

INSPECTION REPORT

ASH MANOR SCHOOL

Ash, Surrey

LEA area: Surrey

Unique reference number: 125271

Headteacher: Mr R M Linnell

Reporting inspector: Mrs S D Morgan
1355

Dates of inspection: 14th-18th May 2001

Inspection number: 187973

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

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11 to 16
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Manor Road Ash Surrey
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs J Watkinson
Date of previous inspection:	May 1996

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Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
1355	Mrs S D Morgan	Registered inspector	-	What sort of school is it? What should the school do to improve further? The school's results and pupils' achievements How well are pupils taught?
9053	Ms V Phillips	Lay inspector	-	Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
24142	Mrs S McConville	Team inspector	English English as an additional language	-
27719	Mr P Metcalf	Team inspector	Mathematics	-
29742	Ms P Fyans	Team inspector	Science	-
22491	Ms L Small	Team inspector	Design and technology	How well does the school care for its pupils?
2501	Ms R Allison-Smith	Team inspector	Art and design	-
2495	Mr B Munden	Team inspector	Information and communication technology	How good are curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
25073	Mr S Jordan	Team inspector	Geography History Equal opportunities	-
15075	Mr B Stephens	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	-
11746	Mr R Coulthard	Team inspector	Music Religious education	-

22042	Mr J Challands	Team inspector	Physical education Special educational needs	How well is the school led and managed?
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Ash Manor is a comprehensive school of average size with 945 students in Years 7 to 11. Numbers of boys and girls are similar, although there are variations between year groups, with more boys in Years 9 and 11. Since the previous inspection the number of students has increased substantially. The school is oversubscribed, reflecting its increasing popularity with local families. Students' attainment on entry is average. The percentage of students who are known to be eligible for free school meals is broadly in line with the national average. The school serves a mixed rural and urban area and students come from a wide variety of backgrounds. Just over seventeen percent of students have been identified as having special educational needs, a broadly average proportion. These students have a range of needs, with most having learning difficulties. An average proportion of students have statements of special educational need. Almost all students are white. The number of students speaking English as an additional language is low, and none are at an early stage of learning English. The inspection of this school included a detailed inspection of the quality of provision for students in Years 10 and 11.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

The overall effectiveness of the school is good. In relation to their attainment on entry to the school in Year 7, students' achievements are satisfactory up to the end of Year 9 and good in Years 10 and 11. Students make satisfactory or better progress in almost all subjects. Teaching is satisfactory in almost all subjects and good in several, including English. Good teaching in Years 10 and 11 is reflected in the GCSE examination results which have improved consistently. The headteacher, leadership team and governors are providing good leadership and management and have a clear vision of how to enable the school to improve further. The school provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- Good teaching and learning in Years 10 and 11 enables students to achieve well.
- The school works tirelessly to foster constructive attitudes, personal development and positive approaches to learning among all students, whatever their home circumstances.
- Partnership with parents underpins students' achievements because it is focused positively on helping all to succeed.
- Excellent links with the community contribute significantly to many aspects of students' learning and personal development.
- The school is very well led by its headteacher and governors so that it serves its students and the community effectively.

What could be improved

- The implementation of the National Curriculum requirements for information and communication technology (ICT) and design and technology. Students do not have enough opportunities to develop and use skills in ICT and not all students take a design and technology subject in the GCSE years.
- Students' attainment in art and drama.
- In some lessons, teachers' planning to meet better the learning needs of students of all levels of attainment.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

When the school was last inspected in May 1996, it was judged to have many good features. Since then it has made good improvement. Strengths identified by the last inspection have been maintained or built upon further. The quality of teaching has improved with a significantly higher proportion of lessons being good or better. This is having a positive impact on standards, particularly at GCSE, where results are considerably better than five years ago. Students' performance in English national assessment tests for fourteen-year-olds have also shown marked improvement.

Almost all of the key issues from the last inspection report have been systematically dealt with. For example, good improvement in collection and use of assessment data enables the school to monitor students' progress, set targets for their future work, and to give students and their parents good information about how well they are doing. The school has also worked hard to improve the achievement of boys and a range of strategies have been put in place. As at the time of the previous inspection, the school does not meet statutory requirements for collective worship or provide sufficient opportunities for students to use ICT across the curriculum. The school continues to seek further improvement and has been successful in gaining a number of national and local "quality marks" for many aspects of its work, including the Basic Skills Agency quality mark. The school is well placed to improve further.

STANDARDS

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

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

The table shows that the results achieved by all students were above average at GCSE compared with schools nationally. Overall, results were average compared to similar schools (that is, schools with a similar proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals). The trend of improvement in GCSE grades is above the national rate. Over the last three years the results of boys have been close to the national average and those of girls above the national average. The results for individual subjects varied considerably. Comparing students' results in each subject shows that they did relatively well in English literature, French, geography, and mathematics. They did less well in art and design, combined science, drama and English language. The 2000 results show an improvement in a number of subjects, including English literature, mathematics, science, design and technology, French, Spanish and religious education. The school exceeded the targets for GCSE results in 2000 which had been agreed with the Local Education Authority (LEA).

In Year 9 national assessments in 2000, overall results were average for all and similar schools. Students did better in English than in mathematics and science. English results were above average for all and similar schools. In mathematics, results were average for all schools but well below average for similar schools. Science results were average for all schools and below those of similar schools. Results in English have risen sharply over the past four years. In mathematics and science they are similar to those reported at the previous inspection. Girls perform significantly better than boys in English. Boys' and girls' results are similar in mathematics and science. The results indicate that students' achievements are good in English and satisfactory in mathematics and science.

