teachers and special needs assistants
118. Attainment by the end of the A-level course is at least in line with the average nationally and with syllabus requirements. Most students have developed sound skills including note taking, information gathering, analysis of data and decision-making in relation to geographical case studies and associated issues. Most students have a satisfactory knowledge of slope development, erosion and

depositional processes and landforms and the factors influencing the development of the mass tourist industry. Standards at A-level need to be judged in relation to the fact that many students start from a C grade standard at GCSE. Learning across the course has been good as a result of positive and hard-working attitudes from the students combined with good teaching.

119. Teaching is entirely satisfactory with a half of the lessons observed good or very good. Teachers prepare lessons carefully, ensuring that subject matter meets the needs of all pupils. In the good and very good lessons in particular, learning is assisted by the use of an effective range of learning strategies and by careful explanations of geographical processes. A good example of very good practice was observed in a lesson on the classification of occupations in countries at different stages of economic development. Appropriate emphasis is placed upon the development of mapping and atlas skills. Teachers' knowledge is secure and a suitable range of resources and up to date information is used in lessons to interest pupils and enhance learning. The aims of lessons are shared effectively with pupils. Classroom management is friendly yet firm. In the very good lessons teachers are lively and motivating in their approach, engaging pupils' interest and stimulating learning. Good examples were seen in lessons on river processes, and in sixth-form teaching. While no unsatisfactory teaching was observed, in a very small percentage of satisfactory lessons, there is an element of over direction by the teacher and sometimes the momentum and pace is rather slow. In most lessons, however, expectations are appropriate and pupils are required to use geographical skills and appropriate language. Marking is carried out regularly but the quality and amount of helpful comments and targets to help pupils to raise the standard of their work varies considerably between teachers.
120. The department is well organised. Subject policies and procedures are fully documented in a practical and useful subject handbook. The scheme of work meets National Curriculum requirements but the learning objectives identified are very brief. An annual review of the work of the department has identified areas for development, as is required by school policy, but no focused subject plan has been prepared, outlining strategies for development and identifying in-service needs and costs. Monitoring of teaching and learning is limited. The development of pupils' information technology skills, as an aid to learning geography, is largely limited to information gathering and word processing. The provision of a very good range of field study opportunities has a significant influence on the development of skills and knowledge. The department makes a satisfactory input into pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development in an implicit rather than identified and planned way.
121. Since the last inspection little progress has been made in the processes of wider development planning with targets for longer-term development. Similarly little progress has been made in linking assessment to National Curriculum levels across Key Stage 3. An improvement in the quality of teaching has taken place since 1996 and pupils are now given the opportunity to develop research skills. The range of teaching strategies has also widened.

HISTORY

122. Examination results at GCSE fluctuated between 1997 and 1999. Results have been significantly below national averages over the last few years. Although there was a marked improvement in 1999 in the proportion of pupils gaining a GCSE grade A*-C, the overall results remained below average. A-level results also improved in 1999 from previous years although they were below average.

