

INSPECTION REPORT

EVESHAM HIGH SCHOOL

Evesham, Worcestershire

LEA area: Worcestershire

Unique reference number: 116932

Headteacher: Mr David Kelly

Reporting inspector: Mr George Knights
3268

Dates of inspection: 12th – 15th March 2001

Inspection number: 187709

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 13 to 18

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Four Pools Road
Evesham
Worcestershire

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Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mrs Frances Smith

Date of previous inspection: April 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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3268	George Knights	Registered inspector		What sort of school is it? How high are standards? How well are pupils and students taught? How well is the school led and managed? What sort of school is it?
10173	Catherine Hinds	Lay inspector		How high are standards? (Attitudes, values and personal development/attendance) How well does the school care for its pupils and students? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
7084	Jack Haslam	Team inspector	Information and communication technology Design and technology	
11584	David Lee	Team inspector	Mathematics	
4787	Sanchia Pearse	Team inspector	English EAL	
30596	Jack Brown	Team inspector	Science	
12110	Roger Bailess	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	How good are curricular and other opportunities?
3534	Ann Braithwaite	Team inspector	Physical education	
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Evesham High School is a mixed comprehensive school for students aged 13 to 18 years. There are 806 students on roll, making the school smaller than the average for comprehensive schools. The school is situated in the south east of the town of Evesham in Worcestershire. The school serves the south and east of the town and the surrounding villages. Over 95 per cent of pupils come from two main partner middle schools, who in turn draw pupils from 9 partner primary schools. Numbers in the school have risen slightly in recent years, but overall the school is under-subscribed. Students come from a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds. Employment levels are close to the national average, though with significant seasonal and casual labour. The number of students eligible for free school meals is below the national average.

For several years, the attainment of students on entry to the school has been close to the national average, though the number entering the school with attainment well above average is relatively low. The number of students from ethnic minority backgrounds or with English as an additional language is very low. The number of students on the register of special educational needs and the number with statements of special educational need are both above the national average, reflecting the fact that the school provides support for a significant number of pupils with dyslexia. Around 75 per cent of students in the school continue their education when they reach the age of 16, either at the school or in other schools and colleges. Around 70 per cent of students who leave the school after sixth form study follow courses in higher education.

The inspection of this school included a detailed inspection of its provision for pupils with special educational needs.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Evesham High School is a school with many strengths, but also with a significant number of areas where improvement is needed. Standards are broadly in line with national averages, but have improved at a slower rate than national results in recent years. Teaching is generally good, enabling the students to learn successfully in lessons. Day to day management of the school is satisfactory, but overall leadership and management are unsatisfactory because the school does not ensure that the necessary strategies are in place to bring about significant improvements. The school's level of effectiveness is satisfactory, as is the capacity to bring about necessary improvements. The school gives satisfactory value for money.

What the school does well

- Students currently in the school learn well as a result of consistently good teaching.
- Students are known well and thus the school is able to provide for their individual needs.
- It ensures very good links with partner middle schools so that students successfully build on and extend their learning.
- Students with special educational needs make good progress because of the very good arrangements in place to support them in their learning.
- It provides a curriculum focused on meeting the needs, interests, aptitudes and aspirations of its students.
- It fosters good relationships, which helps students adopt positive attitudes and behave well.

What could be improved

- Those aspects of leadership associated with ensuring that all members of the school community play a full part in shaping the strategic direction of the school.
- Long-term strategic management and processes for evaluation of effectiveness.
- Provision for information and communication technology across the curriculum.
- Attendance levels in the school.
- Provision for religious education throughout the school.
- Arrangements for all students to take part in a daily act of collective worship.

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 made satisfactory progress overall since the time of the previous inspection. Standards have risen very slightly, but at a slower rate than standards nationally in Key Stages 3 and 4. The overall quality of teaching has improved and this is enabling students to achieve good standards of work in lessons. Some aspects of management have improved and others, such as the leadership of heads of department and the oversight of provision for special educational needs, have remained good. However, the lack of a clear strategic long-term direction means that the overall management of the school is unsatisfactory. The school was last inspected in April 1996. Work to address the issues identified in the report of that inspection has been variable. There has been some improvement in planning, monitoring and evaluation, but not consistently across the school, nor in a well co-ordinated way. There has been some improvement in the quality of teaching, with a resulting improvement in students' learning and in their use of research skills. Good progress has been made in the development of strategies for assessment of students' work and of the use of the data gained from those assessments. The music curriculum now meets National Curriculum requirements. Steps to extend provision for students' spiritual development have been satisfactory. The school has not ensured that all students have their full entitlement to religious education and it still does not ensure that all students have the opportunity to take part in a daily act of collective worship. The school has not kept pace with requirements in information and communication technology.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 14, 16 and 18 year olds based on average point scores in national tests, GCSE and A-level/AS-level examinations.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1998	1999	2000	2000
Key Stage 3 tests	C	C	C	*
GCSE examinations	D	D	C	*
A-levels/AS-levels	D	C	C	

Key

well above average A

above average B

average C

below average D

well below average E

[Note: * - similar schools comparisons are made by comparing the results of students in this school with those in schools where there is a similar level of eligibility for free school meals. There is compelling evidence that the free school meals data for Evesham High School is inaccurate, underestimating eligibility for free school meals. Hence the comparison, which suggests that standards are well below the similar school average at both key stages, is unreliable.]

The school's national test results for 14 year olds were below the national average in English, whilst those for mathematics and science were above the national average in 2000. This repeats the pattern of the two previous years. Overall results at the end of Key Stage 3 have improved over recent years, but at a slower rate than the national improvement. Students in Year 9, as a result of improved teaching, are achieving standards of work that are a little above what would be expected on the basis of their attainment on entry to the school.

Students make steady progress during Key Stage 4. GCSE results in 2000 were better than in the two previous years and were close to the national average. Improvements in GCSE results in recent years have not, however, kept pace with improvements nationally. For the past three years, boys' results have been below the national average, whilst girls' results have been close to the national average. Students currently in the school are achieving relatively well, on the basis of their prior attainment.

Results in sixth form examinations have improved since 1998 and, in the past two years, have been close to the national average. The number of students gaining A and B grades is below the average, but reflects the pattern whereby fewer than the normal number of higher attaining students are admitted to the school.

The school just met its targets for GCSE examinations in 2000 and has set lower targets for 2001 on the basis of the knowledge it has about these students' prior attainment. The targets for 2000 and

2001 are not challenging because they do not represent any aspiration for attainment to be better than expected on the basis of prior attainment.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Students' attitudes to the school are good. Students are very positive about what the school provides for them.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Students generally behave well, both in lessons and around the school, showing that they recognise, and adhere to, the school's code of conduct. A small number do not do so, however, and the number of fixed term exclusions has increased.
Personal development and relationships	Relationships among students and between students and staff are generally good. Students co-operate well and are very supportive of one another. The school makes a good contribution to students' personal development.
Attendance	Attendance is unsatisfactory overall, with absence being a significant factor in lowering the levels of attainment of some students.

Students enjoy coming to school. The vast majority participate well in the range of opportunities provided, both in lessons and elsewhere. The school is a harmonious community, where students feel safe. Students are not always punctual to lessons, reducing the time available for effective learning.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Teaching has improved in quality since the previous inspection and is good at all stages in the school. The teaching is good or better in around three quarters of lessons and is very good or excellent in a fifth of lessons. It is only rarely unsatisfactory. In English, teaching is good in Key Stage 4 and is satisfactory elsewhere in the school. Teaching of mathematics is good throughout the school, as is the teaching of science in Key Stage 3. Elsewhere, science teaching is satisfactory. Some effective measures have been taken to teach literacy and numeracy skills, both in English and mathematics and in other subjects. Staff are kept informed about the requirements of students with special educational needs and thus are able to ensure that they learn well. More lessons are now interesting to students who are encouraged to take more responsibility for their own learning. Both of these are improvements in teaching since the previous inspection.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The school offers students a good range of curriculum experiences.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	The provision made for these students, and especially those with statements of special educational need, is very good.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	The school has a small number of students for whom English is an additional language. The provision made for these students is satisfactory.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	This is satisfactory overall. The contributions made to students' moral and social development are good.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school cares well for its students. Each student is recognised as an individual and tutors have good knowledge of their students and their needs. Procedures for ensuring the health and safety of students are good, as are child protection procedures. Arrangements for monitoring students' progress are also good and assessment information is used well to guide curricular planning.

Overall curriculum provision is good and a range of well planned extra-curricular activities, well supported by students, enhances and extends work done in class. The school does not, however, provide an adequate course in religious education at any key stage to meet the requirements of the agreed syllabus. Applications of information and communication technology in other subjects are inadequate. The school has very good curriculum links with its main partner middle schools and this helps students transfer smoothly into the school. The school has good working relationships with parents, providing them with good quality information about how well their children are doing.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Day-to-day management of the school is satisfactory, but the lack of a coherent long-term strategy for improvement in the school means that leadership and management are unsatisfactory overall.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors are interested and are active. They visit the school regularly and are linked to departments. They do not, however, fulfil all their statutory responsibilities and are not sufficiently involved in shaping the direction of the school.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school has taken steps, through a range of review activities, to evaluate some aspects of what it does, but there is not a coherent overall strategy for evaluating effectiveness, including the effectiveness of budget decisions.
The strategic use of resources	This is satisfactory overall, but the lack of a robust system, involving governors and senior staff, for evaluating cost-effectiveness means that some resources are not well used.

Overall staffing levels in the school are adequate, though the school does not have trained teachers of religious education. Arrangements for the induction of staff into the school are good. The school is accommodated in well-maintained buildings on a pleasant site. A rolling programme of refurbishment and redecoration is well managed. Resource provision is adequate in most subjects, but there is a shortage of equipment for the application of information and communication technology in many subjects. The principles of best value are only applied to a limited extent in the school.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Twenty seven parents attended a meeting with the Registered Inspector before the inspection took place. One hundred and forty two parents returned questionnaires and 22 parents added comments to these.

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students like coming to the school. The school has high expectations of what students can achieve. Teaching in the school is good, enabling students to make good progress. They feel confident that they can approach the school with questions or problems. The school is well led and managed. The school helps students to become mature and responsible young people. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The extent and range of homework set. The information provided to parents about their children's progress. The extent to which the school works closely with parents.

Inspectors agree that the majority of students like coming to school. They also agree that teaching is good, enabling students currently in the school to learn well, and that the school helps students to become mature and responsible. They do not agree that the school does not work closely with parents or provide adequate information to them about students' progress. Both of these aspects are relative strengths of the school. Homework arrangements are satisfactory, with all students being provided with appropriate tasks to undertake at home. Inspectors do not think that the school has sufficiently high expectations of students, as illustrated by the lack of challenge in targets set for attainment at the end of Key Stage 4. Whilst much day-to-day management of the school is satisfactory, the school is not well led or managed because there are too many aspects of its work which could be improved.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. Students enter the school at the beginning of Year 9. They do so with overall attainment broadly in line with the national average, though with a smaller than average number of students with high levels of prior attainment. Records of students' attainment in their middle schools are used well. They are set alongside diagnostic test results and informal assessments by teachers in each subject as a basis for the school to measure how much progress students make. Whilst attainment on entry is broadly in line with average in most subjects, it is below that expected in English, design and technology, information and communication technology (ICT) and art. Overall, the standards of literacy of students on entry to the school are slightly below average.
2. Students make satisfactory progress during Year 9 and by the end of Key Stage 3 standards are broadly average. In national tests at the end of the key stage in 2000, results overall were in line with national averages, maintaining a pattern set over the past three years. Standards in these tests were higher in mathematics and science than they were in English. Particularly significant is that the number of students reaching Level 6 or above was below average in English, whilst it was close to the average in science and just above the average in mathematics. In both 1999 and 2000, boys performed better in national tests than girls. They performed better than boys nationally. This is a positive outcome of the school's recent efforts to improve boys' performance at Key Stage 3. Over the past four years, girls' results have not kept pace with the slow but steady improvement nationally, showing a small decline in overall levels since 1997.
3. Since 1996, when the school was last inspected, the overall improvement in results at the end of Key Stage 3 has been slower than the improvement nationally, largely as a result of a decline in English and science results. In English, mathematics and science, results in 2000 were slightly better than in the previous year. When compared with similar schools, results at the end of Key Stage 3, in 2000, were well below average, but the school has compelling evidence that the free school meals data for the school is unreliable, thus making the comparison unreliable. The school also has a larger than might be expected number of students with special educational needs in each year group. In other subjects, attainment at the end of the key stage in 2000 was above national expectations in history and in line with expectations in all other subjects. Students currently in Year 9 are, as a result of good teaching, achieving well in relation to their prior attainment in science, design and technology, ICT, mathematics, modern languages, geography, history and art. Achievements are in line with expectations in English, music, religious education and physical education.
4. Students have made satisfactory progress overall in Key Stage 4 and, in 2000, results in GCSE examinations were broadly in line with the national average. The number of students gaining five or more grades A* to C was close to the national average, as were the numbers gaining five or more A* to G and one or more A* to G grades. Results were well below average when compared with similar schools, but these comparisons are unreliable. If results for this school are set alongside those of schools with similar patterns of prior attainment at the end of Key Stage 3, then they were broadly average in 2000. The overall trend of results over the past five years has been upward, but at a slower rate than nationally, though results in 2000 were an improvement on those of the previous year. Almost all students took examinations in

English and mathematics in 2000. Results in these subjects were broadly in line with the national average. Standards in double award science were above the national average, as they were in history and music. In most other subjects, results were close to the national averages. In several subjects, boys performed less well than girls and this difference was most marked in geography. Steps are being taken to deal with the imbalance in boys' and girls' performance at Key Stage 4, but these have not yet been reflected in results.

5. Targets set for 2000 were met, but not exceeded. These targets were based on predictions on the basis of testing, with no additional element to represent a challenge to improve on what might be expected. Targets set for 2001 are lower than those for 2000, because the school considers that these students have lower levels of prior attainment than those in the previous year. The targets set for 2001 are thus not sufficiently challenging, because they do not reflect an intention by the school to raise students' levels of attainment above those expected on the basis of prior attainment. The work of students currently studying in Year 11 suggests that the targets will be met. Students are achieving well in most subjects, with satisfactory levels of achievement in English and science. Only in religious education are students not achieving as well as they should be. This is a direct consequence of the school not providing a satisfactory course of study in this subject. This was an issue at the time of the previous inspection and remains to be addressed.
6. At both key stages, students with special educational needs are making good progress overall. Progress for these students is good in science, design and technology, history and physical education and satisfactory elsewhere. This positive picture is a consequence of teachers being well informed about the particular needs of these students and taking them into account in preparing lessons. Students with statements of special educational needs are given good levels of help, either by regular withdrawal from lessons or by support within classrooms. There are very few students who have English as an additional language. A small number of these students need additional support with English. The needs of these students are individually assessed. They take part in the full range of subjects, which allows students with particular talents, for example, in mathematics to attain good standards. Overall, students with English as an additional language make sound progress and fit in well with other students.
7. In the sixth form, standards have been in line with the national average in A-level examinations for the past two years. The average point score for each student was below the national average, but was an improvement in the school's results in the two previous years. This represents steady progress on the part of sixth form students. The proportion of students gaining the higher A and B grades was below the national average. This reflects the fact that the school recruits fewer of the higher attaining students and, when this is taken into account, makes the overall performance creditable. In 2000, results were above the national average in history, art and music and in line with the average in other subjects. Sixth form numbers have risen over the past three years. Inspection evidence suggests that students currently studying in the sixth form are likely to maintain the steady progress in results, with levels of achievement being good in most subjects and satisfactory in English and Spanish.
8. Standards of literacy in the school are generally satisfactory. A whole school policy guides teachers in all subjects on how to pay closer attention to spelling and to aspects of writing, including the development of drafting and editing skills. This is beginning to have a positive impact in some subjects and is supporting the work of teachers in English lessons, though more remains to be done. Similarly, standards of numeracy in the school are satisfactory. Within the framework of a whole school

policy for numeracy development, an audit has been undertaken to identify which subjects already make a contribution and to highlight where other departments could do so. Teaching in science, for example, reinforces the application of calculation and graph skills and students apply their measurement skills well in design and technology.