Current standards in Year 9 are broadly average and a little above average in Year 11. In relation to their standard of attainment when they come into Year 7, students achieve well over their time at the school. Their achievement in Years 7 to 9 is generally satisfactory. It is very good in French and German. Students achieve well overall in Years 10 and 11 with particular strengths in English, mathematics, design and technology, GCSE ICT, modern foreign languages and religious education. In art, drama and the use of ICT across the curriculum, achievement is

unsatisfactory throughout the school.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Attitudes to the school are good because most students value the range of opportunities provided and want to succeed.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour is satisfactory. Most students are well behaved most of the time. A few students misbehave in particular lessons, which affects their own progress and, at times, that of the whole class. Very few students have been excluded.
Personal development and relationships	Students become mature and responsible members of the school community by Year 11. Their personal development is good and shows marked improvement as they move through the school. Relationships are good and students work well together.
Attendance	Attendance is satisfactory. It is just below average after rigorous work by the school. The high absence rate of a few students limits the progress they make.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged 11-14 years	aged 14-16 years
Lessons seen overall	Satisfactory	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 was satisfactory or better in 94 percent of the lessons observed during the inspection, and very good or better in 24 percent. It was unsatisfactory in six percent of lessons. This is an improvement on the last inspection, as the proportion of very good and excellent teaching has increased significantly. Teaching was most effective in Years 10 and 11 and weaker in Year 8. Students' learning reflected the overall quality of teaching; it was satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and good in Years 10 and 11. Weaknesses in teaching occurred, particularly for younger students when classes were taught by non-specialist staff. For students of all ages, teaching was good in English. It was good in mathematics and science for Years 10 and 11 and satisfactory for Years 7 to 9. With the exceptions of art and drama, teaching in all other subjects was satisfactory or better. In many lessons, strengths in the teaching included varied and interesting activities which were well planned, with teachers having high expectations of students' performance. Teachers' good subject knowledge and understanding of GCSE examination requirements were particular strengths which enabled students in Years 10 and 11 to make good progress. Teachers organised and managed their classes well and relationships between teachers and students were good. This enabled all students to work productively. In many lessons, there was an appropriate focus on developing students' literacy and numeracy skills. Where teaching had weaknesses or was unsatisfactory, lessons often lacked pace and challenge. Whilst in the vast majority of lessons teachers provide work that meets students' needs, in a few, expectations are too low for higher attaining students and work is not well matched to the needs of special needs students. This results in some students making insufficient progress in their learning.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory in most respects. A particular strength is the excellent contribution of the community to students' learning. In Years 10 and 11 a range of courses is being developed to meet the needs of all students. The programme for personal, social and health education is well planned and the school provides a good range of extra-curricular activities. However, National Curriculum requirements are not fully met for ICT throughout the school and in Years 10 and 11 for design and technology.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Satisfactory. The needs of most students are met. Some students with special needs do not have individual education plans and class teachers do not have sufficient knowledge of their needs. Students make good progress when they receive additional specialist support in class or they are withdrawn from lessons.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Satisfactory. No students are at an early stage of learning English.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good. The school supports students' personal development well. Provision for moral and social development is good and for spiritual and cultural development is satisfactory.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Well. Staff know students well and this enables them to give good academic and personal guidance. Procedures for child protection are very good.
How well the school works in partnership with parents	The school has a good working relationship with the vast majority of parents and this has a positive impact on the standards that students achieve.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher exercises strong leadership and is developing the school for the benefit of the community. He has enthused others to create a school in which standards have consistently risen and the quality of teaching has improved. Senior managers share his vision and work hard to put it into practice. Heads of year provide good management of pastoral care. Subject management is more variable although strong in several areas.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors are committed to helping the school raise standards. They have contributed to improvements through their active involvement. The governing body fulfil their statutory responsibilities well in most respects. However, they have not ensured that all aspects of the curriculum fulfil National Curriculum requirements and that there is provision for a daily act of collective worship.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school development plan is well constructed, it has appropriate priorities for improvement and has helped the school to raise standards. The school has identified teaching as an area for further improvement and is working on this with some success. The school seeks the views of those it serves and is responsive to them. It has successfully used outside systems in order to extend its own self-evaluation and has gained external accreditation including "Investors in People" status.
The strategic use of resources	The leadership team and governors have been highly effective in realising the long-term vision for the continued improvement of the school site and in addressing strategies for staff recruitment and the development of resources. Staffing and accommodation are good overall and learning resources satisfactory. The principles of best value are very well applied.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teaching is good and their children make good progress. The school helps their children become mature and responsible and expects them to work hard and achieve their best. They feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem. The school is well led and managed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The amount of homework. The closeness with which the school works with them.

The inspection team agrees with parents' positive comments, although overall teaching was judged to be satisfactory rather than good. The team did not find evidence that the setting of homework is a weakness. Homework set was appropriately challenging and linked well to the work completed in lessons. In questionnaire responses, some parents expressed concerns about the way the school works with them, whereas parents who attended the meeting prior to the inspection felt that the school kept them well informed and involved. The inspection team agrees with the latter view.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. In this report, the term "standards" refers to students' attainment relative to some clear benchmark, such as National Curriculum levels at the end of a key stage. "Above average standards", for example, means that a higher proportion of students of a particular age are succeeding at or beyond the level set than in the majority of schools. "Achievement" means how well students are doing now in relation to their prior attainment, which is what they could do when they started Year 7 or Year 10.

2. In 2000, the results achieved by all students were above average at GCSE compared with schools nationally. Results have shown steady improvement over the past five years. The proportion of students gaining 5 or more GCSE A*-C passes (50 percent) was just above the national average. The proportion of students gaining 5 or more A*-G grades (95 percent) was above the national average, and it was average for those gaining 1 or more grades A*-G. The trend of improvement in GCSE grades is above the national rate. Over the last three years the results of boys have been close to the national average and those of girls above the national average. The underachievement of boys was identified in the last report as a key issue and the school responded well by introducing a number of strategies to improve their performance. The margin between the attainment of boys and girls has fluctuated but it has not narrowed significantly. However, there have been notable successes, as in the attainment of boys in English Literature in 2000, and the school is continuing to work on this issue. The results for individual subjects varied considerably. Comparing students' results in each subject shows that they did relatively well in English literature, French, geography and mathematics. They did less well in art and design, combined science, drama and English language. The 2000 results show an improvement in a number of subjects, including English literature, mathematics, science, design and technology, French, Spanish and religious education.

3. Compared with similar schools in 2000, the proportion of students attaining five or more A*-C grades was average. The proportion gaining five or more A*-G grades was above average. The proportion gaining one or more A*-G grades was average. The school slightly exceeded its targets for GCSE results in 2000 which had been agreed with the LEA. Appropriate targets have been set for 2001.