123. Pupils' attainment in lessons and from examination of their work is judged to be in line with national expectations by the end of both Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4. The improvement since the 1999 GCSE examinations in Key Stage 4 is due to the work done by the department in improving its provision, including teaching, with the help of an outside consultant. Standards at A-level are below average and reflect the examination results. However, attainment at A-level reflects the wide range of prior attainment of pupils.
124. Pupils' written work shows sound understanding of the main features of periods studied and a satisfactory development of historical skills. By the end of Key Stage 3 pupils are able to recall effectively what they have learned before, for example in a Year 8 lesson where able pupils showed good factual knowledge of religious changes in the Tudor period, and in a Year 9 lesson where less able pupils talked knowledgeably about the alliance system in 1914. By the end of Key Stage 4, pupils refer confidently to complex historical issues, for example in the Year 11 GCSE course on Northern Ireland. At A-level, pupils expressed mature understanding of wider historical concepts, for example in a Year 12 lesson on post-1815 Europe with reference to the repression of liberalism and the legitimacy of the monarchical system.
125. The quality of teaching is good overall. Staff work collaboratively in the production of teaching materials. All lessons seen were good or better. Teachers' knowledge is secure and lessons are well planned. Particular examples were seen in a Year 9 lesson where pupils evaluated plans for war in 1914 and in a Year 10 lesson where pupils explored attitudes held by sixteenth-century medical students. Pupils' prior learning is reinforced at the start of many lessons and teachers contribute to the development of literacy skills through writing frames, bullet point notes, and essay writing skills at A-level and clear reference to historical vocabulary. However, there were few examples seen of extended writing by pupils in Key Stage 3. The quality of teaching contributes positively to pupils' learning and particularly to their understanding of events and chronology. Teachers develop pupils' use of historical evidence satisfactorily although there was relatively little work seen on the interpretation of sources or events. Pupils' learning is supported by their positive attitude to the subject. Behaviour is very good, as is concentration during lessons and perseverance with written tasks. Overall, progress is satisfactory. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress; more able pupils would benefit from a wider range of strategies to enhance their progress.
126. The department contributes positively to the spiritual, moral and cultural development of pupils through its programme of educational visits, Remembrance Day Assembly and curricular topics such as the Holocaust and Slavery. There is scope for the department to analyse its curricular plans more systematically to identify further opportunities for raising pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness through the study of history. Further consideration should be given to the use of pupil data to establish a clearer link between assessment and teaching strategies and to reporting to parents what pupils know, understand and can do. Monitoring of staff is unsystematic and this restricts the opportunities for professional dialogue and further development of teaching and learning.
127. Progress since the last inspection includes sound documentation of curricular planning, with clear reference to learning outcomes for pupils, and a good range of departmental policies. Information technology has developed in Year 7 and in Key Stage 4 but it is not yet fully incorporated into departmental planning.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

128. Standards are improving but are still too low by the end of both key stages. Despite the good overall teaching in information technology as a specialist subject and the effective grounding pupils receive in Year 7 information technology lessons, planning the overall delivery of the curriculum through other subjects is poor. Statutory requirements are not met and there is insufficient use of information technology in subjects of the curriculum. As a result, pupils make unsatisfactory progress and their achievement is below that expected by the end of Key Stages 3 and 4.
129. Although the 1999 GCSE results were well below average, they showed a dramatic increase from 1998, when no pupils attained a grade A*-C, whilst almost a third did so in 1999. However, pupils still did less well in the 1999 GCSE examination than in their other subjects. Standards of work seen during the inspection were higher and indicate continuing improvement in pupils' attainment for those taking the GCSE course. This is largely due to the improvements in provision brought about by the co-ordinator who has been in post for barely a year. Pupils following the GCSE course work well to consolidate their skills with a range of programs such as spreadsheets and databases, but some have difficulties with analysing problems and evaluating their work.
130. The significant proportion of pupils who do not opt to follow the GCSE course have very limited planned opportunities to develop information technology skills and the standards of their work are below average. By the end of Key Stage 4, most are competent in using word-processors to record and present their work, but their attainment in the use of other computer applications is more varied. In science, effective data logging and use of spreadsheets to record information from experiments enhances pupils' skills in these areas. Some digital imaging in art helps them to understand the potential for the creative use of information technology. Individual pupils reach quite high standards through the work they do on computers at home and there are some good examples of effective use of information technology to complete coursework in subjects such as science and technology. Overall, however, pupils' level of competence is lower than it should be.
131. Pupils with special needs make sound progress when using information technology for specific purposes. They are motivated by the use of the computer and use it effectively to improve their presentation and accuracy of spelling. This naturally boosts their self-esteem.
132. Sixth-form attainment in specialist information technology courses, such as the National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) in information technology exceeds expectations. The use of relevant and realistic tasks enhances the progress sixth-form students make and the standards of work they reach. For example, those involved in a purposeful NVQ task where they were linking with primary schools and the Post Office to research and design a mathematics game demonstrated a good grasp of the problem. Some sixth-form students demonstrate a high level of skill, for example, a pupil recently won an award for developing the school web site.
133. The quality of teaching in specialist information technology is good overall with elements of very good teaching. As a result of this good teaching, pupils in Year 7 make rapid gains in developing their knowledge and skill in word-processing and use of spreadsheets, databases and desktop publishing as well as beginning to understand the impact of technology on people's daily lives. Pupils who opt for GCSE in Key Stage 4 also benefit from this good teaching and make good progress. This is an improvement on the previous inspection. Purposeful and well-structured activities