9. The use of information and communication technology (ICT) across the curriculum requires further development. The finding in the last report about the need to improve the use of ICT across the curriculum has still not been addressed. Pupils' achievements across the curriculum in ICT are not assessed or fully recognised. Training has been provided for staff so that they can use applications and gain access to the school's computer network. Planning for the consistent application and development of computer skills is unsatisfactory and is not effectively co-ordinated across the curriculum to achieve full coherence and progression. Computers are used satisfactorily in mathematics, science, English, history, business studies and geography, but there is very little use in other subjects. As a result, whilst standards in ICT lessons are good, standards of application of ICT skills across the curriculum are below average.
10. The overall pattern of standards is one of improvement at a slower rate than is being achieved nationally. This is partly a consequence of low levels of aspiration, exemplified by the absence of a long-term strategy for raising levels of attainment and by the setting of targets that are not demanding. Within a number of departments, teachers are working hard to improve their teaching and this has resulted in some improvement in levels of achievement, but their efforts are not sufficiently well co-ordinated. An additional factor which inhibits improvement is unsatisfactory attendance levels, so that considerable numbers of students miss a significant amount of schooling. A lack of punctuality to some lessons further reduces the time when teachers and students are working together effectively.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

11. One of the strengths of the school is the positive attitudes which students have towards the school and their work. Students enjoy coming to school and this is a feature recognised and applauded by parents. Almost all the students, including those with special educational needs, talk positively about their lessons and many enjoy participating in the wide range of other activities available to them. Students eagerly shared happy memories, for instance, of their involvement in the recent production of *Oliver*. Stage managers talked animatedly about the fun of ensuring props were correctly placed, whilst actors discussed the satisfaction of overcoming first night nerves.
12. Students are usually poised and well prepared as they settle to their work. In almost all lessons, students continue to work hard until the bell goes at the end of the session. Year 11 geographers busied themselves throughout the lesson, for example, discussing and writing about aspects of farming. Sixth form students often have very good attitudes to their lessons and to school life in general. They do not have uniform, but wear their suits and jackets with pride and some style. Occasionally, inspectors were unsure whether these well presented members of the school community were staff or students.
13. The students' overall approach is diligent rather than exuberant. Some of the most able teachers are, however, able to inspire students and to foster excitement in the lessons. Historians and sociologists are often totally absorbed and participate eagerly in lively discussions about specific aspects of the subject they are studying. The

common factors evident in jobs with low job satisfaction fascinated a group of Year 11 sociologists. They eagerly contributed information from their own family situations to the discussion. Although only really enthusiastic when very good teaching inspires total involvement, students are almost always prepared to co-operate willingly with teachers in well planned activities. A Year 11 group in a media studies lesson watched a selection of video clips with increasing interest, ultimately thoroughly enjoying the humour of the final example as they identified the features of 'docusoaps'. These positive attitudes which the students, including those with special education needs, bring to their lessons, help them advance their learning.

14. Occasionally, students are not enthusiastic about their lessons. This is rare but occurs when teachers have not provided sufficient interest or variety in the activities they have planned. The school has a very small number of students who have not embraced the positive approach of the majority. Whilst these students are loyal to the school and enjoy being part of the community, they are occasionally truculent in lessons and reluctant to start their work.
15. The Prospectus claims that a high standard of behaviour is required and most students live up to this. The students' behaviour is good and they are usually courteous and trustworthy. Their behaviour in lessons allows almost all sessions to begin and continue without interruption. Students show, by the sensible way they move around the extensive site, that they understand and embrace the school's code of conduct. Students' behaviour in large groups, such as when they are in assembly or in the dining hall, is often very good and helps them to benefit from the opportunities offered. All students in Year 9 paid close attention whilst the head of year talked about the forthcoming *Comic Relief* day and the meaning of poverty.
16. Whilst the vast majority of students obey the school's rules, a very small minority do not conform to the school's clear expectation of good behaviour. Disruptions are infrequent, rarely affect the progress of others and very seldom upset the genuinely harmonious atmosphere of the school. The number of students permanently excluded from the school last year was the same as at the time of the previous inspection and is below average for similar schools. Fixed term exclusions have increased as the school seeks to help students understand what is expected of them. Sensitive and sensible use is made of these sanctions, encouraging students to improve their attitudes and behaviour and keeping them included in the school community. Bullying in the school is rare, but when it does occur students are rightly confident that it is handled promptly and effectively.
17. The school successfully aims to encourage a spirit of co-operation and respect for all, including members of the local community and the wider world. As at the time of the previous inspection, relationships between students are good. This is another significant and positive feature of school life. Many examples were seen of students willingly supporting each other and cheerfully sharing with one another. High levels of collaboration are evident in music, for example, when students are performing in ensembles for course work. This collaboration helps them appreciate and make allowance for the needs and abilities of others. This shared mutual support is a feature of many lessons and students are keen to help each other learn. It was evident in a Year 9 physical education lesson on balance. Students were very supportive of one another as classmates tried walking along higher and higher beams. Even when unsuccessful, the attempts of the confident were unhesitatingly applauded. When cautious students were tempted to challenge themselves further, their successes were greeted with enthusiasm.

18. The school deliberately encourages boys and girls to sit together in many lessons and tutor periods. This strategy works well and is helping promote easy and relaxed relationships among all students. Students like this system, with members of Year 9 claiming it helps their concentration and enables them to meet and get to know more of their year-group. This strategy also ensures that boys and girls are comfortable with one another and able to discuss sensitive issues. A very good discussion emerged about the physical and emotional risks of sex before marriage in a Year 10 personal and social education lesson. The absolute lack of self-consciousness ensured that pupils, whether boys or girls, were able to concentrate on the topic and contribute their own comments without concern for any negative reaction from their peers.
19. Students are tolerant of each other's strengths and weaknesses and are usually considerate to the less able. They understand and are kind when others are having difficulty with their learning or aspects of their personal lives. A student with a speech impediment was listened to courteously and carefully when presenting his own opinions. This consideration is evident in their ability to accept views different from their own. A Year 11 group of sociologists were totally unfazed by their divided reaction to a particular job situation. Generally the vast majority of the school population relate well with one another. Relationships between adults and students are also good. Students are open and friendly with staff and visitors. They are keen to work hard for many of their teachers and give smiles and greetings in response to visitors.
20. The personal development of the sixth form students is a positive feature of the work of the school. These older students often demonstrate very good levels of personal responsibility and they efficiently manage their own lives and activities at the school. They participate enthusiastically in a range of activities such as the Young Enterprise Competition, where their involvement and commitment help secure an increased economic awareness. They are alert to the needs of others and commit willingly to activities which will support those less fortunate. They also commit time to helping younger pupils and students, for example, in listening to pupils read at a local middle school.
21. When given the opportunity and some encouragement, students show that they can be responsible and mature. Tutor groups are responsible on a weekly basis for putting chairs away after assembly and for tidying up the common rooms after break. These tasks are performed carefully and conscientiously. Some Year 11 students are already anticipating with some relish their end of year dance. They are, essentially, organising this event themselves with some aid from the year heads. The students are energetically offering to design tickets and posters, organise the flowers and promote the sales of tickets.
22. Students in Years 9 to 11 take a reasonable interest in the life and organisation of the school. There is a *School Council*, which is energetic in identifying concerns, but membership is neither eagerly sought nor particularly well promoted by students themselves. Overall, students' personal development is satisfactory, enabling them to successfully manage their daily life in school. Students are, for example, making regular use of their planners for recording homework or the merits they have been given and are making sensible use of their personal folders where they store merit certificates and other accreditations.
23. Most students are happy to attend school every day, but attendance at the school is, overall, unsatisfactory. Figures for attendance are below average for all secondary schools and have declined recently. Comparisons with all secondary schools are

unreliable, as Evesham High School has no Year 7 and 8 pupils, the year groups who usually have the best school attendance. There are, nevertheless, some students who do not attend on a sufficiently regular basis. A tiny minority have become school refusers. A few parents condone absence and allow their children not to attend school. Similarly, a few parents have to leave home for work before their children leave for school and are occasionally unable to enforce attendance. Others take their children away during term time for family holidays. When students do not attend regularly, this slows their progress because their learning is regularly interrupted and this contributes to a lowering of overall standards in the school.

24. Most students arrive in school in time for registration. Students are not, however, as punctual to individual lessons. There are many occasions, both in transfer between lessons and in returning from break and lunch, when sessions begin several minutes late owing to the sluggish arrival of the students. This happens because teachers provide students with little sense that their prompt arrival is essential, rather than a reluctance on the part of students to attend lessons.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

25. The overall quality of teaching in the school is good and has improved since the previous inspection. Teaching is very good or excellent in a fifth of lessons and is good or better in around three quarters. It is only very rarely unsatisfactory. The small amount of unsatisfactory teaching occurs in Key Stages 3 and 4, with no unsatisfactory teaching occurring in the sixth form. Otherwise, there is no significant difference between the quality of teaching from one key stage to another. This consistently good teaching overall is a major factor in helping students throughout the school to achieve well in lessons.
26. The teaching of English is good in Key Stage 4 and is satisfactory in Year 9 and in the sixth form. This represents a similar picture to that at the time of the previous inspection. Staffing problems in the English department in recent times, now resolved, have been a major contributory factor in limiting the rate of improvement in quality in this department. Teaching is now good, overall, in English, enabling students to learn well. Occasionally, unsatisfactory teaching results in students not taking an interest in their work and thus not making satisfactory progress. The teaching of mathematics is good throughout the school, as is the teaching of science at Key Stage 3. Elsewhere in the school the teaching of science is satisfactory. In mathematics, teaching has improved since the previous inspection. Teachers are keen to present the subject in stimulating ways and students respond with interest. This was well illustrated in a Year 10 lesson dealing with graphs of inequalities. Here, a very stimulating discussion, led by the teacher, prompted students to sort out their uncertainties about the topic. Science teaching varies in quality from one key stage to another. In good lessons, a clear structure, based around well-defined objectives, enables students to apply their investigative and experimental skills to good effect. Occasionally, however, lessons in science are unsatisfactory because there is too much teacher direction and low levels of expectation of what students will contribute. As a result, students lose interest and do not learn sufficiently well. In English, mathematics and science there is a close link between good teaching and levels of attainment, as measured in national tests and examinations, and students are learning most successfully where lessons are stimulating and well focused on the needs of each individual.
27. The school has policies in place designed to ensure that close attention is paid, in all subjects, to the development of students' literacy and numeracy skills. Some progress has been made in literacy development, with several subjects making good

contributions to the improvement of students' writing, spelling and reading skills, but this is not consistent across all subjects. An audit has been undertaken of where, in other subjects, students' numeracy skills can be enhanced. Subjects such as science, design and technology and geography are making contributions to promoting students' skills in calculation, measurement and graphical interpretation, but once again there are inconsistencies in the effectiveness of these contributions.

28. Elsewhere in the curriculum, teaching in Year 9 is satisfactory in modern foreign languages, physical education and religious education and is good in all other subjects. Teaching at Key Stage 4 is good in all subjects except religious education. In this subject, the lack of a clear course structure to guide a team of teachers who are not specialists in religious education contributes to this situation. Teaching in the sixth form is generally good and is very good in art. In most subjects, therefore, students are being helped to make good achievements in relation to their prior attainment. The teaching of information and communication technology (ICT) is good when students are being taught ICT as a separate subject. Largely because of limited availability of resources, teachers in other subjects are not teaching the development and application of ICT skills very well.
29. Teaching has improved since the previous inspection in mathematics, science, art, geography, history and physical education. At the time of the previous inspection, concern was expressed about some teaching being unsatisfactory because of inadequate planning, teachers requiring students to take part in work that lacked interest for them or where relationships between teachers and students were not conducive to a positive atmosphere in lessons. All of these aspects have been improved. In most lessons now the atmosphere is very constructive, with positive relationships between teachers and students. Most lessons are interesting and rarely do teachers go to lessons without having given careful attention to their planning. As a result, most lessons are interesting and students frequently show that they enjoy their learning.
30. Many teachers, as part of their planning, identify clear intentions for the lesson and these they frequently share with students. In a Year 10 French lesson, for example, students were describing, in French, aspects of the weather. By referring back to the objectives for the lesson, the teacher was able to give students confidence by showing them that they were making progress. Similarly, in a Year 11 design and technology lesson, the teacher regularly referred back to the lesson objectives as the lesson progressed and this helped the students to make good progress in their design techniques as they prepared a design of outdoor play equipment for young children. In the best lessons, teachers used the objectives as a basis for review of what students had gained from the lesson, often inviting students to identify for themselves what they could now do that they couldn't do at the start of the lesson. When such reviews do not take place, much of the benefit of a lesson is lost. An example occurred in an English lesson with a group of Year 9 students, who lacked confidence as they tried to grasp the plot of *Twelfth Night*. A summary would have helped them to recognise the progress they had made.
31. Whilst some teachers are not sufficiently demanding in the work that they expect of students, others recognise the potential of their students and ensure that work is stimulating and challenging. A feature of many good or very good lessons is the use by teachers of sharply focused questions. In a Year 11 mathematics lesson, for example, exploring the area under graphs, the teacher's searching questions made students think very hard and thus get to grips with a difficult idea. The teacher was also, by careful monitoring of how the students answered, gaining clear insights into what students understood and where they needed additional support. Many teachers

use discussion very constructively as a means of helping students clarify their thinking. In a Year 13 business education lesson, for example, students were working together as a marketing team and discussion in a group helped these students to express their ideas clearly. Similarly, in a Year 10 lesson looking at relationships, the teacher sensitively encouraged students to work in pairs before they made a contribution to class discussion. This played a big part in helping them to clarify their thinking and to practise how they were going to present their ideas without embarrassment.

32. Generally, teachers make very good use of time once lessons get under way, but there is some lack of urgency about getting lessons started and this limits the amount of time for students to learn. Good use is made of resources in many lessons, as in a French lesson in Year 10 where an overhead projector was used to hold students' attention at the beginning of the lesson. The use of ICT facilities is, however, unsatisfactory and this means that students are not having the benefit of the enrichment which modern computers can bring, both through the use of programs related to the subject and through access to the Internet as a resource.
33. A significant improvement since the previous inspection has been the use of assessment to guide teachers' planning. Teachers mark students' work regularly and, in the best practice, give clear and helpful guidance to students on what they need to do to improve. This is a particularly good feature of work in English, mathematics and art. Teachers regularly assess what students know through tests and by other means and the outcomes of this assessment are progressively being used more effectively to help planning, both at a department-wide level and for particular classes and students. Teachers are provided with detailed information about the specific needs of students who have special educational needs and, in most lessons, these are well met. Different strategies are used successfully. In some cases, teachers prepare alternative materials for groups of different abilities. In others, teachers vary the level of questioning to ensure that all students are working at a level which match their needs. Where individual students receive direct classroom help, teachers and support assistants generally work closely together. These measures help to ensure that students with special educational needs make good progress throughout the school. The quality of teaching in sessions where students are withdrawn to receive specific support is very good. The small number of students who do not have English as their first language are well integrated into lessons and are able to make satisfactory progress.
34. Some parents expressed concern that homework is not well used as a means of extending students' learning. Their concerns are, however, unfounded. The school has a clear policy and framework for setting homework and, in general, teachers adhere to this. Tasks set usually relate to the work being undertaken in class, either by providing a context in which to reinforce learning by applying what has been studied, or by undertaking some preparation for a forthcoming lesson. Occasionally, students are not given sufficient guidance on how to manage their time, especially when a homework task is spread over more than one night, and this sometimes results in students having what appears to be excessive, or no, homework on a particular evening.

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

35. The school provides a curriculum that is effectively organised to meet the various interests, needs and aptitudes of all its students. There are very good links with partner middle schools and these result in detailed planning across subjects.