4. Taken as a whole, standards of work for students in Year 11 as observed in lessons and through recorded work are a little above average and students' achievements are good. In English, mathematics, design and technology, GCSE ICT, modern foreign languages and religious education standards are above average and students achieve well. This is because teachers have good subject knowledge, high expectations and plan activities which focus on examination requirements. Standards in art are below expectations. Students have not been well prepared for the examination course due to weaknesses in teaching in Years 7 to 9. Standards in drama are also below expectations due to a lack of challenge in teaching, particularly for higher attainers.

5. Overall, the school's results in the national assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2000 were average and similar to the previous three years. The 2000 results in English were above average and average in mathematics and science. English results have risen sharply and faster than the national trend. Overall, however the trend of improvement in results for the three subjects is below the national rate. Girls perform significantly better than boys in English. Boys' and girls' results are similar in mathematics and science. Overall, when students enter the school their levels of attainment are average, although there are an increasing number with learning difficulties and very low reading ages.

The results indicate that students' achievements are good in English and satisfactory in mathematics and science. Current standards reflect these results. Standards in almost all other subjects, as observed in lessons and through recorded work, are broadly average and students' achievements are satisfactory. In French and German, standards are well above average and students' achievements are very good, because the curriculum is well planned and teaching is good. In music and history, students achieve well because their subject skills and knowledge are systematically developed and teaching is good. In art and drama, standards are below average and students underachieve. Weaknesses in teaching result in students making insufficient progress. In the case of ICT across the curriculum, the requirements of the National Curriculum have not been fully met and this leads to underachievement throughout the school.

6. Compared with similar schools, end of Year 9 results in 2000 were average. Standards in English were above average for similar schools, in science they were below average, and in mathematics well below average. Overall, teaching of English has been more effective than teaching of mathematics and science. In the mathematics and science departments, a number of staffing changes and some difficulties with staff recruitment have had a negative impact on students' learning.

7. Across the curriculum, literacy standards have improved since the last inspection with some good opportunities for developing reading and writing in a number of subjects. Good guidance on writing in history helps students structure their work. In design technology and science, teachers give students writing frameworks. There is a strong focus on written accuracy in Key Stage 3 modern foreign languages, and teachers of most subjects occasionally note spelling and punctuation errors in their marking. However, the approach to spelling is inconsistent, in spite of the spelling policy, and marking of other errors is erratic. Opportunities are missed for students to read aloud and to apply themselves to writing for different purposes. Overall, development of students' numeracy skills across the curriculum is satisfactory. It is particularly effective in design and technology where students' number, shape and data handling skills are used very well. Number work is developed well in languages and in history.

8. Students throughout the school whose special educational needs relate to learning difficulties generally make satisfactory progress and reach standards commensurate with their prior attainment. In some lessons, students do better than expected. This is often the case when students are supported in class by learning support assistants, or when they are withdrawn from lessons and work is closely matched to their specific needs. Students whose special educational needs relate to behavioural difficulties also mainly achieve satisfactorily. In a few lessons, however, when teaching is not as effective as it could be in managing the behaviour of these students and there is no specialist support, they do not progress as well as they could. Very few students speak English as an additional language, and none are at an early stage of learning English. These students make satisfactory progress and reach standards in line with their various starting points.

9. The school has identified a number of students who are gifted and talented. Opportunities for developing these students' potential within subjects are being considered but are at a comparatively early stage. Their current achievement is mainly satisfactory. They underachieve in some lessons, however, where teachers do not pay enough attention to the spread of ability in the class, or take insufficient account of students' prior knowledge.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

10. There has been steady improvement in students' attitudes, values and personal development, since the last inspection. Students respond positively to the many opportunities offered by the school for

them to feel a sense of achievement. Attitudes to learning and to school are good, particularly among older students who recognise the benefits of working hard and doing well at school. By the time students are working on examination and work-related courses in Years 10 and 11 they show great commitment to learning and a desire to be successful. For instance, in a lower set science lesson, Year 10 students were full of enthusiasm and readily involved in activities linked to classifying animals, which enabled them to make excellent progress. A top set in Year 11 showed impressive levels of interest and motivation in their revision on living processes. In contrast, at times, the attitudes of a few younger students, particularly boys, in middle and lower sets, leads to slow progress, sometimes for the whole class. For example, in a geography lesson, students were unenthusiastic about a map-reading task, so several did very little work, which contributed to an unsatisfactory rate of learning. A few students in each year group do not particularly want to work, but even they respond positively to enthusiastic teaching and activities that allow them to develop new skills. In all year groups, where teaching is lively and work is interesting enough to catch the attention of students with different strengths and weaknesses, they soon become involved in what they are asked to do. Most students want to succeed.

11. Standards of behaviour are satisfactory. Many students are very well behaved in and out of lessons. They are polite, considerate and helpful to others, including visitors. Other students usually behave well most of the time, but if lessons are not particularly interesting, or someone else misbehaves, they are distracted quite easily and join in the chattering or other inappropriate behaviour. A small number of students behave badly in many different settings and find it much harder than everyone else to respond well to the school's code of conduct and the staff's considerable efforts to teach them. For example in an English lesson, the poor behaviour of some students prevented others from discussing poetry in any meaningful way. However, even the most difficult students behave well when teaching is stimulating, there is interesting practical work to do, or they find a new skill, such as playing a musical instrument, that gives them the chance to do well.

12. The school is deeply committed to doing its best for all the different groups of students in its care. As a result, in spite of occasional conflicts and examples of unacceptable behaviour, its exclusion rate is low, with only one permanent exclusion in the previous year. The school used exclusion as a very last resort after commendable efforts to support the individual concerned. Most students get on well together, so the atmosphere in the school is friendly, not harsh. The occasional disputes and isolated instances of bullying are resolved constructively, often with careful support from older students.

13. Younger students, particularly boys, are unusually immature, so that their behaviour and approach to school life are not typical of their age group. They sometimes show characteristics of an earlier stage of personal development, for example when, like young children, individuals are reluctant to settle down or to listen. They are not keen to have a go with tasks when there is little chance of instant reward, or because they have to write at some length before enjoying a practical activity. At times, individuals choose to be uncooperative without considering the rights and wishes of others in the class. By Year 11, students show much better understanding of their responsibilities and the effect they have on others. This is largely the result of good teaching, careful work by form tutors and personal, social and health education (PSHE) lessons.