enable pupils to be well focused on their learning and to forge ahead at a good pace. For example, in a Year 7 lesson, pupils created and developed a time line to support their work in history. The teaching by information technology specialists demonstrates flair and enthusiasm, and this inspires the pupils to succeed in the tasks they are set and to enjoy their work.

134. Lessons are well planned. They have clear objectives and teaching methods are interactive and involve the pupils actively so raising their standards of work. Teachers use debate, discussion, and question and answer techniques that probe pupils' understanding well. Homework is relevant and extends pupils' learning effectively. Discipline is good. Pupils are aware of the importance of self-discipline when working with computers and apply themselves well to their work. Teachers encourage independent learning, giving the opportunity for able pupils to move forward more quickly. Lower attaining pupils are considered carefully in planning and effective provision is made to support and extend their skills through discussions and demonstrations by the teacher. These factors lead to good quality learning in lessons with pupils willingly helping one another and collaborating effectively. However, some pupils in Key Stage 4 have difficulty managing their time when working on extended projects.
135. Lack of planned provision in Years 8 and 9, either through a taught course or through the planned use of computers within other subjects, means that pupils who go onto a GCSE course in Key Stage 4 do not have good enough grounding to meet the demands of the course. In addition, most departments are not meeting their statutory requirement to teach information technology in Key Stages 3 or 4, although there is good practice in areas such as science where the department make good use of data logging to record and measure experimental outcomes. Procedures for assessing pupils' work are unsatisfactory and there is no method for tracking the progress pupils are making in the use of information technology in subjects. Assessment practice within the department is inconsistent. Self-assessment is used well in discussions between pupils and teachers, particularly at Key Stage 4. However, work is not graded to allow pupils to see how much they need to improve, although there are informative comments to help clarify and reinforce understanding. Lack of guidance notes or exemplar work annotated with comments means that teachers and pupils do not have useful models to work from. Pupils are unaware of the levels at which they are working and therefore are unaware of what they need to do to improve. Nor do they keep a personal record of skills they gain from school or home to enable them to see what they need to do to maintain or improve their skills or for teachers to assess their progress. Pupils' competence in information technology is not reported to parents at the end of Year 11 as required by law.
136. Management of the use of information technology is unsatisfactory. The co-ordinator has limited non-contact time with classes and so is unable to monitor and evaluate the quality of work within the department. There is no cross-curricular team to support the development of computer work in all subjects. The lack of a computer technician to maintain the equipment and manage the network places an undue burden on the co-ordinator and detracts from his role in developing the use of computers across the school. The development plan is soundly structured and provides an effective tool to improve the school's information technology provision. It now needs to be implemented urgently to move the school forward. Whilst the school has made some progress in improving information technology provision and standards of work since the previous inspection, the progress made has been too little. Most of the issues identified in the last report have yet to be tackled effectively.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