Students are thus able to build positively on their previous learning and experience. These arrangements work very much to their advantage. At Key Stage 3, a common curriculum is offered and this works well. Higher attaining students in French also learn Spanish to give a basis for their choice of languages in Key Stage 4. Information and communication technology (ICT) is taught as a separate subject in rotation with drama. At Key Stage 4, most students follow a common core of subjects. The choice of two further subjects, key skills and Youth Award courses, together with vocational options, are also available. This pattern ensures a good range of subjects to meet the needs of all students. In Year 11, a very small number of students do not follow all aspects of the National Curriculum. They take part in *Project 19* activities, which cater for a small group of disaffected students. These are part of a programme which provides extended work placements and college training. This is effective in continuing to motivate and cater for these students.

36. There are many strengths in the sixth form curriculum which caters for students of different levels of prior attainment. Courses are planned to meet individual needs and most Year 13 students follow a course of three A-levels. Most students in Year 12 are studying up to four AS-level courses in their first year in the sixth form. There is a good choice of traditional and newer A-levels, such as media studies, computing, sociology and theatre studies. Vocational courses are provided in business and in leisure and tourism and the school has a well planned provision for key skills. Students also follow additional courses in physical education. The general studies course is less satisfactory. Students are not clear about the content and timing of the lessons and the course is not popular. Most take a mock examination in this subject, but few go on to take the final examination.
37. The statutory requirements for the provision of religious education and for a daily act of worship are not met through the school's curriculum and other provision. A review of the curriculum is now taking place in order to strengthen the provision of religious education across the school. Because of lack of ICT facilities, requirements for ICT in a range of subjects are not fully met. Future planning includes extending the range of ICT courses at GCSE and GNVQ and further increasing options at Key Stage 4 in order to extend student choices.
38. The school demonstrates a strong commitment to enabling all students to gain access to a wide range of subjects and activities. Students with special educational needs are very well provided for through the learning support department. This department embraces support for two specific groups of students, as well as those within the school requiring additional help with their learning. The first of these is a disaffection unit, which successfully enables students who would otherwise be excluded from school to remain in full-time education. The second provides help for students with a range of specific learning difficulties, especially dyslexia. Students with mobility problems receive excellent support in the school. There is also particularly good work in mathematics, art and science with effective help given to other subject departments with resources and teaching materials. Over the last two years, some staff development work has focused on issues related to equality of opportunity and the need to include all students in the broad range of school activity. Gifted and talented students, however, whilst clearly identified as such, are not specifically provided for. Generally, students are well supported in learning to work independently. Many departments make good use of the recently re-established school library and link effectively with the school librarian. Collections of books are put together to help students when they are undertaking independent study.
39. The strategies used by the school for teaching literacy across subjects are generally satisfactory. The school has set a clear framework of requirements to support

departments. Key words are clearly displayed in classrooms in a number of subjects. Further contributions are made in languages and the humanities, although oral skills are less well developed in physical education. Ways of extending writing and developing oral work are clearly identified by the school and there is an awareness of the need to raise standards further. Schemes of work in different subjects give some guidance, based on whole school policy, in relation to developing students' numerical skills. Activities in which students can apply their number skills are sometimes identified, but these are not yet fully implemented.

40. There is a good programme of extra-curricular activities to support the mainstream curriculum. This includes a range of visits, after school clubs, music and drama productions. Young Enterprise and the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme in particular are highly valued by students and parents. There are a good variety of competitive sports and school teams, including indoor rowing. Participation rates in these activities are high, standards are good and many teachers are involved in this provision.
41. A comprehensive programme of personal, social and health education is provided. This incorporates sex, drugs, careers and health education and is mainly taught in form tutor periods. The programme is well organised by a specialist team who draw on best practice from other schools. Outside support and training are effectively provided by health agencies and by a range of other visitors. The personal development of students is fostered through assemblies, form tutor mentoring, personal achievement records, the National Record of Achievement and work experience. These activities help students review and record their own targets for achievement and build their confidence. The *School council* is well regarded by some students who are able to debate and effect some useful changes to their school life. There are particularly good opportunities for sixth formers to help younger students in local middle schools with their reading. In partnership with the youth service, some students in Years 11 and 12 are also involved in a peer education programme. This focuses on students organising workshops for younger students on the dangers of drugs, thus enabling them to develop a good knowledge and understanding of the issues.
42. The school provides very effectively for work related education. A particular strength is the careers education and guidance programme. Starting in their middle schools, students work regularly and in a well planned way on careers issues. The programme is well organised and staff responsibilities are clear. Plans and schemes of work provide interesting activities for students. The contributions of other subject areas to careers education are mapped out. Lower attaining students are particularly helped by clear guidance. Work experience, which includes mini-enterprise activities, is well planned and is a positive experience for students. All these initiatives increase students' self-confidence and their capacity to look creatively towards their future.
43. The school has good links with the local community. Many visitors and outside agencies provide help to the school and around 30 companies sponsor evenings to celebrate students' achievements. Local charities are fully supported. Help is given to the elderly with their shopping. Artwork is frequently displayed locally. The school premises are fully used by the local community and this gives some sense of communal purpose to the school's activities.
44. The school's provision for the spiritual development of students has improved since the previous inspection and is now satisfactory, although weaknesses remain in its provision for collective worship. Students attend two assemblies a week in their year groups. These assemblies have good moral, social and cultural content and reinforce

the school's values. The school now plans well to ensure that the majority of assemblies have good spiritual content. Around half are also explicitly Christian in character. During the inspection week, students responded positively to well led assemblies on Lent, Easter and Christian giving, which made particularly good use of Biblical material, successfully drawing out its relevance to a range of contemporary issues. Assemblies are, however, lacking in some of the key characteristics of worship, for example prayer, and offer students too few opportunities for reflection. On the days when there are no year assemblies, students meet in their tutor groups. Tutor time affords no opportunities for spiritual development through, for example, a *Thought for the Day*, or chances for reflection. In this respect, the school is not meeting its statutory duty to provide a daily act of collective worship for all students.

45. The school has improved provision for students' spiritual development in lessons. It has raised staff awareness through training and reviewed schemes of work to identify opportunities for promoting spiritual development. There is good practice in a number of subjects. For example, mathematics introduces students to the concept of sacred number in religious belief and, in music, students explore their inner feelings through composition. However, although departments have identified where they could contribute to students' spiritual development, they do not all take advantage of them and there is a need for closer monitoring to encourage them to do so.
46. The school makes good provision for students' moral development. It has clear values, based on respect and caring for the individual and the environment, which are shared by students, teachers and parents alike. There is a clear code of conduct and teachers provide very good role models for students. Students give practical expression to the values of caring in the good support they give to fund-raising for charities, including, for example, *Children in Need* and *Love in a Box*. Students are able to explore moral issues such as those surrounding relationships or substance abuse in a well-planned personal, social and moral education programme. Students are also challenged with moral issues in a number of other subjects in the classroom. In history, students are encouraged to think about the ethics of war and English raises ethical issues related to the power of the media. Religious education raises fundamental questions of good and evil.
47. The school makes good provision for students' social development. Students' achievements are publicly recognised and their self-esteem is raised through the Awards System. They value this recognition, as was well evidenced during the inspection week when members of the cast of the recent school production received awards for their achievements. Students are able to develop their social skills through an effective *School Council*, the Duke of Edinburgh Scheme, Young Enterprise, school productions and a wide range of sporting activities. They can take part in residential activities through geography field-work and the activities week. However, the school does not provide all students with a residential experience. Lower sixth form students have recently completed drug awareness training with a view to working with their peers. In physical education, sixth form students help with clubs and games in the lower school. In some subjects, including English, mathematics and science, too rarely can students show initiative in their work. Social issues are well addressed in the programme of personal, social and moral education. Students are challenged with social issues in some subjects in the classroom. For example, in history, students explore the forces in the 19th century that helped shape contemporary British society and in religious education they encounter Sikh teaching on equality. Most subjects encourage students to develop skills of collaborative working in pairs and small groups.

48. The school makes satisfactory provision for students' cultural development. Students are able to develop their skills in music, dance and drama and to experience performing for an audience through regular productions such as this year's *Oliver*, concerts and workshops. Students' awareness of other European cultures is raised through good opportunities to take part in sports and recreational visits abroad, although the foreign language exchange programme is no longer available. History uses art to improve understanding. Physical education leads students to appreciate their local and national sporting heritage. Science works with history to introduce students to the work of scientists from other countries. Some subjects promote students' awareness of cultures other than the European. During the inspection, it was a delight to experience a Chinese student singing a Chinese pop song in a music lesson and to listen to students discussing how it might have been influenced by Western ideas. Mathematics recognises the importance of Islamic thought to its discipline. Religious education introduces students to world religions at Key Stage 3, but the school does not do enough to promote their appreciation of the multicultural diversity and richness of contemporary British society.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

49. The school takes good care of its students. It successfully meets its aim to recognise each student as an individual who has a valuable contribution to make to school life. Staff spend considerable time and energy identifying and meeting the needs of each individual student, ensuring the high level of pastoral support which parents appreciate and value. Arrangements for ensuring the health and safety of everyone in the school community are good. Inspections are carried out regularly and the governing body is diligent in its approach to health and safety matters. Children who are sick or injured are looked after well in a pleasant medical room. Of particular note are the first aid folders prepared in advance to accompany any group participating in an off-site activity. Effective child protection procedures are in place and the school has noted the need to secure further confidentiality in the filing of information.
50. The genuine and caring attitude of the staff is of particular benefit to the welfare of the students. Very good transfer and induction arrangements ensure that students' needs are identified and supported by careful allocation to tutor groups. Students remain with these groups as they progress through school, thus enabling tutors to get to know their form members very well. Most students commented that they enjoyed time spent with their forms. Year heads provide good support for their tutor teams, giving sensitive guidance for the handling of difficult situations. The positive rapport between tutors and students encourages students' confidence in the availability of help. Students' concerns are heard sympathetically and followed up with sensitivity and care.
51. Registrations and tutor periods are usually used effectively to support students, although there is significant variation in quality from teacher to teacher. In the best of practice, students are helped to prepare for the morning or afternoon ahead, to consider their own responsibilities and to reflect on the situations of others. Good reference was made in one Year 9 registration to the theme of the previous day's assembly and students were encouraged to reflect on their own interpretation of the theme. This was all part of a five minute registration, which included taking the register and checking homework. Sometimes, however, students are neither settled calmly nor provided with sufficient, purposeful activities to prepare themselves for their lessons.
52. The contribution which support staff make to ensuring students' welfare is good. The general office runs very smoothly and this efficient administration ensures that

information about students' needs passes quickly and effectively. The school works very well with other agencies, as instanced by the work of the local youth service helping promote the peer education programme for drugs education. During the inspection week, 14 students were presented with certificates for completing the course. The planning meeting for the next stage was observed where Year 11 and 12 students were eagerly anticipating their work with younger Evesham High School students and local middle school pupils.

53. The school takes equally good care of its students with special educational needs, involving them in setting and meeting targets, raising their self esteem through recognising even small successes and providing skilled teaching and well-planned work. Individual education plans are of satisfactory quality overall, though they lack clear targets and there is some inconsistency in how plans are used from department to department. These individual plans are reviewed regularly and consideration is given to how the pupil can best be helped in the light of what they have achieved to date. The school meets the needs of all statements well and care arrangements take due account of all requirements.
54. The school's good arrangements for promoting acceptable behaviour ensure that an orderly atmosphere exists throughout. The code of conduct is usually consistently applied and clearly understood by the whole community. A very few teachers are not as confident in managing, nor clear in sharing with students, expectations of correct behaviour. Almost all the students are committed to the school rules and sanctions are fairly and sensitively applied to those few who transgress. Some students have individual education plans for behaviour and these are regularly reviewed and all staff have access to them. There are regular team meetings, including representatives from a wide range of local services, and these are very beneficial to the welfare of those students experiencing difficulty as they progress through school.
55. The school has developed good systems for the use of rewards and sanctions. Students are motivated to work hard and behave well by the regular use of merit awards. Year 9 drama students, for instance, moved quickly and eagerly into groups to practise their freeze framing techniques when the suggestion of merits for high performance was offered. The school's procedures for dealing with bullying are clear and staff handle potential situations with confidence and sensitivity. Students are alert to the menace of racism. Good information is accessible to them either within the personal, social and health education programme, through posters and leaflets around the school or through the willingness of the staff to reflect with the students about the nature of racism. A good example of this occurred when a group of Year 10 students showed high levels of understanding while discussing the dangers of stereotyping.
56. Many staff promote good attendance by carefully recording attendance, querying and rigorously following up absence and recognising and encouraging those students who are committed to regular attendance. Overall, however, arrangements are unsatisfactory because of the inconsistencies in approach and lost opportunities to promote the benefits of good attendance. The school does monitor attendance. Tutors are required, on a half-termly basis, to complete all details of attendance, year heads meet regularly with the attached welfare officer and strategies for improving the attendance of referred students are discussed. The school does not yet use computerised systems for this work and this restricts prompt, rigorous and vigorous analysis of attendance by week, by age, by gender and by comparing patterns with previous years. Whilst the school rewards individual attendance, there are no systems for establishing a corporate group approach to attendance.

57. Amongst the most significant improvements since the previous inspection have been the arrangements to both assess students' work and to use these assessments to guide their future curriculum and learning. These arrangements are now good and the school has a reasonably consistent approach. The school pays for the testing of pupils at the two local middle schools to enable a rich bank of data to be available on entry. There are carefully documented procedures for regular testing of students in all subjects, including those required nationally. The grades for testing are carefully measured against National Curriculum criteria. There is now a regular review of student progress across each year group and in all subjects. The school has introduced a marking system based on *three, two, one* marks as recognition of how well students have achieved in relation to their ability. This system is well developed, although sixth formers were not as familiar with it as the younger students. Some departments have established very good systems for recording assessment, such as in science where teachers assess and record at the end of each module and share these assessments with the students. Most departments are now making good use of their assessment information to guide their future planning.
58. The collection and analysis of data has improved considerably since the previous inspection. A central recording system has been established and updates take place termly. This provides a complete record of each student's performance in all subjects. The information is centrally collated and is distributed to departments, teachers, tutors and students in order that everyone can measure and judge performance. Whilst all staff have received training in the management of this data, there is not yet complete confidence and competence in its use. Analysis by gender, ethnicity or previous performance of groups is not yet consistent across all subjects in all year groups.
59. Monitoring progress on a day-to-day basis is good with teachers keeping good records of attendance, behaviour, homework, progress and performance. This helps them take account of individual needs, including those for students with special educational needs. The progress of these students is carefully recorded and monitored and suitable arrangements made to provide additional help for them.
60. Students are given good guidance for both their academic and personal development. Individual target setting is often used well to encourage students to improve. Students know the level they are working at, whether this is a National Curriculum level for Key Stage 3 tests or an expected grade at GCSE or A-level. Targets for improvement are given in the form of target grades. In many subjects, students can articulate what they need to do to attain that grade because they are given clear guidance in lessons, in work books, on homework and after tests. Very good practice occurs in history, where targets are negotiated and students have a very clear understanding of the exact skills and knowledge which they need to improve or acquire. There are, however, some departments where the guidance given is only satisfactory because targets are too general to help students refine or develop their work. This inconsistency limits the overall impact of target setting on raising students' attainment levels. Individual target setting is not well co-ordinated with whole school target setting procedures and this means that whole school targets are not a direct reflection of the targets being set for students across the school.
61. Interim progress updates are provided for each student on a termly basis. These are discussed between students and tutors and individual targets identified. Students are expected to seek subject-specific targets from their individual teachers and to prioritise these in discussion with their tutors. This system, whilst potentially valuable, is only partially effective because the skills and confidence of tutors vary, there is limited time available and insufficient space in the planners for students to record their

targets carefully. Annual reports give students and parents a good idea of strengths, weaknesses and targets for improvement.