14. Students with special educational needs behave well in almost all lessons. Most of these students are confident they will succeed when they have appropriate support in class and because teaching staff are usually aware of their needs. Their attitude to work is enthusiastic and they have good relationships with other students and with their teachers. There were incidents of unacceptable behaviour, however, particularly from younger students with identified behavioural problems, when they were not receiving specialist classroom support.

15. Personal and social development are good because of rapid improvement in students' approach to work and the respect they show for other people's rights and beliefs in their final two years at the school. The foundations for the change are laid carefully from when students enter the school and very many younger students respond well to opportunities to show initiative with their work and consideration for others right from the start. For example, they represent the school as members of sports teams, work as receptionists for visitors and make an active contribution to the school council. Older students show a strong sense of responsibility in their work on the anti-bullying team, as prefects and senior prefects and in work for the Duke of Edinburgh's Award. Students of all ages are eager to use their initiative and work independently in response to the challenges set them, especially in well-taught lessons. This is more obvious among older students, in top sets and where teachers' expectations are high.

16. Attendance is satisfactory. It is just below the national average, with unauthorised absence lower than that found nationally. Although most families understand the importance of regular attendance and respond well to very clear messages and procedures designed to promote it, a few do not. Individual students are absent too often without good reason and fail to make the progress of which they are capable, in spite of active efforts by the school to ensure that they come in regularly. A few students choose to miss particular sessions because they do not enjoy specific subjects such as art and geography, or because they are not committed enough to their work to spend time in school on Friday afternoons and Monday mornings. Most students arrive on time and lessons usually start punctually, which helps them to achieve what is expected of them.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

17. The quality of teaching has improved since the previous inspection. Although the percentage of satisfactory teaching, at 94 percent, is slightly lower than at the time of the previous inspection (then it was 96 percent), the number of lessons observed in which teaching was judged to be very good or better has increased significantly. In the last inspection six percent of lessons were very good or better and in this inspection it was 24 percent. The number of good or better lessons at 61 percent also indicates improvement. Overall, teaching is satisfactory. Teaching was most effective in Years 10 and 11 and weaker in Year 8. The school has experienced difficulty in recruiting staff in some subject areas and weaknesses do occur in a few lessons, particularly at Key Stage 3, when they are taught by non-specialist staff. Some variations between subjects was found. Teaching was good overall in English, design and technology, history, specialist ICT lessons, modern foreign languages and music. It was good at Key Stage 4 in mathematics, science, physical education and religious education. In geography it was satisfactory throughout the school, but in art and drama it was unsatisfactory.

18. The lessons in which teaching was very good or excellent were characterised by teachers planning activities very thoroughly and ensuring lessons were varied and interesting. For example in physical education, students were provided with opportunities to take some responsibility for their learning, work with independence and assess what they had learnt. In a Year 7 lesson, students were taught the importance of health-related fitness through an imaginative and practical approach which also developed their fitness. Teachers took care to find out what students remembered and understood about previously completed work and then built upon this. In the best English lessons, teachers showed considerable enthusiasm and planned their lessons to ensure that the needs of all students, both higher attainers and those with special educational needs were met. The activities challenged and motivated students and enabled them to learn effectively. The best music lessons were taught with pace, vigour and enthusiasm. Planning was excellent and teachers developed students' musical knowledge and understanding through applying it to imaginative practical tasks. This motivated students strongly and they learnt efficiently.

19. A considerable number of strengths were seen in the teaching and learning in many lessons that were satisfactory or better. Teachers' good subject knowledge, understanding of GCSE examination requirements and detailed assessment of students' work are particular strengths of teaching in many subjects, and enable students to make good progress in Key Stage 4. Interest in the subject matter was communicated by teachers very well and this motivated students to work hard. A good balance was struck between the contribution of teachers and that of the students. In history, for example, students were encouraged to show initiative and work independently. Classes were well organised and managed, and relationships between students and teachers were good. Students made good progress as a result of teachers having high expectations. Practical sessions were well organised and planned. In design and technology teachers used interesting methods to enable students to develop basic skills. For example, in a Year 7 resistant materials lesson, the teacher used the manufacture of puppets as a basis for teaching skills such as marking out, cutting and drilling wood which resulted in students producing a variety of interesting and personalised puppets. Students worked enthusiastically on the activity and developed both their practical and their design skills. Teachers used a variety of activities and resources effectively to engage students' interest. For example, in modern foreign languages most lessons had frequent changes of task and good coverage of the four language skills. Deadlines were used effectively to motivate students and keep them on target. Good use was made of a variety of resources such as overhead projectors, cassette recorders and videos.

20. The teaching of basic skills was satisfactory. Teachers focused on developing students' skills in writing, for example, through the use of outlines or "frames" which provided a structure to follow. This was particularly useful for lower attaining students and used effectively in science and design and technology. However, teachers do not focus consistently on correcting spelling and other errors. Teachers developed students' numeracy through applying skills such as the use of matrices and Venn diagrams in history, and recording and illustrating the results of surveys in modern foreign languages. In some lessons, in subjects such as mathematics and modern foreign languages, teachers' planning effectively incorporated the use of ICT skills into lessons. However, overall there is insufficient planning for the use of ICT to support work in a number of subjects. Appropriate homework was set regularly and students' work was marked effectively. This helped students see how they could improve their performance.

21. Where teaching had weaknesses or was unsatisfactory, lessons often lacked pace and challenge. Teachers had not planned the work to meet the needs of all students and some students did not make enough progress. This was true for a small number of lessons in several subjects. For example, in mathematics, especially in Years 7 and 8 there was insufficient challenge especially in the top sets where teaching did not take enough account of prior knowledge so that students learned little that was new to them. Teachers' expectations of students were too low in subjects such as art and drama. In both of these subjects teaching over time has not ensured that students make sufficient progress year on year and this has resulted in underachievement at Key Stage 3 and in GCSE examinations.

22. Over the last year, the school experienced difficulties in recruiting staff in some subject areas such as mathematics and design and technology. This had a negative impact on students' learning and standards. The school has made every effort to recruit suitably qualified staff and has managed the situation very effectively. These difficulties have now been overcome and specialist staff appointed.