137. The attainment of pupils in French is above average at the end of Key Stage 3. The results of teacher assessments, as reported verbally by the head of department, reflect pupils' attainment in lessons. Pupils' attainment in the most challenging lessons is higher than average, and in the rest, most pupils work at levels appropriate for their age. All pupils start a second language, German or Spanish, in Year 8 but have less time to study it, so their attainment is slightly lower than average at the end of the key stage. Most pupils can follow lessons delivered in the foreign languages and read texts ranging from brief captions to simple summaries of scientific data. By the end of the key stage, the more able linguists are adept in using tenses referring to the past and the future. Most pupils can write short descriptive passages, and talk briefly about their families, interests and daily lives. Some send informal letters abroad using e-mail. As well as acquiring the vocabulary relating to topics such as clothing, pets and food, a large minority gains good knowledge of French, German and Spanish grammar.
138. The overall attainment of pupils in French at the end of Key Stage 4 has risen since the last inspection, and is only slightly below the national average. In 1999, girls' and boys' results at grades A*-C, from a large entry, rose to just below average compared with all schools. In German, the small numbers of pupils entering for GCSE gained lower grades than in previous years, although results in the A*-C range remained above average compared with all schools. All pupils entering for French and German gained grades A*-G. As in Key Stage 3, girls' attainment was higher than that of boys. Attainment in lessons matches the most recent examination results in German, and is better in French. Attainment in Spanish classes is satisfactory, and pupils work independently on various tasks exercising different skills. In all three languages, pupils converse naturally with their partners, teachers or the foreign language assistants. Most can express their ideas and opinions clearly in speech and writing, although some have poor levels of accuracy. Higher attainers use more complex structures, giving added detail to their descriptions. Lower attaining pupils, including some with special educational needs, speak and write more simply as they work through topics related to living and travel abroad.
139. As in recent years, the small numbers entering for French and German at A-level in 1999 gained grades lower than average, and few attained the higher grades A-B. In lessons, students can talk or write discursively on a range of contemporary issues such as the environment and healthy living. They base their arguments on research, using authentic texts, television programmes and the Internet. Most discussions and essays are lively, well prepared and imaginative, but a minority of students lack the fluency, breadth of vocabulary or grammatical accuracy needed to gain good grades.
140. The quality of teaching is always at least satisfactory. Most lessons in all key stages are good and a minority of these is very good. Teachers speak the foreign languages fluently and clearly, either at a challenging or an accessible level, to suit their pupils' age and abilities. The three foreign language assistants and support staff contribute to the presentation and effectiveness of many lessons. Only occasionally is teaching predictable and based on exercises from textbooks and worksheets. Most lessons are planned to include practical activities such as group presentations on education, a survey of household pets or a café simulation. The department makes regular use of audio-visual resources, and pupils appreciate opportunities to learn independently, using their own textbooks or by handling materials and equipment. Pupils with special educational needs are integrated into classes and benefit from specially designed materials and extra resources including worksheets in large print and transmitters.

141. Relations between teachers and pupils are particularly good and classrooms are usually busy and productive. In Key Stage 3, boys and girls are keen to join in presentations about food, clothing and household chores and work responsibly, in groups and pairs. Older pupils are mostly mature, co-operative and purposeful, and lower attainers sometimes learn from their more accomplished classmates in lessons dealing with topics such as regional features or teenage problems. Teachers use regular tests and continuous informal monitoring to assess and record their pupils' progress. Their marking is thorough and supported by encouraging remarks, but they do not always inform pupils how they can improve.
142. The department is well managed on a day-to-day basis and responsibilities are equitably shared. Teachers are discursive, buoyant and purposeful. They have worked hard to improve the quality and variety of both teaching and curriculum, providing opportunities for foreign travel and exchanges, as well as including international students in their work. Pupils mostly achieve better in French and German than in other subjects, although suitable strategies are required to raise the achievement of boys. Monitoring and evaluating the quality of the work of the department, including teaching, is not done formally, and this could be improved. The department needs to consider the ways in which it can pool its best practice, including computer skills, in order to enhance the overall provision. Departmental development planning is not rigorous enough. The process of assessment does not involve pupils and parents more fully in setting individual targets. The departmental policy on setting targets is inconsistently implemented.