62. Students are encouraged to keep personal achievement folders where they record their own interpretation of their personal development. These personal achievement records are completed during the tutor periods. This record will include any merit certificates and other accreditation they have received, such as attendance awards or governors' awards given for outstanding service to the school or wider community. This system complements the good personal guidance which students receive.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

63. The majority of parents are supportive of the school, recognising and applauding its strengths. A significant number of parents expressed concern about the amount of homework which is given and the way in which the school works with parents. A few felt they had insufficient information about the progress their children are making. Inspection findings suggest that none of these concerns are justified.
64. As was the case at the time of the previous inspection, the school is genuine in the welcome which it extends to parents and all staff are open in their approach to them. Staff commit significant time and energy to communicating with parents. Many letters of congratulation were sent out accompanying recent Year 10 termly progress review sheets, for instance. Staff listen carefully to parents' queries and are diligent in following up concerns. The welcome extended by office staff to all visitors and callers, including parents, is friendly and efficient. This initial welcome is further enhanced by the attractive and interesting displays in the entrance hall.
65. The general information which the school provides for parents continues to be of good quality. The Prospectus folder is invigorating with lots of photographs of contemporary life at the school and the school's motto *Advancing Learning* borders each of the inserted sheets. The monthly newsletter, *Vantage Point*, produced in colour and newspaper format and style, contains a wealth of information about the variety of activities which students enjoy.
66. The school is working hard to ensure that all parents are well informed not only about school life, but also about the progress their children are making. Consultation evenings are held regularly and are well organised. A report for parents on their children's progress is provided each term. For one term of each year this is the full annual report, with pupil progress review sheets being provided in the other. These updates are useful additions to the annual reports, enabling the school to keep parents up-to-date with how well their children are progressing. They give parents a clear picture of the standard at which their child is working and the progress towards expected grades, either for national tests or for GCSE and A level examinations. Annual reports are good and reflect the school's understanding of each student as an individual. Parents are given straightforward information about what the student has studied with unambiguous measures of performance against these programmes. Each teacher gives targets for improvement, most of which describe exactly what the student needs to do to secure improvement.
67. Parents of children with special educational needs value the information they receive from the special needs department and the way it works with them. Statement review meetings take place regularly, as is required, and parents are invited to attend these. There is close informal liaison with parents and regular attendance of these parents at parents' evenings.

68. Homework is well used to promote students' learning at home. Parents are able to involve themselves in supporting their children's work. Each year they are sent a letter explaining how the homework will be organised for their child's year group. Teachers adhere to the homework timetable and most students make good use of their planners to record the daily requirements.
69. Whilst many parents are supportive of the school from afar, only a few are actively involved in the life and work of the school. The effort which the recently re-formed *Friends Association* offers by raising funds for the school is valued and valuable. The help of parents who transport children to various events and competitions is much appreciated by the school. Many parents attend school events such as the recent *Oliver* production.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

70. The headteacher has a clear view that the school needs to improve, both in terms of raising levels of attainment and in improving the range of opportunities available for students. In this he is supported by both staff and governors. The school's motto, *Advancing Learning* is well known to staff and provides a positive focus for developmental activity centred in the classroom. The school's value system, which is about care and concern for all aspects of students' development, is well reflected in many aspects of its work and is a strength of the school.
71. Beyond the motto, the school's aims with regard to performance have not been developed with the sufficiently active involvement of the staff and governors. Consultation has taken place, but not at a sustained level where staff, particularly, are able to feel that they have played a significant part in shaping and developing the direction of the school. The aims are not well articulated in terms of the specific outcomes that are intended and this is a factor in slower than expected improvement in the school's results. Neither staff nor governors are effectively consulted on a regular basis about the fundamental priorities for bringing about long-term and sustained improvement. Levels of delegation and accountability are inadequate to enable the school to make the most of the potential of all members of the school community.
72. The school has a development plan, within which there are three major strands. These refer to raising standards, improving the learning environment and improving community links. The school development plan sets out a range of activity and includes both a statement of what is intended as outcome and resource implications. The plan is for the current year only, however, and the document lacks any reference to context or to how it relates to what has gone before. Departments also have plans for one year, based around the same main areas as the whole school plan. What is missing is an agreed and documented whole school long-term strategy for bringing about improvement. This hampers many developments and limits the extent to which there can be careful forward planning of the management of finances or resources. The lack of a long-term plan has resulted, for instance, in a situation where the school does not provide for all of the requirements associated with the use of information and communication technology (ICT) in at least five subjects. Without a long-term whole school plan, departments are not able to plan effectively beyond the current year. Whilst many aspects of leadership and management are satisfactory, they are not successfully brought together into a coherent process for bringing about the necessary improvements in the school. Thus, leadership and management are, overall, unsatisfactory.

73. Senior and middle managers perform a range of management functions smoothly and efficiently. They are supported by an effective administration team. The appointment of a site manager, who oversees all aspects of administration in the school, is effective in releasing teaching and management staff to undertake other work. Delegation of routine tasks is good. Delegation is not as effective in empowering key staff in the process of shaping the strategic direction of the school or for ensuring that all aspects of the school's professional work are operating as well as they might be.
74. The school has taken some steps toward the evaluation of aspects of its work. Most notable is a programme of large-scale departmental reviews. In these, each department is reviewed in turn by the headteacher, a deputy, another head of department in the school, a governor and a LEA adviser. These reviews are scheduled to take place once every four years and the programme has, in the past two years, covered eight departments. The outcomes of these reviews are detailed and provide pointers to improvement in those subjects reviewed. The overall process is not, however, sufficiently well focused to bring about rapid change. The long timeframe means that some departments will wait for almost four years to be reviewed. The intention is that, between reviews, there should be monitoring within departments. To enable this to happen, all heads of department are allocated one teaching period each week to monitor some aspects of work in their department. These staff have had limited preparation or guidance for this task and there is no systematic communication and evaluation by members of senior management about how this monitoring programme is working. There is some confusion among heads of department about how they should use this time and, therefore, some do not use it effectively as a means of bringing about improvement in the quality of work in their departments. The programme represents a major investment, roughly equivalent to two thirds of a teacher and in its present format represents an inefficient use of resources.
75. Some monitoring of other aspects of the school's work takes place. Progress on the activities identified within the school development plan is reviewed during the year. The headteacher undertakes classroom observation and, with other colleagues, reviews aspects of work in classrooms through analysis of students' work and teachers' planning. The headteacher holds meetings with heads of department to review examination results and progress on departmental plans. Governors pay visits to the school, usually focusing their time in the department to which they are attached. These monitoring and review activities are not, however, sufficiently well co-ordinated into a strategy which leads to improvements in overall standards in the school. For the past three years, reviews of curriculum arrangements have been undertaken in order to accommodate changes in National Curriculum or sixth form course requirements, but these reviews have had a narrow focus and have missed opportunities to look at more fundamental arrangements for providing an effective framework for teaching the curriculum.
76. Heads of department generally manage their subjects effectively. They ensure that, within their subject, students are encouraged to achieve well. Heads of department are appreciative of the interest shown in their work by their link governor. Generally there is a shared commitment within departments to improve, but efforts to achieve this are not well co-ordinated across the school. The school has neither a policy or a long-term strategic plan for the development of ICT across the curriculum and the management and co-ordination of ICT across the curriculum is limited. The school is not yet tracking the contribution of other subjects to the use of ICT.
77. Members of the governing body take a close interest in the school. A governor is always invited to participate in departmental reviews. A committee structure enables

governors to explore in detail specific aspects of the school's life and work. Governors are, however, too dependent on the information they are given by the headteacher and other senior members of staff. They are not sufficiently able to participate in shaping the strategic direction of the school on a regular basis, because there is no mechanism for the widespread discussion of priorities or the shaping of a long-term plan for improvement. They do not properly fulfil some of their functions as critical friend, for instance, in questioning the balance of expenditure or in monitoring the impact of their decisions. Governors have not ensured that adequate provision is made for the teaching of religious education in the school or for all students to be able to take part in a daily act of collective worship. Both of these matters were highlighted in the report of the previous inspection. Neither have they ensured that the necessary resources are available to teachers to enable the application of ICT to be taught effectively across all subjects. This is because they have not had the benefit of a long-term strategic plan to guide budget planning and management over several years. Thus the governing body is not as effective as it could be in fulfilling some of its responsibilities.

78. Governors and staff are fully committed to bringing about improvement in the school, but they are limited in what they can achieve by the lack of a coherent strategy which would co-ordinate their efforts. Within departments, within teams of year tutors and within groups of the governing body, much good work goes on. The improved levels of care for students, improvements in teaching and learning, better use of assessment information to guide planning and the improvements to library provision are just a few examples of where progress is being made. None of these improvements, however, is part of an overarching plan, articulated with clarity, so those working on them do not have a clear vision of how their work is contributing to overall improvement. The capacity of the school to succeed in bringing about the desired improvement is thus only satisfactory.
79. The management of special educational needs provision is satisfactory overall. The management of provision for two specific groups of students is well integrated into overall management of the special needs department. Parents are rightly very appreciative of the work of the special educational needs co-ordinator and her team. Good management of this department is characterised by clear documentation, detailed record keeping, satisfactory communication with subject departments and constructive leadership of the support staff. Where management of provision for students with special educational needs could be improved is in setting more detailed targets within the students' individual education plans and in improving the provision made within some subject departments. Long-term development of this work is hampered by the fact that the departmental development plan is, as elsewhere in the school, for only one year.
80. The school is adequately staffed and in most subjects there are sufficient specialists. However, a lack of specialist teaching in religious education has been a significant factor in the very limited teaching of this subject in the school in recent years. The school makes good arrangements for the induction of staff who are new to the school or to the teaching profession. Arrangements for the performance management of teaching staff meet statutory requirements and professional development planning is linked to priorities identified within departments and in the school as a whole.
81. The school is generally adequately resourced, in terms of the availability of books and equipment. Good progress has been made on providing research facilities with the relocation and better equipping of the library. The appointment of a qualified librarian has helped enhance the value of this facility. Resources are adequate in most departments, except for inadequate access to computers and other ICT equipment.

The number of computers available is below what might be expected nationally and some of the older equipment, although serviceable, is not compatible with newer systems. The use of newer technology to enhance the teaching of ICT is also limited.

82. The school buildings and site are well maintained and provide an attractive environment for teachers and students to work in. There is limited space for work in history and music, as well as for the provision of the necessary ICT equipment. The school has a rolling programme of refurbishment and redecoration which helps to maintain the buildings in an attractive state. Students respect the school environment and there is little evidence of graffiti or vandalism. Senior staff and governors review budgets and resource management on an annual basis, but limited use is made of national comparative information in reviewing expenditure patterns. Moreover, because the school does not plan on a longer timescale than one year, the effectiveness of overall resource management is reduced. Thus the school only makes satisfactory overall use of its resources and the principles of best value are only applied to a limited extent. The school is not generously funded, when compared nationally and so, given the shortcomings in several aspects of provision and the relatively slow improvement in standards, the school gives only satisfactory value for money.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

83. In order to bring about a more rapid improvement in standards and to ensure that the school fulfils all statutory requirements, governors and staff should take the necessary steps to:
- Improve leadership in the school, by:
 - involving all staff and governors in reviewing and agreeing the fundamental priorities for improvement;
 - maximising the effectiveness of all members of the school community by strengthening both delegation and accountability;
 (*paragraphs 10, 71, 73 and 77*)
 - improve strategic management, by:
 - producing a long-term coherent strategic plan for school improvement, based around agreed priorities;
 - putting in place systems for monitoring and evaluation of the effectiveness of all its decisions and actions in terms of both cost and outcomes;
 (*paragraphs 5, 10, 53, 58, 60, 61, 72, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 82, 94, 112, 120, 181 and 191*)
 - improve information and communication technology provision in the school, by:
 - improving access to resources;
 - extending the availability of resources to all departments and thus to all students;
 - extending the role of the ICT co-ordinator and defining this role more clearly;
 - planning the use of ICT across the curriculum by ensuring that ICT is identified within all Schemes of Work;
 - monitoring the use of ICT across the curriculum;
 - developing effective means of assessing students' capability in ICT across all subjects;
 - ensuring effective co-ordination of on-going staff training;

(paragraphs 9, 28, 32, 37, 72, 76, 81, 89, 93, 118, 124, 128, 129, 134, 145, 149, 154, 168 and 181)

- improve attendance levels in the school, by:
 - developing more rigorous systems for the collection and analysis of attendance data;
 - ensuring more consistency in the approach of staff to following-up on absences;
 - emphasising to both students and parents the need for regular attendance at school;

(paragraphs 10, 23 and 56)

- ensure that all students in the school are able to study a course in religious education which meets the requirements of the agreed syllabus;
(paragraphs 5, 28, 37, 77, 80, 182, 184, 185 and 190)

- provide all students with the opportunity to take part in a daily act of collective worship.
(paragraphs 44 and 77)

In addition, the school should include the following issue in its action plan:

- take the necessary steps to make sure that all staff and students arrive punctually to all lessons.
(paragraphs 10, 24, 32 and 118)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	153
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	70

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
1	19	52	25	3	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y9 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	643	163
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	48	0

Special educational needs	Y9 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	23	4
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	175	7

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	13

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	22
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	35

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	90.3
National comparative data	93.7

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	1.1
National comparative data	0.4

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	111	78	189

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	57	81	78
	Girls	55	53	45
	Total	112	134	123
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	59 (56)	71 (68)	65 (64)
	National	63 (63)	65 (62)	59 (55)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	22 (13)	45 (43)	30 (24)
	National	28 (28)	42 (38)	30 (23)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	71	83	60
	Girls	63	58	35
	Total	134	141	95
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	70 (63)	75 (72)	51 (46)
	National	64 (64)	66 (64)	62 (60)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	27 (28)	48 (45)	30 (18)
	National	31 (31)	39 (37)	29 (28)

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4

Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	103	120	223

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	32	93	100
	Girls	64	112	115
	Total	96	205	215
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	43.2(46)	92.3 (86)	96.8 (96)
	National	47.4 (46.6)	90.6 (90.9)	95.6 (95.8)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	36
	National	38.4

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

Vocational qualifications		Number	% success rate
Number studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	0	n/a
	National	n/a	n/a

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
	2000	35	31	66

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	14.94	18.0	16.38	1.0	0	2.0
National	17.7	18.6	18.2	2.6	2.9	2.7

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	1
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	4
Chinese	3
White	635
Any other minority ethnic group	0

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	54	2
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y9 – Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	52.7
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	15.4

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y9 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	19
Total aggregate hours worked per week	347

Deployment of teachers: Y9 – Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	77.2
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Average teaching group size: Y9 – Y13

Key Stage 3	24.3
Key Stage 4	20.7
Sixth Form	13.7

Financial information

Financial year	1999 - 2000
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	£
Total income	1,970,266
Total expenditure	1,964,653
Expenditure per pupil	2,417
Balance brought forward from previous year	30,029
Balance carried forward to next year	35,642

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate 17.6%

Number of questionnaires sent out	806
Number of questionnaires returned	142

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	29	56	11	4	0
My child is making good progress in school.	35	60	3	1	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	20	56	11	6	7
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	13	54	25	6	2
The teaching is good.	22	63	8	3	4
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	30	49	15	5	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	36	54	4	3	3
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	41	53	5	1	0
The school works closely with parents.	20	52	21	5	2
The school is well led and managed.	24	57	8	5	6
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	25	61	9	3	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	25	47	10	6	12

Other issues raised by parents

Twenty seven parents attended a meeting with the Registered Inspector before the inspection took place and 22 parents added comments to the questionnaire. In general, comments from both these sources expressed similar feelings as represented in the questionnaire analysis above. A number of parents expressed concern about the large number of staff changes experienced by some classes during the past 18 months, especially in English and drama.