23. The teaching of students with special educational needs is satisfactory, and where support is provided in class or students are withdrawn from lessons for additional support it is often good. Many teachers plan for the needs of these students and use an appropriate range of teaching strategies and resources. However, the targets on students' individual education plans are general and the identification of subject specific needs and the setting of related targets is rarely apparent. This is a

weakness.

24. There are a small number of students who speak English as a second language. None of these students are at an early stage of learning English and in lessons they make satisfactory progress. A good start has been made to identifying support for gifted and talented students and staff are aware of the issues. In a few lessons, where teachers do not plan the work to take account of the full range of ability in the class, the progress of this group of students is too slow.

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

25. The quality and range of the learning opportunities in the curriculum are satisfactory in most respects. There has been satisfactory improvement in the provision for religious education at Key Stage 4 and some work to develop literacy skills across the school, but aspects of ICT and design technology do not meet statutory requirements. A major strength is the contribution of the community to students' learning. The provision for extra-curricular activities, PSHE, careers and relationships with partner institutions are also good.

26. In Years 7 to 11, all National Curriculum subjects and religious education are in place. However, not all aspects of the ICT National Curriculum are taught, and throughout the school a programme for ICT across the curriculum is not sufficiently co-ordinated. As a result of staffing difficulties, the school has had to restructure the curriculum and not all students follow a design and technology course in Years 10 and 11 as required by the National Curriculum. Although the staffing difficulties have now been resolved the rotational courses in this subject have been significantly affected and triggered other changes in the Key Stage 3 curriculum. For example, the linking of ICT lessons to the design technology rotational programme results in some students not having ICT until the end of the academic year. This means that their skills and knowledge are not developed consistently. However, a positive development is the introduction of a learning enrichment course in Year 7, which includes a variety of study skills, and is having a positive affect on students' learning.

27. The Key Stage 4 curriculum has been enriched by providing teaching time outside the school's working day for a group of students to take Spanish as a third language and there are opportunities for students to take child development, expressive arts and two humanities subjects. Progress has been made since the last inspection in developing a curriculum that is more relevant, matched to the needs of all students and gives support for those who are at risk of becoming disaffected or being excluded. For example, a work-related curriculum for students with special educational needs uses a variety of external programmes such as the Waverley training project. This provides useful support for students. However, there are co-ordination problems with the main careers programme and with GCSE subjects and it is not yet an integral part of the whole curriculum; some students miss other lessons to take part in the work-related programme which affects the progress they make in other subjects. Although the school does not provide any vocational courses such as GNVQ, some students can take a Certificate of Achievement in history, geography and physical education as an alternative to GCSE. The school has made significant efforts to find positive solutions to staffing difficulties and although a number of classes are taught by more than one teacher, only in geography and modern foreign languages is this affecting the standards achieved by students.

28. The school is very aware of the need to develop the curriculum further to provide courses more suitable for students' differing needs. Planning has already started on a curriculum to this purpose. Proposals are due to be shared with parents in the near future.

29. The extra-curricular programme provides a wide range of clubs, courses, visits and sporting opportunities for students. Significant numbers take part in the various sporting activities and the learning resource centre provides students with access to computers every day. There are clubs for different age groups in many subjects and an extensive range of visits and field trips for art, history, geography, religious education, mathematics and science. The school arranges whole-school public speaking and creative writing competitions. These have led to considerable success at a local and national level. Exchanges take place with students from Belgium, Italy and Germany and an Internet club is linking with Japan as well as successfully developing the school's web site. Good opportunities exist for GCSE students to have extra support in most subjects. Music provides opportunities for recitals and concerts and there is an annual drama production that includes a large cast. Students enter a number of competitions that take them outside the school, and Year 8 have a residential course which contributes to the school's programme for students' social development.

30. Across the curriculum, literacy provision has improved since the last inspection with some good opportunities for developing reading and writing in a number of subjects. The school has a literacy policy and a Basic Skills Quality Mark. Regrettably, as yet, there is no teacher from each subject to implement and oversee literacy provision, and to monitor the standards and progress achieved by the students. The provision for teaching numeracy across the curriculum is satisfactory, and it is particularly effective in design and technology. The school has a numeracy policy and, across the curriculum, students use a good range of mathematical procedures and graphical skills in a number of subjects. The mathematics department also has a well written 'Graphical Presentation of Data' policy which details how graphs and charts should be used across the curriculum.

31. A comprehensive, well planned and effective PSHE programme provides good coverage of a wide range of appropriate topics, which are targeted to match the different needs of students as they progress through the school. The documentation to guide teachers is very good and teaching resources are varied and of high quality. There is a very good programme of external visiting speakers who talk about issues such as drug abuse and contraception. PSHE makes a good contribution to the development of students' social, moral and health education.

32. Links with the community are excellent. Many visitors attend the PSHE lessons including the Surrey Care group and the local police. The school works on research projects with a number of universities. Year 9 students organise a Christmas party annually for local senior citizens. A particularly interesting link is with the rehabilitation of offenders from local prisons. As part of the drug abuse programme, offenders whose crimes were related to drug addiction talk with Year 10 students about their experiences. The contact has a great impact on the students and the offenders and enables discussions on value systems and ideas about self-esteem to take place. Another interesting extra-curricular activity is the crime prevention group. This does very good work, for example having students' bicycles marked for security, running an anti-bullying council and helping teachers plan the use of videos on bullying. The group is re-examining some earlier work on helping older people in the neighbourhood to protect themselves from people such as bogus meter readers. This provides a good opportunity for students to exercise their social responsibilities.

33. The provision for careers education at the school is good. The scheme of work is part of the PSHE programme and runs from Year 8 to Year 11. A team of teachers, led currently by a qualified careers teacher, delivers the programme. There is a one week work experience programme for all Year 10 students and they can choose from a wide range of opportunities. Some students travel as far as London to take up work opportunities. All students are also given a practice work experience interview. At present, Surrey careers support has recruitment difficulties so that the school has no careers consultant. This means that careers interviews are only made available to students with special educational needs and those not expected to gain 5 A*-C grades at GCSE.