MUSIC

143. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is well below expected standards in composing and performing. Many pupils in Year 9 are unable to compose effectively without substantial input from their teacher on a one-to-one basis. Few are confident singers or keyboard players, the exceptions being those who have extra-curricular instrumental tuition. Listening and appraising are a little stronger, for example Year 7 pupils can suggest improvements to their own work, but listening and appraising are hindered by the small classrooms and large numbers of keyboards all playing at once. Pupils cannot hear what they are playing against the noise of the other students.
144. The number of pupils taking GCSE in recent years is too small to make statistically valid comparisons with national averages but the majority of candidates have obtained an A*-C grade. Students in the current Key Stage 4 are, overall, meeting national expectations, but with wide variation. Pupils' appraisal suffers from lack of confidence. Composing is a little stronger, pupils understand what is required and about half can do it to expectation, drawing effectively on the rhythmic backings and different voices which they can generate through electronic keyboards. Weaker pupils are hampered in composing by limited performing skills, they cannot play the notes accurately. A minority of pupils are stronger at performing, particularly those who have extra-curricular tuition.
145. A-level numbers are too small to compare with national figures, but all recent candidates have obtained a pass grade. Current Year 13 is at expectation for their age. They can apply their knowledge of musical history, for example drawing on their knowledge of music of the Impressionists to help them complete an aural test on an Impressionist piece, identifying such features as whole-tone and pentatonic scales. Their solo performing is satisfactory and they respond well to an audience, especially when playing with the skilled accompaniment which the department can provide.

146. Teaching is, overall, just satisfactory, but the majority of teaching in Key Stage 3 is unsatisfactory or poor. This was a weakness at the last inspection. Lessons are not planned in sufficient detail, time is wasted by pupils because they are unclear about what they have to do. Their understanding is not assessed at the start of every lesson, so for example in Year 9 they are asked to compose 12-bar Blues but few understand what a chord is or how to construct one, so they lack the basic understanding to create the music. Class singing is poor because pupils are not actively taught the melodies but are expected to sing along until they get it right. Also there is unequal treatment of pupils when boys are disciplined for shouting out, but girls are not. In Key Stage 3 the large majority of pupils are not motivated to learn. They are not badly behaved, just not consistently working because they don't have the skills to do the work and don't really know what they are supposed to be doing. A small minority of higher musical attainers persevere with more determination because they already have adequate basic skills. These pupils are also willing to help their friends.
147. Teaching in Key Stage 4 and the sixth-form is at least satisfactory and sometimes good. Students' understanding is more often assessed at the start of lessons and with smaller numbers pupils are very well known to staff. Different work is set for different groups, for example different listening examples used in Year 11, so that weaker pupils can still attempt the work and succeed. Questioning is often good, helping pupils to focus their answers and extend them. They are also helped to learn by clear explanations which show teachers' own thorough knowledge of the subject. However, the pace of lessons is not consistently brisk. Marking in Key Stage 4 is helpful in identifying ways for pupils to improve their composing and performing, but not quite so helpful in specific guidance on how to achieve these improvements. Comparatively small numbers of pupils elect to take music for GCSE but a little cohort of keen pupils respond well to the enthusiasm of staff. Many of them also belong to extra-curricular groups.
148. In the sixth-form even smaller numbers mean students get much individual support to tackle specific weaknesses, for example when problems encountered in a previous lesson or with exam work are used as the starting point for new work. Relationships with staff are particularly good in the sixth-form where musical skills are shared in ensemble work.
149. The Key Stage 3 curriculum is inadequate. Schemes of work are not planned in sufficient detail, there are no clear links from the list of things to be studied to outcomes in terms of what pupils will know, understand, and be able to do by the end of the key stage. As at the last inspection, pupils are not doing enough performing and composing, resulting in low standards in both. Moreover, there is no systematic assessment of pupils to criteria linked to the National Curriculum, so judgements about pupils' attainment are not secure and teachers cannot be certain that all pupils are making the maximum progress of which they are capable. The Key Stage 4 curriculum is satisfactory, focused on GCSE requirements, however the styles of pieces performed, particularly singing, are all very similar, a weakness identified by the last inspection. There is no specific planning to meet the needs of pupils with special educational needs. In class they are given some support but there are not enough support staff to help weaker pupils.
150. There is good provision of extra-curricular chamber music groups. However, comparatively few pupils attend, it is often the same faces at most of the groups. Pupils have opportunities to perform in local venues such as Harbledown Church and the cathedral, and also in combined events with three other local secondary schools, which gives the opportunity for the better orchestral players to perform with others of

similar ability. This is good provision for the talented musicians. The department makes a good contribution to pupils' spiritual development through singing and composing hymns and spiritual songs.