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

ENGLISH

84. As at the time of the previous inspection, standards in English are below the national average at the end of both Key Stages 3 and 4. However, within that judgement there are improvements. Students enter the school with below national average attainment in English, especially in verbal reasoning. This has a significant effect on the Key Stage 3 national test results and partly accounts for the results in English being below the attainment in mathematics and science. There are more boys than girls in the school and nationally boys tend to perform less well than girls in English. In fact, the boys are now almost in line with the national average for boys at the end of Key Stage 3 and slightly better than the national average by the end of Key Stage 4. This reflects the commendable efforts made by teachers who have successfully employed deliberate strategies to improve boys' performance.
85. In Key Stage 4 the number of students achieving A* to C grades in English is below the national average. The school enters more students than the national average for GCSE English and students achieve better than the national average in terms of A* to G grades. Students with special educational needs are entered for GCSE and for the Certificate for Achievement, which means that all students have a good chance of gaining an external examination qualification. The school has analysed the effect of setting and made amendments from the present Year 11 onwards in order to help more students enter for the higher tier paper in English and, therefore, stand a better chance of gaining a C grade. The top three sets out of five are entered for English Literature and students gain above national average results. There is also an option for media studies at GCSE, which is popular with students across the attainment range and is well taught. The results for media studies are also above the national average. In the sixth form, all students taking English and the new media studies course gained an A-level in the year 2000. The year 2000 results for English show improvement from 1999.
86. The work seen during the inspection indicates some improvements since the previous inspection. The school is successfully raising boys' standards as the teachers deliberately adapt the choice of texts, the seating arrangements and the activities in order to engage boys more fully. The setting arrangements have been carefully revised to encourage the maximum number of students to take the higher tier paper in English and to help redress the imbalance of girls and boys in any given set. The provision of revision classes and individual targeting of students who are on the borderline levels or grades also help to raise expectations and standards. The additional choice of media studies at GCSE and A-level widens the scope for students to use their skills in English. Where there is good teaching, the higher attaining students work to develop their own style and skills of analysis.
87. Students make satisfactory progress with English skills as they progress through the school. As in the previous inspection report, students speak confidently and communicate clearly. Most listen attentively and follow discussions and instructions. When expectations are high, students give thoughtful responses. For example, in a top set Year 10 English lesson, students were engrossed with the teacher's account of a personal incident, given as an example of a life enhancing, memorable, experience – an epiphany. Students then shared their own moments, choosing their words carefully to express the wonder or the fear that they had felt. Such opportunities also add to the students' spiritual development, encouraging them to reflect on life and death issues.

88. Reading skills in Year 9 are mostly in line with students' chronological ages. For those with reading ages of two years or more below, there is helpful additional support from adults and from the sixth form, who pair with Year 9 students and listen to them read. The school has identified that the main issue with reading is the depth of understanding. This improves as students progress through Key Stage 4, with good teachers focusing clearly on analysing texts in detail. For example, a top set Year 11 responded well to the challenge of identifying key features of effective political speeches. They use technical terms, such as rhetorical questions and antithesis, and noticed the use of alliteration, repetition and pauses. They showed a good understanding of manipulation of an audience through the subtle use of language. These skills are further developed, in terms of visual literacy, in media studies lessons. Year 12 students accurately identify details of production and editing, which convey hidden meaning, such as the use of the screen, the settee and the staircase in *Blind Date*. Teachers are aware of the need to develop students' skills for finding the underlying meaning and interpreting what they read in order to raise attainment further.
89. In Year 9, most students use clear cursive handwriting and have sound presentation skills. Spelling and punctuation is reasonably accurate. Noting key spellings, not just in English, but across other subjects such as science and design technology, helps reinforce correct spelling and use of specific specialist terms. Lower attaining students still need help with structuring their work. They benefit from good special needs support and from the use of writing frames, both in English and in some other subjects, such as geography and history. A good variety of writing activities encourages even the lowest attainers to commit their ideas to paper. For example, the lowest set in Year 10 designed posters conveying their ideas about how to help the homeless. Some students showed an awareness of the need to write appropriately for a given audience and chose to use the mobile phone texting conventions, such as U for you and 2 for to. The highest attaining students write with an awareness of style, with the better teachers striving for an imaginative use of language and analysis. Teachers' detailed marking, at all key stages, helps all students understand what they are doing well and indicates how to improve. There is a lack of consistent reference to the criteria for National Curriculum levels at Key Stage 3 which means that students are not always clear as to the exact features which would help them achieve a better level. The sound use of word-processing and desktop publishing enhances presentation and develops some of the key information and communication technology skills. However, opportunities for using computers are limited and could usefully be extended, especially with lower attainers.
90. Most students have positive attitudes to English. Those who lack confidence are well supported in small sets and through additional support that enables them focus on the tasks in hand. Students co-operate with each other and benefit from working individually, in pairs and in groups. Some are initially reticent in expressing opinions, but where there is good teaching they overcome this. Where students have had consistently good teaching, behaviour and concentration are good.
91. Students with English as an additional language who need extra support are taught in the smaller groups for English in order to offer individual and detailed help. This is a good arrangement for those students who also have special educational needs as they benefit from specially prepared work. It is less satisfactory for higher attaining students who would benefit from the stimulation and discussion in the higher sets. It does, however, allow students to receive sound individual support and ensures that they all make satisfactory progress, as the teachers know them well and targets their individual needs.

92. Teaching and learning are good overall. Teaching at Key Stage 3 is at least satisfactory, with the exception of one unsatisfactory lesson. Where lessons are sound, they are well planned, but students do not always complete all tasks. This happens when the lesson lacks a sense of urgency or does not start on time. During such lessons, students are not pushed to work to their full potential. For example, teachers tend to accept the first answer without encouraging students to develop their ideas more fully. Where teaching is unsatisfactory, the students are not kept on task and classroom management is insufficiently firm. At Key Stage 4, the teaching seen was at least satisfactory and mainly good. Features of good lessons include a stimulating range of activities with a clear focus and a brisk delivery. There is a sense of purpose and expectations of students doing their best. Students respond with enthusiasm to good teaching. For example, they join in brainstorming in media studies and show that they are thinking hard about the possible features of reality television. In a Year 11 English lesson, they debate imagery in a poem by Thomas Hardy which shows a serious exploration of the use of the words, such as 'shrinking', or of his portrayal of death. Students benefit from individual comments as teachers circulate and discuss their work, as well as the thorough marking of written homework and class work. Teaching and learning in the sixth form is at least satisfactory. Good features include an interesting range of activities, such as analysing newspaper extracts or filling in thematic grids. There is, on occasions, too much teacher input and a lack of challenge to students in order to expand their ideas further.
93. There is a policy for literacy across the curriculum. The planned appointment of a co-ordinator in order to monitor literacy across all subjects is an important development. With the weakness in English identified on entry to the school, students need to have literacy skills reinforced across the entire curriculum in a consistent and rigorous way and this is beginning to be accomplished. Students also have insufficient access to the use of information and communication technology to help raise standards in key skills.
94. Finally, although there is a helpful process of external departmental reviews, this is not built on through an on-going system of regular, formal, observation of teaching in order to maintain a consistent and rigorous approach to raising standards further.

Drama

95. All students have two blocks of drama, each of approximately eight weeks duration in Year 9, which gives them a chance to develop some key concepts about improvisation and scripted texts before selecting options for GCSE. The work in Key Stage 3 reinforces speaking and listening skills, which are fundamental to raising standards in English. It also builds confidence in the students and helps them to work collaboratively.
96. The option for GCSE is taken by 19 students in the present Year 11 and 18 in Year 10, which allows for good work in groups and a sense of audience when performing. As in the previous report, results at GCSE are good which reflects, in part, the selection process. The new head of department is keen to open drama to a wider attainment range. This idea of including all those who show an interest is already obvious in the recent successful production of *Oliver*, which involved a very wide range of students. At present, there are very small groups in the sixth form, but they are working to a good standard.
97. Teaching and learning in drama is at least satisfactory with good features. For example, there is a careful choice of text to allow for all reading abilities in Year 9 with a well planned build up of activities leading to a performance. Students, at all key

stages, are involved in discussing good points and areas for improvement. The studio is adequate in terms of size for present numbers. Students make good use of stage lighting and flats that help create a sense of production. Year 12 and 13 students work well with the teacher and benefit from in depth discussion of their work.

MATHEMATICS

98. This is a very good department with many strengths. Attainment in mathematics by the end of Year 9, in national tests, has improved slightly over the last three years. The 2000 results for the school were above the national average at Levels 5 and 6, but slightly below the proportion achieving Level 7 or above. The achievement by boys and girls was very similar at Levels 5 and 6, but more boys than girls achieved Level 7 or above.
99. At the end of Key Stage 4 in 2000 the proportion of students achieving A* to C grades in GCSE examinations was above the national average. All students who were entered for GCSE gained an A* to G grade, which exceeds the national average. Girls significantly achieved the greater proportion of the A* to C grades in 2000, exceeding the national average by 10 percentage points. These results are consistent with the students' performance in national tests at Key Stage 3 in 1998. The performance in mathematics is similar to the figures for science, but above those for English. Despite the relatively weaker performance by boys in 2000, the proportion attaining the A* or A grades matches that of the girls and the national picture. Since the last inspection the proportion of students achieving A* to C grades has steadily improved.
100. In 2000, the proportion of students gaining the higher A and B grades at A-level was below the national average, but most of the 23 students who entered GCE A- and AS-level mathematics gained a pass grade. The number of students who achieved a pass grade was a slight improvement on the figure for 1999. All students taking GCSE mathematics in the sixth form in 2000 achieved a pass grade. Since the last inspection, the good standards being achieved in the sixth form have been maintained.
101. Evidence from observation of lessons, discussion with students and an examination of their work, shows that achievement by students in Year 9 is at least in line with that expected nationally. They are developing sound mental recall and gaining confidence with numerical calculations, estimation and the use calculators. Higher attaining students are achieving well across all aspects of the subject. These students are able to apply their mathematics in different situations, commensurate with that expected for a Level 7 in national tests. For example, a group of Year 9 students deepened their knowledge of transformation of shapes, through using a computer programme where they were expected to describe the movements of a shape drawn on a graph. However, the more able students in this year are not always sufficiently extended in their learning through the work set in lessons. Lower attaining pupils in Year 9 and those with learning difficulties work well with decimals and fractions and can add and subtract numbers accurately. Where positive attitudes, good behaviour and sustained concentration is of a high level in lessons, these make a positive contribution to the standards and the good learning that is being achieved by the students.
102. The work seen in lessons during the inspection revealed that the attainment by students at the end of Key Stage 4 is at least in line with that expected for this age group. High attaining students in a Year 10 group are given demanding tasks by their teachers, for example, when working with inequalities and their associated graphs.

These students have good understanding of the principles of algebra and competently rearrange equations to find unknown values. Students in another Year 10 group demonstrated their understanding of the relationship between the sides of a right angled triangle. They confidently applied Pythagoras' rule and used it to find the value of the unknown sides. Both sets of students set out their work in a logical way, demonstrating their confidence and understanding with these complex topics. A Year 11 group of high attaining students estimated the area formed under curves by dividing the area into a number of trapeziums. By adding all the various areas together, they successfully calculated the cumulative area. A similar set of Year 11 students deepened their learning about straight line graphs and were able to calculate the gradients of such lines with confidence. The quality of students' coursework for GCSE is of a particularly good standard and demonstrates their ability to apply their mathematics successfully to new situations. Through investigations, and coursework at GCSE, students are able to display their intellectual and creative skills.

103. Students with special educational needs continue to make good progress with their learning through both key stages. These students gain confidence with basic mathematics, learn to apply the four rules of number to a range of problems, work with decimals and use the measurements of length, capacity and time correctly. They continue to develop these skills for the Certificate of Achievement and all have the opportunity to be entered for GCSE in Year 11. The in-class support these students receive, particularly in Year 9, adds considerably to their learning and confidence.
104. Students in Year 12 are coping well with the rigours of the new AS-level courses in mathematics. In one group, students confidently reduced algebraic fractions to their lowest form, building on their knowledge and skills with similar work on fractions. Generally students display good learning habits and are capable of research and independent learning, although the opportunities for these are limited in lessons. Students working towards the further mathematics AS-level are equally confident when working with equations written in a modulus format. They understand the principle and are able to represent it graphically. Similarly, students working on the problems associated with impulse and momentum are developing good problem solving skills through correctly applying these aspects of mechanics. These students, and others taking mathematics in the sixth form, are enthused and motivated through good teaching.
105. The department has a clear aim to develop students' numerical skills through their mathematical education. The recently revised scheme of work for Year 9 makes provision for this basic skill development and for an increase in the use of information and communications technology (ICT). The vast majority of students acquire good skills in the handling of number, measurement, fractions, decimals and percentages and are able to convert from one form to another confidently. However, students in low ability groups will become muddled over, for example, place value when converting single figure percentages to decimals. The high standards of presentation depict the confidence students have in using ICT.
106. In subjects other than mathematics students apply their numeracy skills in a satisfactory way. Students understand co-ordinates and interpret data presented graphically. They use population pyramids to display data in geography. In science at Key Stage 4 they measure the speed and acceleration of objects and accurately present their findings graphically. Further improvement of these skills will not occur until a whole school approach to numerical competence is fully implemented. Students generally have good listening skills, but their oral skills and their confidence in explaining mathematical processes are areas for improvement which will only occur when the department implements in full the school's literacy policy in mathematics.

107. The quality of teaching in mathematics is good overall. This represents an improvement on the last inspection. Teachers work hard at planning interesting lessons that motivate and stimulate students to learn and this is impacting on the standards they achieve and the quality of their learning. All teachers have very good subject knowledge, which is effectively used through exposition, demonstration and questioning of students.
108. In the very good lessons, teachers use well planned and structured activities. These lessons move on at a brisk pace, where expectations are high and students succeed well, making good gains in knowledge and understanding. The skilful mix of probing questions, discussion and a range of exploratory activities underpins the standards that are being achieved by students. Tasks are usually well matched to the range of ability within the teaching group although, in some lessons, the more able students would benefit from being stretched and challenged.
109. Teachers generally have high expectation for their students. This is most noticeable in the way students listen to the teacher, undertake the tasks set and record their work in their books. Teachers usually share the purpose of each lesson with students at the start and readily use the responses to ascertain their prior knowledge and understanding and stimulate discussion. The effective use of the overhead projector and a range of other visual aids ensures that students receive very good explanations. Students in a Year 10 class very quickly understood Pythagoras' theorem through the visual aid used by the teacher. The positive relationships that exist between students and teachers ensure that a purposeful working atmosphere is created in most lessons.
110. Where teaching is not so effective, expectations for the students are unclear and the learning is insufficiently structured to meet the varying needs of the students in the group. Words displayed around each classroom are not used enough to secure greater understanding by students of the vocabulary in common use in mathematics. Teachers do not always give consideration to the skills that students will need to use in their lessons and identify these in their planning. The strategy adopted by some teachers to conclude a lesson through a short summary brings notable benefits to students' learning and establishes the link to the next one.
111. The marking of work is systematically undertaken and students receive good feedback from teachers on where they can improve. The frequent assessment of students' work undertaken by teachers provides solid evidence of their level of attainment and how it matches with the targets set for the end of Key Stage 3 or for the GCSE. The regular use of tests and more rigorously assessed pieces of work act as a good motivator to students for achieving success at the end of Key Stages 3 and 4. Students in the sixth form receive progress reports at regular intervals and these provide a valuable guide to their achievement in mathematics.
112. The department has excellent facilities and is very effectively led by an experienced teacher. A team of dedicated, enthusiastic and experienced teachers shares the management of the subject. The working practices of the team are of a high standard. The sharing of ideas and good practices enhance the professional dialogue that occurs throughout the day. This extends further through regular monitoring and evaluation of the work of the department. There is a strong team ethic that has effectively supported and sustained teachers over a number of years. The development plan for mathematics reflects the priorities identified by the school, but the short-term nature of the plan restricts the effectiveness that would accrue from long-term thinking and planning.