34. The school has good relationships with partner institutions. All feeder primary schools are visited by the head of Year 7 and the head of learning support to gather information about pupils' performance and needs in order to plan a programme of transitional support. The school has links with local sixth form colleges and colleges of further education and organises a careers fair for Year 11 students to help them with their choices after leaving school. As part of its linking with partner institutions, the school has gained funding to run a second two-week summer school for an identified group of gifted and talented students in Years 6, 7 and 8 and a third summer school aimed at developing students' literacy and numeracy skills.

35. Curriculum provision for students with special educational needs is satisfactory and all students are receiving their curriculum entitlement. The school's policy on equality of opportunity is reviewed regularly by the governors who share, with the school leadership team, a firm commitment to the principles and practice of educational inclusion. The underachievement of boys was identified in the last report as a key issue and the school responded positively to this challenge. A number of strategies have been introduced in an attempt to overcome this problem, for example, tutoring action plans and summer schools. Though the margin between the different performance of boys and girls has fluctuated, it has not narrowed significantly. However, a notable success was the attainment of boys in English Literature in 2000.

36. Provision for students' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good, much as it was at the last inspection. The strengths now are in the way the school fosters students' moral and social development. Support for cultural development is not quite as good as it was judged to be in the last report, although still satisfactory, as is that for spiritual development.

37. The school gives satisfactory attention to students' spiritual development. Moving pieces of poetry, written for a competition, are on display in a corner outside the school hall and in corridors. Relatively few outstanding examples of students' presentations, coursework, or art, are on display outside classrooms to inspire others, which is a missed opportunity to celebrate high achievement. The school has chosen not to provide a daily act of collective worship, nor to use form time to share a relevant thought for the day. The best assemblies make a strong contribution to students' spiritual development, but there are not enough of them to make a real difference to their awareness of different beliefs and values.

38. In effective lessons, teachers give meaningful opportunities to students to reflect on their work and experiences. In religious education, history and English, they are expected to think about issues such as faith and justice. In music, they have the chance to be inspired by exceptional performances and the genius of composers. The librarian offers imaginative, special cultural and social events, which contribute very strongly to students' personal development. Students have the opportunity to reflect on stimulating visits by authors and others and to enjoy lively quizzes held in the library.

39. The school's aims are reflected in its strong support for students' moral and social development. Both are fostered well through the everyday life of the school and the positive approach of staff, led by the headteacher. Form teachers set a good example for students of how to relate to others and are very clear about the right way to behave. Students are taught to recognise the difference between right and wrong and encouraged to choose to do the right thing when faced with difficult choices such as joining in with a fight or walking away from trouble. Teachers work hard to help younger, more immature students to understand why it is wrong to misbehave and spoil other people's chances, as well as their own, of learning and doing well at school. In lessons such as religious education, history and English, students discuss prejudice and conflict, using examples from the past or from literature. This helps them to understand the significance of social responsibility and consideration for others. In

PSHE lessons, much good work supports students' moral and social development, including the opportunity to discuss the devastating effects of drug-related crime with prisoners. Good opportunities are provided for students to contribute to the school community as prefects, as representatives on the school council and in various sports teams.

40. Cultural awareness is encouraged through subjects such as history and music where students learn to value their own heritage and begin to explore other traditions, for instance as expressed in Indian and African music. In other subjects, opportunities are missed to help students develop an understanding of how different traditions and experiences have shaped other cultures. Groups of students benefit from very good experience of life in other parts of Europe as a result of trips and fieldwork. There is a strong link with Japan through use of the Internet and interaction with a visiting teacher. Given that the school is committed to working with students from diverse backgrounds, opportunities for students to value the different cultural backgrounds of people in the immediate and wider community were less stimulating than might be expected. The contribution of art and drama is modest. Very good work in music is beginning to have an impact on students' cultural awareness.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

41. The overall standard and care for students in the school is good with significant strengths in some areas. Child protection procedures are very good and policies are up to date. Staff are aware of the person who has overall responsibility for child protection and the school's procedures are published in the staff handbook. As part of their induction to the school, all new staff are well informed about the systems that should be followed. There are good systems for promoting good behaviour and eliminating oppressive behaviour. Issues relating to bullying and racism are dealt with in the PSHE lessons, assemblies and tutorials. Good records of any incidents are kept. The school regularly monitors attendance and has very good arrangements in place to improve the attendance of students.

42. Health and safety procedures are good. Staff are made aware of their responsibilities as part of the schools risk assessment process. The appropriate staff and outside contractors are used to monitor and carry out specific safety checks. Arrangements for dealing with accidents and caring for students when they are ill are good.

43. Staff know the students well and relationships between staff and students are good and based on mutual respect. Students respond well to the individual attention they receive. As part of the academic monitoring process, all students have regular tutorials with their form tutors to discuss their progress and any difficulties with behaviour are also addressed. Targets for further development and improvement are agreed, monitored at regular intervals and heads of year are fully involved. The time allocated to tutor periods is used well, following a planned programme. The school benefits from a strong team of staff with pastoral responsibilities who meet on a regular basis to ensure a high standard of care for individual students.

44. The PSHE programme is good. It is timetabled as a lesson for Years 7 to 11 and taught by a small team of staff who, in the main, have had specialist training. PSHE issues are also covered in tutor time and assemblies. The provision for careers education and work experience is good overall.

45. The school liaises with other support agencies as necessary, depending on the needs of students. Staff supervise students well at lunchtime, and prefects take on specific tasks to provide additional support where it is needed. The school has established the 'study buddy' system where students in Year 11 support younger students who experience difficulty with their work, such as homework and reading.

46. The good level of care and support contributes effectively to promoting high standards of behaviour. The school has a clear code of conduct and a good system of rewards to encourage positive behaviour. Management of behaviour in the classroom is generally good. Inappropriate behaviour is dealt with quickly and followed up effectively by staff. The school monitors students' behaviour and uses exclusion as an ultimate sanction very effectively, though very infrequently, to reinforce the standards of behaviour and effort expected of students. The school works hard to ensure all students are included in and benefit from the educational opportunities and activities provided.