151. Day-to-day management of the department is sound but long-term planning is unsatisfactory. There is no consistent monitoring and evaluation of teaching and no clear planning of professional development linked to the department's and the school's development plans. There is no long-term vision of how the department should be working to raise the attainment of all pupils. The department is capably supported by its technician, who is well qualified both technically and musically, and assists Key Stage 4 musicians to use equipment such as the 4-track recorder.
152. Since the last inspection there has been some improvement in accommodation but the new rooms, though warmer, are still too small for practical work. Also the noise of many performers, all playing keyboard at once, combined with a lack of headphones, leads to poor aural focus. This makes it hard for even the best pupils to hear the music they are trying to compose. There has also been improved provision of resources such as keyboards, but there are not enough computers, which means the weaker players/composers in Key Stage 4 have no access to composing software to help them raise their standards.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

153. GCSE results in 1999 were well below the national average at grades A*-C compared to all schools. Results at A*-G were above the national average. The relative performance of pupils was just lower than the same pupils achieved in other subjects. Results have steadily improved since the introduction of the course in 1995.
154. Attainment by the majority of the pupils at the end of Key Stage 3 is below the national expectations. A minority is in line with these expectations. These pupils are able to refine existing skills and apply them to new situations. In gymnastics they perform complex sequences that are imaginative and exciting to watch on the floor and apparatus. In football, many of the boys have a good grasp of the basic skills and are able to apply strategies and tactics in a competitive game. They understand the importance of teamwork and have good levels of fitness in cross-country. They are motivated by good teaching and have a clear respect for the expected code of behaviour. The low attainment of the majority of the pupils is seen in lessons that are uninspiring and lack discipline. The pupils have little inclination to work hard and to refine their skills. In hockey, for example, they often use the reverse side of the stick and have little idea of positional play. In gymnastics they work with a slap dash attitude and are unable to link a sequence of moves with extension or clarity of body shape. The pupils' evaluative skills are not sufficiently developed.
155. Attainment by the majority of the pupils at the end of Key Stage 4 is below the national expectations. A significant minority is in line with these expectations. These pupils show increasingly refined techniques in activities and their performance is more consistent and effective. In basketball, for example, the pupils are able to shield the ball whilst dribbling and can outwit their opponent with disguise and speed of movement. They use appropriate strategies and tactics with confidence. As in Key Stage 3, the lower attainment of the pupils is directly linked to poor teaching and lack of self-discipline. Their performance is unrefined and their coaching and officiating skills are not sufficiently developed. Attainment by the majority studying GCSE is below average relative to examination requirements. A significant minority is average. These pupils mostly have a satisfactory depth of knowledge but are generally not confident in the use of technical language. A few higher attaining pupils present

written work that is well structured with careful analysis. Homework assignments do not encourage the level of independent research that could be expected. The majority of pupils have limited subject knowledge and their notes and homework are often incomplete. Most pupils do not have a good understanding of the syllabus requirements and find it difficult to link practical and theoretical concepts. Practical work for the majority is average with a significant minority above average. The boys' rugby skills are a strength. A minority is below average in their practical activities. They have poor co-ordination and find it difficult to apply and understand strategies.