113. The department has made good progress with the issues arising from the last inspection, in particular with the improvement of students' numerical skills. It continues to strive to increase the access and application of ICT in the teaching of mathematics across all years. There is considerable capacity within the department to take forward the issues raised in this report.

SCIENCE

114. The attainment of students at the end of Key Stage 3 is above the national average. In 2000, test results were above the national average, as they have been over the past three years. This represents an improvement from the last inspection report. Boys' performance is slightly better than that of girls. Teachers' assessments are generally in line with the final test results. Observations in lessons and scrutiny of work reflect the standards produced in tests. By the end of the key stage, high attaining students have developed competent investigative skills, can demonstrate good understanding of scientific concepts in all areas of the curriculum and can apply them to a wide range of tasks. They are able, for instance, to use kinetic theory to explain changes of state, describe variation and its causes in various species and, in physical science, they can explain the transmission of sound and describe resonance. Students with special educational needs are able to explain the nature of solids, liquid and gases in terms of simple kinetic theory and can draw diagrams to explain how light travels through lenses. Good teaching at this key stage enables students to make good gains in understanding in relation to prior attainment.
115. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 is very slightly above the national average. Results in 2000 are close to the national average for students achieving grades A* to C in GCSE, but above average for students achieving A* to G grades. These results show an improvement from the last inspection with more students now attaining A* or A grades and all students achieving at least grade G. Insufficient attention has been paid to helping students close to the borderline between grades C and D to attain the higher of these grades. Observations in lessons, and scrutiny of work, indicate that these students are not sufficiently involved and that there is over emphasis on teacher guidance. Girls' performance is better than that of boys, which reflects the national pattern. Over the past three years, the results closely track the national trend and indicate that most students are making satisfactory gains in understanding. Students with special educational needs are entered for both GCSE single science and the Certificate of Achievement and make good progress. Observations in lessons and scrutiny of work confirm these standards. By the end of the key stage, high attaining students have developed good investigative skills and can give clear explanations showing good understanding in all other aspects of science. They can carry out calculations accurately on problems related to sound waves. They are also able to explain the process and applications of osmosis, can work out formulae for compounds and balance chemical equations. Low attaining students and students with special educational needs can plan fair experiments and make relevant predictions based on their prior learning.
116. Sixth form students obtain results in line with their prior attainment. The variation in the number of entrants for chemistry, physics and biology makes the identification of trends difficult. Lesson observations and scrutiny of work files confirm that most students achieve in line with course expectations. High attaining students are on course to achieve the higher grades. Chemistry students, for example, are able to relate the size of atomic radii to bond energies, lattice enthalpy and solubility. Physics students can carry out calibrations of various instruments and use differential equations in investigations into simple harmonic motion. In Biology, students can

carry out sophisticated investigations into environments and explain ventilation movements in insects. High attaining students are particularly adept in applying their knowledge and skills to new situations.

117. Teaching and learning are good in Key Stage 3 and satisfactory in both Key Stage 4 and the sixth form. Teaching in Key Stage 3 is mainly good and sometimes very good. Although teaching in Key Stage 4 is considered to be satisfactory overall, with almost half being good, a small number of unsatisfactory lessons was observed. One third of lessons in the sixth form were good, with the remainder being satisfactory. Overall, there is more good teaching now than at the time of the previous inspection. Most lessons have a definite structure, which includes a definite beginning, with a sharing of lesson objectives with the students, a development section and a final plenary to check on learning. However, there are inconsistencies in teaching that produce different rates of learning. In the most successful lessons there is a bright, lively introduction that immediately engages the students and the pace of working is good. Students are involved in investigations. They have to report and explain their findings to their classmates and the lesson ends with a final check that learning objectives have been achieved. This was well demonstrated in a Year 9 lesson on sound, where students arrived to find a wide range of equipment on display (guitar, violin, cornet, oscilloscope, signal generator, loudspeaker, bottles, tubes, slinky, tuning forks). Students enthusiastically discussed the learning objectives and worked enthusiastically as groups were given individual investigations to carry out. The gains in understanding and self-confidence were clear as students reported back and explained what they had found and learned. The final check of understanding by the teacher showed that learning had been deep and rapid.
118. In the small number of lessons where the teaching is unsatisfactory, there is too much teacher direction, low expectations in terms of the amount of work required and little input from the students. The pace is usually moderate and the rate of learning slow. In one lesson, students worked passively with little interest as they listened to the teacher and then copied from the board, whilst in another lesson the students expressed their disinterest by frequently straying off task and causing the teacher to waste time trying to bring them into line. There is some lack of punctuality to lessons and teachers accept this too readily. Overall, students are well behaved and persevere with their work, but a consistent departmental approach to discipline would keep all students on task for longer and consequently improve learning and results. Computers are not well used in the presentation of work for enhancing learning in science. There is a marked lack of suitable computer equipment in the department. There is some emphasis on the correct use of scientific vocabulary, but there are few opportunities for extended writing. Numeracy skills are well used to present and analyse results.
119. Books are regularly marked and graded, but not enough helpful, subject related, comments are given. Reports to parents give a good idea of course content and the progress being made, but do not give a clear indication of particular weaknesses in science. A more diagnostic approach to marking and reporting would enable students to become more fully involved in their own learning. Teaching is not monitored enough to ensure that best practice is shared or weaknesses identified.
120. The quality of the documentation is good and the departmental handbook provides all the necessary information for new teachers to quickly settle in. There is a good short-term development plan, but there is a need for better liaison with senior management over long term planning. There is a good system of data collection, assessment and mentoring. The head of department fosters a good spirit of teamwork and the two technicians play a very important role here, where great emphasis is placed on

practical investigations. This is a hard-working department with many strong features. It is in a good position to eliminate weaknesses and improve results.

ART AND DESIGN

121. By the end of Key Stage 3, attainment overall is in line with national expectations with a significant number of students achieving above the national standard. Students enter the school with a low skills and knowledge base in many elements of the art and design curriculum. The strong emphasis given to skills acquisition and increasing knowledge and understanding compensates well for areas of weakness. This, and the developing and comprehensive scheme of work, contribute greatly to the improving standards. At the end of Key Stage 4, the proportion of students gaining A* to C grades in GCSE examinations in 2000 was slightly below the national average, but has improved by over 50 per cent since the previous inspection. The number gaining at least a G grade is above the national average. This represents a considerable upward trend and grade forecasts for the coming year indicate that this improvement can be sustained and increased. Effective work is being undertaken to improve boys' standards relative to those of girls. Results for the small number of students taking A-Level are above the national average.
122. During Year 9 students' knowledge, understanding, use of specialist language and terminology are increasing, as is their use of a wide range of media including graded pencils, paint and clay. Observational drawing is given a high priority. The portrait project in Year 9 emphasising accuracy, proportion, quality of line and the construction of the eye, helps students' confidence and increasing skills level. Students' three-dimensional work in clay, where shape, proportion and construction are strong elements, is also adding to their wide range of experiences and visual awareness. Students have a working knowledge of a wide range of artists and designers from different periods and cultures, including Egyptian, African and European. Students demonstrate a good balance between imaginative responses and technical skills. During Key Stage 4, students build upon their Year 9 experience. They develop and achieve well, taking ideas and themes through to successful conclusions, using the works of artists such as Moore, Frink and the sculptor Giacometti as starting points. They make visual decisions with confidence and reasoning and explore their own ideas within coursework units. Sixth form students work with confidence and commitment. They understand the importance of colour, line composition and texture; also how these elements can influence and help them portray their ideas in painting and ceramics. Many have well developed styles of working and an involvement that leads to them producing a range of high quality, well presented, paintings and drawings.
123. The quality of teaching at Key Stages 3 and 4 is at least good and is sometimes very good. Teaching in the sixth form is very good. Teaching is a strength of the department and is having a very positive impact on students learning, attitudes and achievement. It is conducted with confidence, flair and imagination against a background of very good subject knowledge in a very supportive atmosphere. Planning is carefully thought through and quality time is given to discussion, project introduction and demonstrations of techniques when appropriate, such as in the application of linear decoration and coil construction. Tasks build upon previous experiences and the needs of the individual are given a high priority. Students of all abilities, including those with learning difficulties, are helped to express their ideas in media that suit their interest and aptitude. Good use is made of homework to practise skills and develop ideas relating to projects and a high emphasis is given to quality. Students respond, develop and achieve well. This is reflected in their willingness to

try different ways of working and experiment with a variety of media within a structured framework of projects. Relationships and attitudes are good, students feel valued and work proceeds at a good pace.

124. The Year 9 curriculum ensures that all students are capable of following a GCSE course at Key Stage 4. The schemes of work are comprehensive and syllabus requirements at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form are fully met. Good opportunities are provided for students to work in the department at lunchtimes and sixth form students are able to use the facilities throughout the week. Assessment and recording systems are in place and are used well. Work is marked regularly and comments help students to improve. The use of computers across the department has not improved since the previous inspection, mainly due to lack of access to equipment.
125. The leadership of the art and design department is enthusiastic and effective. The head of department has a clear view of art and design in the context of the whole school and has some backing and encouragement from a member of the governing body. Documentation is informative and the development plan is realistic. The department has exceeded its targets for examination results. Staff are well qualified and work well together. They are enthusiastic and hardworking in their efforts to develop a stimulating and varied curriculum to take the subject forward and raise standards still further. Accommodation is good and provides an atmosphere that helps visual investigation at all levels. Very high quality displays in the department and around the school celebrate students' work.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

126. At the end of Key Stage 3, students' attainment was, according to teacher assessments in 2000, below the national average. The full course GCSE results for grades A* to C in the same year were above the national average. The pass rate at A* to C grades for short courses at GCSE were variable, ranging from above the national average to well below in the examinations offered. Overall, the results both key stages continue to improve.
127. The evidence from the work seen during the inspection shows that by the end of Key Stage 3, students' attainment is above the standard expected nationally. The department's concentration on developing skills in designing and making has ensured good quality outcomes in resistant materials, graphics, electronics and food technology. Students have an understanding of designing and ways of presenting their work to communicate their ideas for designs. Standards of technical skills are good. Students understand the working characteristics of a range of materials and how to use tools safely and accurately. The quality of finished products demonstrates an attention to detail, accuracy and precision. When designing and making a storage system for CDs, students fit their design to very specific criteria, select suitable materials and use construction processes confidently and with some accuracy. They are familiar with graphic and illustration techniques and produce covers for CDs which are colourful and appealing. In food technology lessons, students are able to write a specification for sweet and savoury foods and produce products to a very high standard. Students are able to make decisions about suitable ingredients and have an understanding of what constitutes a healthy balanced diet.
128. From the evidence of students' design work and practical projects, their attainment by the end of Key Stage 4 is above national expectations. Current work with resistant materials, graphic design and food technology is above the expected standard and students pay particular attention to accuracy, quality of finish and the selection of

materials and ingredients. In their design work they develop an understanding of construction techniques and presentation of work is of a high quality. Students have limited experience of control technology and computer aided design.

129. Students enter in Year 9 with levels of attainment that are average overall. In their early lessons, students make good progress in learning practical skills and the underlying theory on tasks that are precisely structured with clear learning objectives for each week. The department emphasises good standards of graphical skills and presentation of work. At present, there are limited opportunities to develop information and communication technology skills through the subject. Students' achievements by the time they reach the end of Year 9 are above the standard expected. Their knowledge of design technology increases steadily because they have opportunities to solve problems working independently or in groups to develop their practical and design skills, and those of investigation and research. Their skills in designing and making are developed through activities in resistant materials, electronics, graphics and food technology. In a lesson on analysing commercially produced cakes and biscuits, students made good progress because they were briefed in detail about what they had to do, listened to instructions carefully and worked in teams to specific time limits. They make good progress in developing their knowledge, understanding and skills.
130. Students' achievement by the end of Key Stage 4 is good. Their knowledge of designing and making improves steadily because students are able to consolidate their learning satisfactorily. They are able to build on their skills of designing, their practical competence in solving more complex design problems and their knowledge of food preparation. They know how their work is assessed and quickly learn how to judge their standards and how to improve. Their practical skills develop through projects, for example, packaging a food product for a special promotion.
131. By the end of Key Stage 4, students can design and make packaging for different products and use materials and processes to make items of furniture. In graphics lessons they can design and produce models to demonstrate their ideas and can use their imagination to produce creative designs for a range of products. They evaluate commercially produced snack foods as part of a project to prepare their own snack meals using a variety of basic ingredients. Students develop design briefs for their projects and can communicate their ideas verbally, graphically and in writing. At both key stages, students with special education needs make good progress, especially when extra support is provided in class.
132. The behaviour of students and their attitude to learning is always good. Students show an interest in their work and maintain good levels of concentration to work to their best standards. They listen attentively and watch carefully to understand what they must do and show pride in their achievements. They respond well to teachers and they are able to work without close supervision. They take responsibility for their areas of work and in organising their tasks.
133. Teaching throughout the department is good. Teachers have a very good knowledge of the subject and plan well to ensure that lessons have suitable pace. The department has made good progress since the last inspection in the development of a very good scheme of work and in the establishment of projects which enable students to develop their research skills in a variety of contexts. The joint planning covering all aspects of design and technology ensures that the work is challenging and provides progression. Practical activities are well organised and the supervision of lessons is effective, with effective teaching interventions to support and sustain individual students' learning and maintain expectations. Work is well linked to the requirements

of the National Curriculum. Teachers' expectations of students' performance and behaviour are high. Learning objectives are clearly stated and work is flexibly planned to provide for students' different levels of attainment and interests.

134. Systems have, since the last inspection, been put in place to monitor progress and attainment. Students' work in design and technology is assessed regularly and teachers give helpful oral and written comments. Assessment concentrates upon tracking experiences and outcomes and individual targets are used to inform students about what they need to do to improve their work. The department also sets overall targets for attainment across each year group. Homework is set to reinforce the content of lessons. A lack of resources restricts teaching in computer aided design and control. The department makes a satisfactory contribution to the development of students' literacy skills through discussion, writing design briefs and critical evaluation of their project work. Their vocabulary is extended through the use of key words and technical terminology. Students consolidate their numeracy skills through the use of calculation of length, weight, angles and time.
135. The leadership and management of the department are good, with a clear vision and direction leading to effective strategies to promote curricular improvements. The department has specific aims and values, including a commitment to good relationships and equality of opportunity for all, which is reflected in the work of the department. There is a shared commitment to improvement and a good capacity to succeed. There is good delegation within the department to ensure the effective contribution of staff with management responsibilities. An effective programme of monitoring, evaluation and development of teaching includes peer observation of lessons. The department has identified appropriate priorities and targets and reviews progress towards achieving them. The scheme of work and a department handbook clearly outline the policies, aims and objectives of the department. Curriculum time is below what might be expected at Key Stage 3. At present, the organisation of courses in Key Stage 4 restricts continuity in learning for students and the department still has to develop projects relating to systems and control and computer aided design.
136. Accommodation is generous and there is a good level of tools, resources and equipment available. The lack of resources for newer technologies and information and communication technology limits coverage of the programmes of study and the standards that students can attain. The technician staff make a significant contribution to the organisation of the department and on occasion work effectively with specific groups of students to assist practical work, providing advice and guidance. The department has carried out a safety audit to ensure the safe organisation of resources and accommodation. Staff are aware of health and safety requirements and risk assessments have taken place.

GEOGRAPHY

137. Standards in geography are satisfactory at Key Stage 3 and in the sixth form, but are unsatisfactory at Key Stage 4. Apart from this decline at Key Stage 4, standards are similar to those found at the previous inspection. Students' achievements by the end of Key Stage 3 are in line with those found nationally. Students collect first-hand evidence of the impact of people's use of the land, for example, by measuring the degree of erosion to a footpath at different places. Their written reports start with a hypothesis and end with an evaluation of their findings. They use graphs to present their measurements for readers of the reports. Over the last three years, the achievement of boys by the end of Key Stage 3 has improved considerably. It is now above boys' national average for teachers' assessments, but below girls'

achievement, although the gap is much smaller than previously. Careful attention has been paid to using teaching strategies which improve boys' achievement at this key stage, but have not yet been extended into Key Stage 4.