47. Good systems have been established for supporting students' personal development. There are good guidance and counselling procedures. The academic monitoring system provides individual counselling and tracking. All students keep a "Record of Achievement" which contains information on their progress. Classroom procedures feed well into this system. The school's mentoring system is a particular strength. The system involves students in Year 11 having a staff tutor to monitor and support their progress. The school also has an effective business-mentoring scheme where students meet with mentors selected from industry to give additional support and advice both in school and in the work environment. The prefect system encourages students to take on additional responsibilities.

48. Good information and support is provided for vulnerable students. The school uses the support of the student welfare officer well. There is also a youth worker and two learning support assistants trained to support students who experience difficulties. This provision enables students to seek help when they need it. The school welfare officer has a good liaison with the local education authority agencies.

49. Overall, procedures for assessing students' attainment and progress are good and this represents an improvement on the last inspection when assessment and its use was identified as a key area for improvement. Assessment information is maintained departmentally in terms of subject specific data and centrally in terms of attainment on entry and expected and actual performance in external examinations.

50. The school's assessment data is briefly analysed at the whole school level and subsequently disseminated to departments who make use of the information to identify potential underachievers and highlight strategies for addressing gender differences. Some departments make good use of data to inform curriculum delivery and guide curricular planning. For example, coursework is broken down into more manageable sections in modern foreign languages, deadlines for tasks introduced in geography and the curriculum amended to provide a more structured framework in food technology. The school recognises that not all departments make full use of the detailed information that is available and has identified the use of data in raising academic standards as a whole-school target.

51. Within departments, good procedures are in place for monitoring and supporting students' academic progress in mathematics, science, music, physical education and design and technology, where assessments are provided in terms of National Curriculum levels and used to identify and support underachievers. However, the use of such data is still at an early stage of development.

52. ICT is monitored effectively in discrete lessons by regular ongoing assessment of student performance. Cross curricular assessment is offered at Key Stage 3 by design and technology, mathematics, science and modern foreign languages although many of these assessments are too high and based on limited evidence of actual ICT capability. There is no cross-curricular assessment of ICT at Key Stage 4 and this is a weakness. Weaknesses in marking and assessment were identified in some other subjects, such as English, religious education and art. This results in inconsistencies in practice and some assessments at the end of Year 9, for example in art, being over generous.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

53. Parents' views of the school are positive, as they were at the last inspection. Communication is better, as a result of very clear expectations within the school about the importance of speedy responses to messages and telephone calls.

54. Parents think that the school is doing a good job in terms of its teaching, management, the high expectations of staff and their children's personal development and progress. They feel very comfortable about approaching the school with queries. The school works tirelessly to ensure that all students have a chance to discover and develop their skills and talents, whatever their background circumstances. Effective links with parents contribute well to levels of academic and other achievement because partnership is focused positively on helping children to be successful in whatever way they can.

55. The school has used a range of helpful initiatives such as summer schools, reviews of parents' evenings and other surveys to try to ensure that its links with parents are as productive as possible. It monitors attendance at consultation evenings and does all it can to build good working relationships with parents who find it difficult to come into school for these and other meetings. Valuable meetings are held for parents of different year groups to give reassurance, as with Year 7, or offer guidance on study technique for those approaching GCSE examinations. These forms of contact and others, such as use of the weekly planner, make a good contribution to partnership. Parents are encouraged to visit the school during normal working days. This kind of openness and clarity about what the school expects from parents and staff, helps to ensure that parents are involved well in what the school tries to do for their children.

56. The school provides good quality information for parents in newsletters, letters home and on display boards, as well as through meetings and telephone calls. Reports on students' progress are helpful, particularly in terms of each student's effort and approach to work. There is variation between subjects in the usefulness of comments on what the student has learned and specific suggestions for improvement. The best comments focus sharply on particular strengths and weaknesses related to what the student is expected to know, understand and to be able to do. The weakest reports contain too many examples of unhelpful phrases such as "must work harder" without reference to the skills and knowledge required for better progress in each subject.

57. Parents support their children's learning satisfactorily. The great majority of parents work with the school to ensure that their children attend regularly, do the work required and follow the code of conduct. They respond well to the school's efforts to work with them, which contributes greatly to their children's achievements. A few parents have less positive views of school and education. These few are less likely to work productively with staff to ensure that their children have a happy and successful experience of school. They are not very well involved with the school's everyday life and aims and are less likely than most to encourage their children to come into school on time each day and to do their best in lessons and with homework. However, they are beginning to respond to the school's huge efforts to include them in its work and to value signs of success in individual subjects.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

58. The head teacher exercises strong and effective leadership and has a clear vision for the future of the school. He has enthused others to create a school in which standards have consistently risen and

the quality of teaching has improved. The school is taking part in a number of nationally funded projects designed to assist in this process. Senior managers share the headteacher's vision and work hard to put it into practice. Responsibilities are allocated effectively and there are clear lines of communication between senior staff and middle managers. Heads of year provide good management of pastoral care. Many subject departments are well managed but there are weaknesses in creative arts, humanities, science and the co-ordination of ICT across the curriculum.

59. Governors are extremely supportive and committed to helping the school raise standards. They are led by a very well informed chair of governors, and although there are no formal links with curriculum areas, heads of department and other staff with responsibilities regularly report to the governing body. As a result, governors have a clear idea of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and set appropriate targets for the headteacher and senior staff. They work closely with the headteacher through a clearly defined and extremely effective structure of meetings and sub-committees and attend well organised training linked to school priorities for that particular year. However, the National Curriculum requirements for ICT and design technology at Key Stage 4 are not being met and the school is still not meeting statutory requirements for providing a daily act of collective worship.

60. The school is committed to working with and for the community and the headteacher works vigorously and very effectively to achieve this. The partnership he has established with parents and the community is imaginative, wide ranging and well organised. He has established impressive links with local industry, voluntary agencies and community bodies that enrich students' learning. A strong working relationship with both the borough council and the county council have resulted in dual use arrangements that have helped to enhance provision of a range of facilities. Equality of opportunity is evident in all aspects of school life. For example, the school has worked hard to provide summer schools for literacy, numeracy and for gifted and talented students as well as developing work related courses in Key Stage 4. Staff work well together and all staff, both teaching and non-teaching are valued. Links with primary schools and sixth form and further education colleges are also strong and have a very positive effect on transition.