156. The attainment of the students in the sixth-form is average. The programme is recreational and in addition students have the opportunity to follow the well-organised Community Sports Leader Award. These students have the necessary organisational and coaching skills for this course. A few show exceptional leadership qualities and have confidence in their own ability.
157. The quality of teaching is mixed. The majority is satisfactory with a minority of good teaching. There is a small minority of very good and excellent teaching. However there is a significant minority of teaching that is unsatisfactory and poor. This wide range reflects the variations in attainment, progress in learning and attitudes of the pupils at both key stages. The best progress occurs in lessons that are stimulating, have a range of tasks that meets all ranges of ability within the class and where the pupils respect the teacher. A good example of this was seen in a Year 8 gymnastics lesson. The task set was challenging, allowing the pupils to be creative and adventurous. The opportunities given to evaluate and criticise each other's work resulted in immediate progress in the quality of their performance. The large number of pupils with special educational needs made equally good strides and all pupils adhered to the teacher's well-established code of conduct. The teachers mostly have satisfactory subject knowledge, but some lack the planning skills required to develop tasks logically and too readily accept a quality of work that is mediocre. Acceptance of poor behaviour occurs too often and little progress is made in these lessons. There are a number of pupils who too readily behave in an unacceptable manner and prevent other members of the class working to the best of their ability. Other teachers have high expectations of all pupils and continually encourage them to strive for better performance appropriately related to their ability. The inclusion of tasks to develop evaluative skills is not yet consistent between teachers and opportunities are lost to develop the observational and coaching skills of those few pupils who are unable to physically take part in the lesson. Staff supporting individual pupils are well informed of the content and aims of the lesson and make valuable contributions to their pupils' learning. Analysis of former results and a review of teaching techniques has recently led to improved practical performance for those pupils taking GCSE. Pupils are able to see the results of frequent assessment, measure their progress and take a pride in their achievement. This monitoring of teaching is not sufficiently rigorous throughout the department to ensure a greater consistency in the delivery of the curriculum. Marking of GCSE theoretical work is mostly constructive, but the department does not have a policy that ensures a standardised system between teachers.
158. There is a high participation rate in the good extra-curricular programme. Pupils are able to further their interests, foster teamwork and have success representing their houses and the school in a variety of sports. The extra-curricular programme is well supported by other male members of staff, but there is little extra help for the girls' teams. Links forged with local clubs and organisations also encourage pupils to participate in community activities. Examination pupils take responsibility for organising clubs, officiating at matches and helping in lessons.

159. Leadership of the department has ensured that there have been significant improvements since the previous inspection in creating a structure from which to deliver the National Curriculum. The schemes of work and departmental policies are now comprehensive and act as a good reference point. The introduction of GCSE and the Community Sports Leader Award have added depth to the Programme of Study and there has been an improvement in some of the teaching. However there has been unsatisfactory progress in a number of areas. The department still does not have a development plan that clearly focuses on strategies for improvement or a secure system that monitors its progress. The current assessment and reporting procedures are not related to curriculum targets and do not specifically record what the pupils can and cannot do. Target setting is not consistent or mentioned in reports to parents. A significant proportion of teaching is unsatisfactory and many pupils have levels of attainment that are below the national expectations. The quality of teaching and standards of work are areas in which the department's performance has deteriorated since the previous inspection. There has been insufficient support for staff development in areas of management and delivery of GCSE. The gymnasium floor is in a poor state of repair and there is no indoor space that is large enough for the effective teaching of games such as basketball or badminton.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