138. At Key Stage 4, where geography is an optional subject, attainment levels have fluctuated since 1996. In three out of those five years, attainment was above the national average, whilst in 1998 and 2000 attainment was below average. By the end of Key Stage 4, students achieve below national expectations. In 2000, the proportion of students attaining GCSE A* to C grades was well below the national average. Girls attained slightly below the national average for girls, but boys were well below both girls' performance and the national average for boys. Attainment of grades A* to G was broadly in line with the national average. A small number of students entered for the Certificate of Achievement in geography gained a high proportion of passes with merit or distinction. Students achieve well in lessons, stimulated by good teaching, but their coursework lacks the depth and curiosity that achieves the highest grades. Lower attaining students' written and oral answers do not explore questions fully. Their presentation is generally good in classwork, but is less so in tests. This applies more to boys' work. The progress of students with special educational needs is satisfactory. In Key Stage 4 a number of students, boys especially, have weaknesses in literacy and oracy which hinder the progress they make in geography. In otherwise satisfactory teaching, insufficient attention is given to addressing improvement in these skills through the subject.
139. Sixth form students perform above national averages at GCE A-level for grades A to E, but the proportion attaining A and B grades was below average in 2000. This is also the case in 1999, though in 1998 half the students gained A or B grades, compared with about a third nationally. Students keep their notes methodically, so that they are accessible for revision. Students show confident use of fieldwork techniques when they conduct individual enquiries, such as data collection on *river discharge*. They make good use of the Internet to obtain information and maps, and computer programs for constructing graphs and diagrams. Students' use of word-processing is good.
140. Teaching is good in the majority of lessons and satisfactory in a few lessons. Students learn effectively when teachers plan well to provide for a wide range of abilities. For example, in a Year 9 lesson, students used information from fieldwork in Evesham to recognise how housing types change from the centre to the outskirts of the town. Using photographs of different housing types, students matched these to particular areas of the town through discussion in small groups. They recorded their findings in writing with guidance on how to order their evidence. Low attaining students and those with special educational needs used a slightly different guidance sheet that they understood well. This helped them to write independently. Students learn well and enjoy lessons which involve group or individual challenge. For example, Year 11 students revised their understanding of how the sea erodes a coastline. They took turns to obtain facts about the process and explained from memory to their group. They participated well because information was graded at their level. The teacher assessed their understanding with sharp, repetitive questioning, so that they gave accurate explanations. Very occasionally learning is interrupted in a lesson where students' unsatisfactory behaviour is allowed to continue, even after students have been disciplined by the teacher.
141. A relatively new head of department leads his recently qualified colleagues well. The department development plan identifies areas for improvement, especially boys' achievement in Key Stage 4. There is much still to be done in addressing students'

weaknesses, particularly in basic skills, and matching these with suitable methods and materials. There is good practice in teaching classes with a broad mix of ability, but this good practice could be more widely and consistently used, for example, by better programmes of monitoring and follow-up by the head of department. Information from marking and assessment of pupils' work provides evidence to guide the planning of activities for classes, groups and individual students. This needs frequent analysis and application to teaching and learning so that improvement is sustained. Stimulating room displays and good provision of fieldwork for all years enhance the overall provision for the subject.

HISTORY

142. Standards of attainment are above average at all key stages. Teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 show that the percentage of students reaching Level 5 and over has been above national expectations and the percentage reaching Level 6 and over has been broadly in line for the last three years, with an improving trend. At the end of Year 11, the proportion of students attaining GCSE results of grades A* to C has been above the national average for the past three years and has improved steadily, while every student has gained at least a pass in the A* to G range. In 2000, the first year that this option was offered, one student gained a Certificate of Achievement. Results in 2000 exceeded subject targets and were broadly in line with the results for other subjects in the school. The number of students entered for GCE A-level has been too low for meaningful statistical comparisons to be made with national results. For the past two years all students entered for the exam have attained a pass grade in the A to E range. The number of students studying history in the sixth form is increasing. Standards of work seen during the inspection are also above average. Students in all key stages have produced a wide range of high standard written work such as letters, dialogues, essays and fictionalised accounts, all based on historical sources. Their work shows a steady development of knowledge and understanding about the causes and effects of historical events and a good level of research and interpretation skills.
143. Students' achievement is good in all key stages. By the end of Year 9, they all know about the causes and development of the First World War. They can all write sympathetic accounts of the conditions of child workers in nineteenth century coal mines and every student has completed a piece of biographical research. In some cases the work of less able students is restricted by less developed literacy skills, but in many cases this is overcome by drafting and re-writing of work. By the end of Year 11, students can analyse evidence such as photographs and written accounts of life in the 1930's depression and can think for themselves in order to draw conclusions about how the resulting poverty affected people. In the sixth form, students can use works of art to develop an understanding of how the world changed during the renaissance, which also widens their cultural experience. They can describe religious attitudes in the seventeenth century by analysing the use of language in pamphlets printed at the time. Because much of the learning is through either group work or skilled teacher-led discussion which draws everyone into the lesson, students of all abilities and those with special educational needs make equally good progress. In the sixth form a student with severe auditory problems is working at the same rate as his peers.
144. The standards of teaching and learning are good in both key stages and in the sixth form. All the lessons observed were satisfactory or better and almost half were very good or better. Students learned particularly well when they were put into the role of another person, as in a lesson where they had to play the part of Nazi German officials trying to decide how to use the Protestant church to their advantage. An

excellent lesson was conducted with the teacher in role as a British general leading an allied forces briefing on the day the Russians closed the West Berlin corridor. Students responded immediately by falling into role as senior officers and their full attention was focused on the political situation throughout the proceedings. In almost all lessons, students are encouraged to make their own notes rather than copying or writing from worksheets, which develops the habit of independent study. Most lessons move at a good pace because they are well planned, which means that students' attention is kept on their work and not allowed to wander from their learning. Homework is used well, as when students studying the first world war were asked to investigate their local war memorials and involve their families in finding out about relatives who fought in the war. A strong spiritual element was introduced into a lesson that examined the Nevison painting *The Harvest of War* as a prelude to understanding about conditions in the trenches in the first world war. At all times teachers use their excellent background knowledge to extend students' learning. In the weaker lessons, faulty timing or unsuitable resources prevented students from drawing their own conclusions, but these occasions were rare. Management of pupils is now very good at all times, with good relationships which produce a calm and secure working environment. This is an improvement since the last inspection when poor management and disruptive behaviour were reported. A constant need to read information, as well as presenting it in a variety of styles, makes a good contribution to students literacy skills.

145. The management of history is secure, with satisfactory improvement since the last inspection and the department has more strengths than weaknesses. The use of information and communication technology has improved and the department is developing its own website. However, because of difficulty gaining access to the computer room, use of ICT as an integral part of the learning process is still restricted. Monitoring and appraisal of teaching in the department has begun, but is not yet properly formalised as a management tool for raising standards. There has been an improvement in the planning of visits to outside locations in order to widen students' experience of original works of art, documents or buildings, but these are still not adequate to meet all the requirements of the course, particularly for Year 9 students. A new assessment system has been introduced in Key Stage 3 that is involving students in self-assessment and allowing lesson planning to take account of gaps in students' learning. Members of the departmental team work well together and are committed to high standards.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

146. Teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2000 showed that the attainment of students is in line with the standard expected nationally. This represented an improvement over the previous year. The GCSE examination results in information technology at the end of Year 11 in 2000 were above the national average and show continued improvement. These improvements reflect the steps taken to improve information and communication technology (ICT) in the school, both through the improvement in the quality of resources and the expertise available and access for students in separate ICT lessons.
147. By the end of Year 9, attainment in ICT lessons is in line with the national expectation within a range of activities and this is reflected in the average teacher assessments in 2000. In lessons, students demonstrate skills in word processing, helping to improve their spelling and presentation of work. They are familiar with spreadsheets to organise information and the simple use of formulae to make calculations. They can use desktop publishing to a high level of competence. The use of computers for most strands of the units of study is in line with that expected for students of a similar age,

as they can sufficiently develop all aspects other than control technology and computer aided design and manufacture. Students have access to the Internet and use this to obtain images and data. They can create and retrieve information from a database.

148. In Year 11, students' attainment in ICT is in line with the expected standard for 16 year olds. Students are confident enough to work independently, using a range of software. They can apply their skills to solve more complex problems, particularly in handling information and data. The higher attaining students understand and use applications to organise, refine and present information for different purposes and produce results of good quality, as seen in the project on producing a promotion package for a commercial enterprise. At both key stages, the progress of students with special educational needs in ICT lessons is good.
149. Students' achievements in their knowledge and application of a range of skills in the subject are good. They can use computers and practise these skills in some other subjects, such as science, mathematics and English, which helps their progress. In both key stages, the majority of students make satisfactory progress through a variety of activities to develop aspects of information handling, desk-top publishing and word processing. Their achievements in other strands specified in the National Curriculum is less satisfactory as insufficient attention is paid to the aspects of control systems and computer aided drawing.
150. In the sixth form, students' knowledge of ICT is of the expected standard. Standards achieved in examinations are in line with national averages with a number of students achieving higher levels. They are able to discuss their work with confidence, solve problems and come to reasonable conclusions when given a task to complete. Work folders show an attention to detail and both the quality and quantity of work fulfils the requirements of the syllabus being studied.
151. Students have good attitudes to the subject and behave very well in lessons. They treat equipment with care and, with few exceptions, work hard to master new skills. All lessons include much independent work, which students enjoy as their confidence grows. Students turn up promptly for lessons and are prepared to use their own time to complete work. They are co-operative and responsive, listen carefully to teachers' instructions, read the guidance material thoroughly and try to work accurately. They enjoy discussions about their work, set themselves suitable targets to achieve and try to meet them.
152. In specialist ICT lessons, the quality of teaching is good and this contributes to students' acquisition of subject knowledge and skills. Lessons are planned to a high standard and have suitable challenge. The management of classes is good. Clear targets are set for students of similar levels of attainment. This careful matching of work motivates students and maintains their interest. Relationships are very good and the skilled support given to students in their work quickly builds their confidence.
153. The department motivates students and recognises their success. Projects are presented in a variety of contexts giving students an understanding of the world they live in. There are good relationships in the department and the department presents a good learning environment. The students enjoy their work and persevere to achieve their best. ICT is a key area for development in the school development plan for 2000 - 2001. Management of the department is good. There are schemes of work and policy statements to support the planning, teaching, monitoring and assessment of the subject.

154. The previous inspection report indicated the need for the competent use of ICT across the curriculum. This has still not been addressed. The ratio of computers to students is below the national average and there needs to be continued investment in equipment and resources. Technical support is very good. Students are able to use computers during the lunch-time when they can develop their computer skills and have access to the Internet. The department development plan is of limited usefulness since it does not include costings, responsibilities or dates for completion.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

155. Students' attainment in French on entry to the school, and at the end of Key Stage 3, is comparable to national expectations. Spanish is provided as a taster course in Year 9, terminating in the Spring half term. There is, therefore, insufficient available evidence to provide an evaluation of standards in Spanish at Key Stage 3.
156. At Key Stage 4, in 1999 and 2000, the numbers of students gaining A* to C grades in GCSE French were below the national average. However, as the school enters candidates with a much wider range of ability than is usual in this subject, this is not a valid comparison. Evidence from the inspection, including classroom observation and scrutiny of work, indicates that standards are fully in line with national figures. Many students achieve well, but there is a gender imbalance with boys' standards in French significantly lower when compared to standards achieved by girls. GCSE results in the last two years are a little below those of previous years. There is, however, no significant evidence of a trend towards lower attainment. Results in Spanish are high and well above national figures. This is to be expected as student numbers are small and drawn from the higher attaining sets in French. At A-level, results are consistently good in both languages, though better in French than in Spanish.
157. By the end of Year 9, most students listen to recorded French dialogues based on familiar topics and accurately pick out key details. They learn, for instance, to match symbols to weather predictions for various regions of France through listening to a weather forecast on cassette. Careful guidance by their teacher helps them to recognise and use the future tense with increasing confidence by the end of the lesson. Nearly all students, irrespective of levels of attainment, learn to understand their teachers' instructions given in French. This is because teachers use French for most of the lesson, which focuses attention on explanations and on the instructions being given.
158. In speaking, most students achieve satisfactory levels of fluency. They ask and answer short questions with acceptable pronunciation. Higher attaining students learn to fill in grids noting fellow students' career intentions through a class survey carried out in French. Accuracy in pronunciation results from high expectations on the part of teachers. Errors are routinely corrected and re-practised. Students work in the knowledge that their answers will be regularly monitored. In writing, all except lower attaining students produce accurate statements using familiar vocabulary and phrases. Higher attaining students produce good work, developing the length and accuracy of their written responses. Their teachers provide creative activities such as written poems, rhymes and recipes. A number of students with special educational needs have good levels of achievement, taking into account their overall attainment levels. In a lesson on asking and giving directions and locating places in a town, most learn to say where these places are in a comprehensible way. This is a result of well planned and regular practice with picture flash cards used by the teacher.
159. In a small number of classes, attainment is poor. In these, pronunciation is heavily anglicised and students use a good deal of English and do not complete all the work

set. This is because teaching mixes English and French giving a message to students that they do not need to listen to, or respond in, the foreign language. As a result boys, in particular, are reluctant to speak and are less confident than girls.

160. In French, by the end of Key Stage 4, most students have expanded their vocabulary and use a wider range of structures and tenses. They understand the faster and more complex French used by their teachers. Higher attaining students, for instance, listened to a rapid set of dialogues about lost property. Nearly all can identify the objects and list their contents, but lower attaining students did not record all the details. In most classes, confidence in speaking is built up by careful revision of topics, regular assessment and help around the class by the teacher.
161. Most lower attaining students can understand most of their teachers' French. They have learnt to identify whether places described in French are located in their home town. Most, however, have difficulty in speaking longer sentences. Careful practice with the teacher using pictures on the overhead projector helps them learn the relevant vocabulary. A small number of average and lower attaining students do not achieve well. They have not learnt simple numbers. They copy single words, often inaccurately, and have problems with their teacher's French because it is too difficult for them to understand, and practice activities are presented too quickly.
162. At Key Stage 4, Spanish is taught only in Year 11 in the current academic year. Attainment is good. Students confidently carry out role-plays about buying and sending postcards and shopping. They learn to read with satisfactory levels of understanding. Some, but not all, speak with good accents. Many students, however, make only modest progress in learning a new language in the lesson itself. This is because teaching sometimes relies on English to convey meaning and because some students do not pay full attention.
163. In the sixth form, attainment is good in A-level French and satisfactory in Spanish. Homework carefully set by the teacher together with friendly and humorous relationships within the French class result in students learning to speak with confidence. They discuss abstract themes such as mortality which extends their learning of different registers of language. In Spanish, students learn the accurate use of a range of tenses. They answer comprehension questions on Mexican and Mayan culture and art, but need a significant amount of written and oral support from their teacher.
164. Students' attitudes and behaviour are usually positive and constructive. They arrive promptly, settle quickly and give their full co-operation throughout the lesson. In some lower sets at Key Stage 4, there are examples of very good levels of co-operation, related to carefully planned teaching. In a few lessons, behaviour is poor with some unauthorised movement and unfocused talking by students.
165. In most lessons the teaching of French is good and demonstrates many strengths. Teachers speak fluent French during most of the lesson and students are expected to do the same. Prompt starts and clear objectives focus attention, maintaining pace and good spans of concentration. Insistence on correct answers and regular monitoring of students' work, result in good behaviour and attitudes. Homework is regularly set and assessed in detail. Insistence on good quality written presentation also demonstrates that most teaching encourages positive attitudes to the subject. In a few lessons, teaching is unsatisfactory. Here there is poor management of student behaviour and overuse of English and of worksheets. In other lessons, the range of classroom activities is sometimes too narrow. The use of songs, games or videos would provide more enjoyable student experience by increasing motivation and

encouraging learning that is enthusiastic rather than passive. Teaching of Spanish is satisfactory, but relies more on worksheets and translation activities than does the teaching of French.