160. At the last inspection, religious education was the subject of a separate, denominational report. There are, therefore, no comparable judgements concerning standards. As a former grant maintained school, and resulting from its foundation status, it is currently subject to the transition arrangements provided by the 1998 Education Act. Comparisons of standards against the locally agreed syllabus are, consequently, not yet possible. A new locally agreed syllabus is currently under development and the school will formally adopt this from September 2000. The school meets statutory requirements for the provision of religious education for all pupils. Provision in the sixth-form is through a proper programme of conferences. Although the documentation for these conferences, and discussions with staff and pupils, indicates they are of high quality, there were none taking place at the time of the inspection.
161. The attainment of pupils at the end of Key Stage 3 is mainly in line with the expectations of the school's chosen syllabus. By the end of Key Stage 3, pupils give proper consideration to moral issues. For example, in relation to wealth in Britain and developing countries, they can properly debate issues concerning modern charity fund-raising as an 'industry'. Pupils know, for example, about relevant 'rites of passage' ceremonies such as Confirmation for Christians and Bar/Bat Mitzvah for Jews. In keeping with the school's denominational status, the emphasis of the chosen syllabus is mainly Judaeo-Christian in nature. Pupils are given a very good grounding in Christianity as a living religion. However, in all year groups, their understanding of other faiths within contemporary British society is more theoretical and factual. Pupils need to be given more opportunity to appreciate the beliefs and values of other faiths on a more 'human' level to prepare them for the challenges of a multi-faith society. This was a whole-school issue at the last inspection in respect of the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
162. The overall attainment of pupils at the end of Key Stage 4 is mainly in line and sometimes above expectations in lessons. This is higher than recent examination results. All pupils now take the short GCSE course for religious education. In 1999, the first year of entry, just over 38 per cent gained an A*-C pass. Whilst this was below the national average, the entry of all pupils represents the commitment of the department to the development of religious education as an examination subject.

Standards in the short course examination are affected by the rotation system of religious education with personal and social education. This leads to issues of continuity for the course and consequent retention of knowledge by the pupils. This also affects the quality of learning over the key stage. Since the last inspection there has been a decline in the entry numbers for the full GCSE course. No additional curriculum time is currently available for this. In 1999 three pupils opted to take extra lessons in their own time in order to enter the full examination. Two gained an A*-C pass; one pupil gained a higher A* pass. By the end of Key Stage 4, pupils can, for example, effectively support personal opinions concerning world hunger and food supply with thoughtful arguments. In a Year 10 lesson, this was brought to life for the class through the experiences of one pupil who had been on a school trip to India. Year 11 pupils are developing an awareness of potential sexism in religion when discussing doctrinal perceptions of male/female roles and the arguments for and against women priests.

163. In the sixth-form, attainment is mainly above expectations in lessons. Very few pupils have been entered for A-level religious education since the last inspection. National comparisons are not, therefore, statistically significant. Although all have gained a pass, none have gained a benchmark A-B grade. Some individual students currently taking the A-level courses are showing the potential for a higher grade pass. This is supported by some of the essay work in student folders, for example on Jesus' claim to be Yahweh (God). Note taking also shows sustained development over Years 12 to 13. In the ethics course, for example, students are developing a good understanding of Christian and Islamic approaches to punishment from both social and religious perspectives. When studying St. John's Gospel, they are properly aware of the problems of dating and validating sources when discussing issues of authorship.
164. The quality of teaching at Key Stage 3 is at least satisfactory and often good and supports the quality of learning which is mainly satisfactory and sometimes good. At Key Stage 4, teaching is good. The quality of learning is mainly good in lessons but satisfactory overall due to the problems of continuity relating to the short course. In the sixth-form teaching is mainly very good and sometimes excellent and leads to good learning outcomes and opportunities for the students. At all key stages there are well-focused introductions to lessons. Teachers communicate well, have a direct teaching approach and maintain the pupils' attention. Debate is encouraged, often through excellent questioning techniques, particularly in the sixth-form. In a minority of lessons, particularly at Key Stage 3, there can be a tendency to give pupils information and some opportunities for discussion are consequently lost. However, the teaching approach enables good opportunity for pupils in all year groups to reflect on moral, ethical and religious issues and the subject makes a very good contribution to the pupils' spiritual development. Learning opportunities in religious education are always positive. Pupils are personally interested in what the subject has to offer.
165. The department is effectively led by an able and perceptive head of department supported by well-qualified staff. There is a clear vision for the subject's development and planning is well on course for the implementation of the new locally agreed syllabus. The work of the department is successful in reflecting the aims, values and ethos of the school. However, as yet, the department makes little contribution to the use of new technology apart from word processing and individual student internet research. Opportunities need to be specifically built in to the developing curriculum. The middle management role and responsibility of the head of department needs to be developed by senior management. In particular, the analysis of performance data and formal departmental development planning to inform whole-school strategic planning are weaknesses which need to be tackled.