166. As a result of efficient and capable leadership in the languages department, teachers are developing more consistent approaches to classroom methods. Detailed planning builds on students' work in the middle schools. Priorities are clear and focus on areas highlighted at the last inspection, such as underachievement by boys. Other issues identified in the last report, such as the need for better accuracy in written work and the consistent use of the foreign language, show good improvement.

MUSIC

167. Music is a popular subject in the school. Students are keen to develop their practical skills and many achieve high standards of musical performance. Those involved in GCSE and A-level examinations do well. The tuition provided by visiting specialist teachers covers a range of instruments and is a significant strength of the school. It is enabling the more-able students to achieve good standards in reading and playing music.
168. By the end of Key Stage 3, standards of performing and composing have improved since the previous inspection and are now broadly in line with the national expectations. Students are fully engaged in practical activities and enthusiastically perform the songs and short keyboard pieces that they compose. Their technical knowledge of basic musical skills is satisfactory. Too much insistence, however, on the use of staff notation is inhibiting the creativity of a significant number of less able students and those with special educational needs. The school, moreover, has failed to equip the department with suitable computer facilities that would provide access to composing for those students for whom traditional methods are not appropriate. Since the previous inspection, standards of singing have improved. From the limited evidence heard in lessons, its quality is now mainly satisfactory and vocally comparable to what is found in similar schools with mixed classes of this age. A few students have the benefit of individual vocal lessons from a visiting specialist teacher and are making good progress. In one Year 9 lesson, three soloists confidently performed songs from the school's recent production of the musical *Oliver* whilst the rest of the class sang as the chorus.
169. Standards of attainment by the end of Key Stage 4 have improved since the previous inspection. Well above average GCSE results have been maintained over the last three years, with most of those involved achieving a grade in the A* to C range. This good level of achievement matches what was found in lessons during the inspection. It reflects the enthusiasm and commitment of the students concerned and the meticulous care with which their teachers prepare them for examinations. For example, in one Year 11 class, the teacher gave individual targets to each student in order to maximise their use of time spent practising and composing. Many students put their performing skills to good use as soloists in concerts and by supporting others in ensembles. Their compositions are varied in style and reflect a range of individual musical interests. Care is taken to ensure that their work is attractively written in musical notation and performed and recorded to a high standard. The progress made by students with special educational needs is good. For example, the linguistic needs of a Chinese music student were being very effectively met through extra singing lessons.
170. Standards of musical attainment in the sixth form are commensurate with individual musical skills. Students involved in A- and AS-level courses achieve examination

results in line with what would be expected, given their prior attainment in the subject. Most also achieve well in the higher grades of Associated Board instrumental examinations. They acquire a thorough technical knowledge of aspects of musical history and much of their written work reflects the results of considerable individual research.

171. The quality of teaching is good. The teachers are experienced musicians who have a good technical knowledge that is frequently shared with students in lessons. Students, particularly those taking GCSE and A-level courses, are supported efficiently through frequent intervention and discussion so that they are able to engage in technical discourse. Practical lessons are orderly and well planned to allow time to develop musical ideas creatively. Students throughout the school are generally enthusiastic about their music lessons and enjoy good relations with their teachers and with each other. Significant numbers of them choose to take up GCSE courses each year. They learn to practise productively and perform regularly and confidently to each other without reticence. Most have a clear understanding of what they are trying to achieve musically and have developed the ability to work independently. Large GCSE groups cope well with the rather cramped nature of the accommodation. There are not enough practice rooms where students can work undisturbed. This general lack of space is restricting further expansion. For example, the department is almost devoid of larger size percussion instruments partly because there is nowhere to accommodate them adequately.
172. Teachers are generous with their time in providing a range of extra musical activities and many opportunities to perform in concerts and other events within both the school and the local community. Groups like the band and the choir are well supported and present music of a high quality. There are significant numbers of musically talented students in the school for whom the department makes good provision. The quality of guitar and vocal tuition, for example, observed during the inspection was very good, in that it developed both instrumental skills and general musicianship. In the vocal lesson observed, a group of singers was successfully learning how to pitch notes from written music.
173. The department is well led and efficiently run. Since the previous inspection, links with feeder schools have been strengthened and work done in Year 9 now complements and builds on students' prior musical achievements satisfactorily.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

174. Attainment in physical education is broadly average across the school both in general physical education lessons and in examination groups. Students' standards of attainment on entry at the beginning of Year 9 are in line with expectations. By the end of Key Stage 3, inspection evidence shows the majority of students attain the national standard. The school assesses students at the end of the key stage, but does not gather these assessments together and so cannot judge for itself how well it is doing against national figures.
175. In lessons at the end of Key Stage 3, standards are average overall. Students have the skills, tactics and knowledge of the rules to play a number of games to a satisfactory standard. They know how to prepare safely for physical activity and do this conscientiously, but do not always link their work in lessons to the effect of exercise on the body and a healthy life style. In practices guided by the teacher, students repeat and modify the skills they are learning in order to improve. However, they are given too few opportunities to observe and then evaluate performances for themselves. This means they cannot always identify the strengths and weaknesses

in their performance and what they should do to improve. Students with special educational needs make satisfactory progress because teachers give individual support and feedback in lessons. In the same way, students of higher ability are also encouraged and make satisfactory progress.

176. In 2000, GCSE results were below the national average for grades A* to C and just above the national average for A* to G grades. Many more boys than girls take the examination course so comparisons between the two are not reliable. Students did as well in physical education as they did in other subjects. The department did not meet its own targets for higher grade passes last year, but analysed these results carefully. Action is being taken to ensure thorough revision of the theoretical aspects of the examination in order to meet the higher targets set for this year. There is no clear trend in results in recent years. They vary considerably between well below national averages to above. Numbers taking the course also vary considerably from year to year. Analysis of results does not reveal any clear pattern for this variation.
177. Standards of work seen in general physical education lesson in Key Stage 4 are average. Students make good progress as they continue to develop their skills and understanding of activities started in Key Stage 3. In addition, they make progress in a number of new activities. Their understanding of tactical play in games develops well and by the end of the key stage they play games of a good standard and confidently act as officials and coaches. They can plan for themselves simple practices to improve their skills in a game. Students' ability to evaluate a performance remains a relative weakness because teachers do not consistently use methods that encourage this. Students with special educational needs make good progress. When necessary they have a carefully modified choice of activities and equipment to suit their particular needs. The most able students also make good progress and there is a wide range of extra curricular activities offered through which they may play at local and regional level. No practical work was seen with examination groups. Evidence from samples of work and lessons show students attain average standards. They have a satisfactory knowledge and understanding of the required areas of study, such as the relationship between the media and sport. Folders of written work are well presented with some longer pieces of written work of good standard from more able students. A few folders show incomplete class work and homework, especially for average and less able students. Teachers are generally vigilant and work hard to ensure students complete these pieces of work through regular checking and marking of folders. In lessons in Year 11, students were reluctant to engage in discussions or to draw from their own experience to illustrate how well they understand the work. This was not the case in Year 10 because the teacher carefully planned group and whole class discussions and students were keen to contribute their ideas and answered questions thoroughly. This made a good contribution to students' skills of literacy.
178. The numbers entered for GCE Advanced level are too small to make reliable comparisons with national figures. The department has a good record of achieving its targets of a 100 per cent pass rate in recent years. Few passes of the highest grade are achieved and targets to improve this have been set for this year. Overall, attainment in the sixth form is average. Students at advanced level have a sound knowledge and understanding of the topics in their course. For example, they can make clear links between physical activities in the past and current issues in the sport and physical education. Some students know more than they can clearly describe. This is a difficulty when they are required to analyse and describe to the examiner a practical skill with which they are familiar.

179. The quality of teaching is good overall. It is satisfactory in Key Stage 3 and good in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form, where there is a greater proportion of good or very good teaching. This is a good improvement on the last inspection when there was some unsatisfactory teaching. Students gain skills, knowledge and understanding because teachers have good subject knowledge and plan tasks and activities that interest and motivate students. Teachers give clear explanations and demonstrations as students start to learn a new skill and thus students know what to do and how to do it. In the best lessons, planning includes methods that encourage students to observe and evaluate a performance for themselves. In a very good Year 9 netball lesson, students had to work in groups to organise a practice for intercepting the ball in a game and then comment on their performance and what needed to be improved. When they played the game they worked hard using their evaluations to improve their play. Not all lessons show the same careful selection of methods to develop students' skills of observation and evaluation. Teachers have clear expectations for behaviour and involvement in lessons. As a result, students behave well and participation levels are high.
180. Students have good attitudes to the subject and relationships in lessons are good. They work well together, handle apparatus with care and have concern for the safety of others. Teachers encourage students and give clear assessments to them on the progress they are making. In the best lessons, teachers show good judgement about when to intervene and move the class on. Then the lesson has a real sense of pace and challenge to which students respond. In a Year 10 lesson on fitness training, for instance, the teacher gave just enough time to explaining the work to be covered, then students organised themselves quickly into groups and set to work. The physical commitment of the students was good and as a result they made good progress both in understanding the principles of training as well as improving their own levels of fitness. The teacher only intervened when necessary and clearly drew the lesson to a close with a review of the work covered. In lessons when the pace of learning is less successful, teachers allow activities to run on too long or take too long to set up or explain activities.
181. Good management and leadership of the department contribute to its success and to improvement since the last inspection. Good use is made of the particular strengths of teachers. The reduction since the last inspection of non-specialist teaching has had a good effect on teaching and standards. A key feature is the committed staff who give generously of their time to run a very good programme of extra-curricular activities that includes a good range of competitive activities for the sixth form. The range of extra-curricular activities for girls has improved since the last inspection. Plans to develop the subject are satisfactory for the one year they cover. Longer term planning is absent, however, since there is no long term whole school plan to which the department can refer. A weakness is the slow introduction of the formal arrangements to monitor the quality of teaching. A better start has been made in the monitoring of marking and students' work in examination groups. Assessment information is insufficiently used to set targets for students, particularly in general physical education lessons. Nor is it used to review the overall progress of the department. There is some limited use of information and communication technology in examination classes, but overall it is unsatisfactory because of lack of access to computer facilities.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

182. The school and its governing body have a statutory responsibility to ensure that the Worcestershire agreed syllabus for religious education is taught to all students in accordance with its requirements. They were not meeting this responsibility at the

time of the previous inspection, when it was a key issue, and they are still not doing so. The school has increased the time allocated to teaching the agreed syllabus at Key Stage 3, but it is still below that required. It has not increased the time allocated to teaching the agreed syllabus at Key Stage 4, where it remains well below its requirements and is below half of the national average. The school still makes no provision for the agreed syllabus to be taught in the sixth form.

183. In work seen during the inspection, the attainment of students at the end of Key Stage 3 was slightly below expectations for their age, whereas in most other subjects it is in line with or above them. Students have a broad knowledge and understanding of the richness and diversity of religion and of the place of Christianity and other principal religions in the country. They have a basic understanding of why religious beliefs are important to those who hold them and of how their lives are shaped by them. They can apply religious insights to their own lives and to those of others, and their skills in making a personal response to religious questions are comparatively well developed. Their knowledge and understanding is, however, lacking in depth, overall, and their evaluative skills are under-developed. The majority of both boys and girls achieve broadly satisfactory standards in their learning because of satisfactory teaching and the good attitudes they bring to their work. The low time allocation, however, limits how well they can achieve. Some students with low levels of prior attainment do not always achieve appropriately because work is not well matched to their individual needs.
184. At the end of Key Stage 4, students' attainment is well below the expectations of the agreed syllabus for their age and much lower than at the previous inspection. Their knowledge and understanding of, for example, secular and religious responses to issues of rights and responsibilities in Year 10, and crime and punishment in Year 11, is poor. The poor standards students achieve in their learning are not a reflection on the quality of teaching in individual lessons, or on their attitudes towards the subject. They achieve poor standards because they have not covered most of the syllabus by the end of the key stage and what they have covered has been covered superficially. The time allocated to teaching the subject is simply far too low for them to study the agreed syllabus in the breadth and depth necessary for them to achieve well and reach appropriate standards of attainment.
185. In lessons observed during the inspection week, the quality of teaching and learning were good overall at both key stages. Good learning in individual lessons is not, however, maintained over time. Scrutiny of student work shows that the quality of teaching and learning is not in fact good, but satisfactory, overall, at Key Stage 3. This is because the low time allocation places a ceiling on how well students can learn over the key stage as a whole. It also shows that learning is actually unsatisfactory overall at Key Stage 4. This is because teachers can deliver good individual lessons where students learn well, but are precluded by the very low time allocation from building on them to enable students to maintain learning and achieve well over time. Where teaching is strongest, teachers have high expectations of students, know clearly what they wish them to learn and share their aims with them, linking them to previous work. For example, in Year 9 work on Buddhism, good whole class review of homework on the Four Noble Truths served both to consolidate prior learning and to introduce the concepts of the Noble Eightfold Path.
186. Teachers engage students' interest and stretch them intellectually through a variety of interesting and challenging activities and tasks. Particularly good use is made of videos to bring the subject alive. For example, Year 11 students made good gains in understanding secular and religious responses to issues surrounding the death penalty. This was because the teacher challenged their thinking with a powerful video

of interviews with a murderer, an executioner, the victim's family and abolitionists. Through skilful explanation and questioning she then led students to a good understanding of the issues, to which they were then able to make a personal response. Some Year 9 students were led to a good understanding of the teaching of the Noble Eightfold Path through writing and discussion of a video of its impact on the daily life of a practising Buddhist. Others made very good gains in understanding the motives and actions of the groups and individuals responsible for Jesus' death, through demanding oral and written work based on an extract from a film on the last week of his life.

187. Such good use of visual material is underpinned by good planning. It forms part of a carefully structured series of activities and tasks through which students are led, step-by-step, to knowledge and understanding of the topic. Teachers use very good questioning skills to extend students' understanding. They provide them with good opportunities to develop skills of collaborative working, in pairs and small groups, as, for example, in Year 10 work exploring Jesus' teaching on giving. Good management of students' behaviour and good relationships ensure a secure ethos in the classroom in which learning can take place.
188. Where teaching and learning is less secure at Key Stage 3, it is because work is not always well matched to the needs of lower attaining students. Where it is less strong at Key Stage 4, it is because it does not stretch students adequately over time in those parts of the Syllabus that are taught. There was a wholly inadequate volume of written work, and that completed was superficial, showing poor learning. This is because teachers with good generic teaching skills were precluded from teaching topics effectively, and students from learning, by the constraints of time.
189. The attitudes and behaviour of the majority of students are good overall. Most come to lessons keen to learn, listen well and sustain concentration well. They are keen to ask and answer questions and listen with respect to each other's views and opinions. They enjoy good relationships with each other and with their teachers. Their good attitudes are reflected in the pride the majority take in the presentation of their work.
190. Since the previous inspection, the school has improved learning resources and accommodation, both of which are now good. Attempts to meet the requirements of the agreed syllabus at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form have been hampered by difficulties in recruiting and retaining specialist staff, but strategic management of the subject by the school and governing body has been unsatisfactory. There has been a lack of vision of the educational direction the subject should take if standards are to be raised, and the obstacles to implementing the agreed syllabus have not been overcome. However, the school now has firm proposals to meet legal requirements through the introduction of a GCSE Short Course for all Key Stage 4 students in September 2001 and earmarked time in the sixth form.
191. Day-to-day management of the department by the recently appointed subject co-ordinator has been sound. He has established effective working links with partner institutions that have led to improved schemes of work and assessment procedures at Key Stage 3, which are now better than at the previous inspection. He is a non-specialist and school has given him good support in developing his knowledge and skills in the subject through in-service training. The head of department has clear ideas about including more students and broadening their experience. As a small department, it is not always clear how it fits into the whole school decision making process and priorities.