61. The school's priorities for development clearly reflect the needs of the school and are evident in the action taken to bring about improvements in the school's performance. The present whole-school focus on improving teaching and learning is effectively linked to the school's new procedures for monitoring and evaluating teaching. Senior staff, including heads of department are involved in observing teaching and providing feedback to teachers as part of the school's performance management procedures. Staff have a clear view of teaching strengths and areas for improvement. Procedures for the effective sharing of good practice are developing and teaching is improving as a result of this strategy. Departmental development plans reflect whole-school priorities, such as increasing academic and other achievements and making the most of human resources available. Funding for development is closely linked to school priorities. The school has a good understanding of how well it is progressing in its improvement programme. It now has available a growing range of data to assist in this area and is beginning to use this effectively to monitor and evaluate progress. The school seeks the views of parents and is responsive to the issues raised. A culture of self-review leading to improvement is developing. The school has successfully used outside systems and criteria to help with its own self-evaluation gaining external accreditation including "Investors in People" status.

62. Several aspects of the management of special educational needs are good and the head of learning support has worked very hard to create a department that provides appropriate support for both students and staff. The policy is clear and the student information file provided for all staff is a very useful working document. Support staff have a clear understanding of their responsibilities. Communication within the department is good and a committed team of support staff work very effectively with students both in the classroom and when students are withdrawn. Formal links

between the special educational needs department and other departments are underdeveloped. The governing body provides appropriate support and the governor responsible for liaison is well informed.

63. The school has made good progress with the key issues raised in the last inspection report. Performance management procedures are very good and have effectively replaced teacher appraisal. Monitoring of development planning and progress on meeting targets by middle managers has improved. Planning at departmental level is beginning to incorporate the necessary detail to ensure that the needs of students of all abilities are met. Most departments are now beginning to use available data to help in this and the effective working partnership between the leadership team and other managers has also helped considerably. The statutory requirement to provide a daily act of collective worship is still not being met.

64. Careful financial planning is a feature of the school's management. The head is very effective in securing grants to further the school's development. Financial planning is meticulous and all grants are spent for their intended purpose. The administration officer monitors expenditure by means of a monthly financial printout, and prepares an up-to-date financial statement for each meeting of the governors' finance committee, which carefully scrutinises planned spending. Expenditure is carefully linked with the priorities of the school development plan. Surrey County Council Strategic Information Service provides data which allows the school to compare its costs for curriculum provision, staffing and premises with those of other similar secondary schools. The school applies the best value principles rigorously in all areas of expenditure.

65. Newly qualified teachers and experienced teachers new to the school are very well supported through an induction programme. Their work and teaching are regularly monitored and the arrangements for mentoring are very effective. Teachers speak enthusiastically about the help and support they receive and how they quickly settle and feel able to make a valuable contribution to the school. The school has placed great importance on ensuring that the areas they have identified for improvement are supported by a robust programme of in-service training. The programme, which includes all staff, teaching and non-teaching, reflects a strong commitment to improving standards by investing in staff, who are central to the school's success. The result of staff training has been positive, securing a much improved record of effective teaching and learning than at the time of the last inspection. Good systems have been developed that will, over time, allow senior staff to monitor the impact of training and staff development on pupil performance more closely.

66. The school has a sufficient number of experienced and qualified teachers and support staff to meet the needs of students and the demands of the curriculum. Overall the match is good. The school has increased significantly in size since the last inspection and many new appointments have been made at all levels including some staff with management responsibilities. This has created some flexibility and the opportunity to improve the match of teachers to the curriculum on offer. As a result, where previously students had been taught by non-specialists, as they were for example in art and religious education and where standards had fallen as a consequence, the headteacher was in a position to appoint newly qualified subject specialist teachers. The headteacher has worked very hard to recruit teachers with the appropriate qualifications and particularly so in subjects where there is a national shortage. The school has been successful in taking the action necessary to minimise the effects of staffing shortages.

67. Teachers and students are greatly assisted in their work by laboratory technicians, ICT technicians and learning support assistants. A team of administration staff, supervisors and site managers provide very good support by ensuring that day-to-day routines are carried out effectively and efficiently. The staff responsible for overseeing the current building programme have been very well organised in keeping any disruption to learning to the minimum. Other staff, including the youth support worker and

the librarian, play a prominent role running extra-curricular classes and homework clubs. An area of weakness in this otherwise very positive picture is in art, where no technical support is provided.

68. The accommodation has undergone substantial changes since the last inspection and another ambitious project is due to begin as the current work is completed. By the start of the autumn term there will be additional classrooms for history, geography and music and much improved accommodation for ICT and the library. The next phase will be to provide high quality sporting and fitness facilities that the school and members of the community will have access to. The headteacher has worked very hard to improve resources and the accommodation and to make the school a place where staff and students choose to work and learn. The school site includes a privately run nursery for 30 pre-school children, a facility shared between the wider community and the school staff. Much has been achieved by taking a longer-term view of the school, the needs of the local community and through imaginative fundraising. The site is pleasant and well maintained, the accommodation good, and improving.

69. Resources are adequate overall. Most of the weakness highlighted in the previous inspection have been addressed, or are shortly to be improved as part of the improvements in accommodation. However, there remains a shortage of computers which limits the development of ICT across the curriculum. Resources are inadequate in religious education, which needs a wider range of teaching materials and in art where students buy their own sketchbooks – a National Curriculum requirement.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

70. Building on the good improvement made since the last inspection, and to raise standards further, the governors, headteacher and staff should:

- (1) meet National Curriculum requirements – for ICT throughout the school, and for design and technology at Key Stage 4;
(5, 20, 25-6, 52, 94-5, 113-4, 119, 127, 131-2, 135, 155, 163)
- (2) improve students' attainment in art and design and drama;
(2, 4, 17, 21, 101-2, 105, 164-6)
- (3) improve teachers' planning to meet better the learning needs of students of all levels of attainment.
(8, 9, 21, 23-4, 87, 97, 99, 103, 105, 112, 118, 155, 162, 168)

(the numbers in italics show the main paragraphs in which these issues are discussed within the report)

71. The report also identifies some other issues which governors may wish to include in the action plan to be developed following this inspection. They include:

- further development of strategies for the improvement of literacy across the curriculum: (7, 30, 81)
- improving the behaviour of a small number of students: (11, 13-14)
- improving the quality of some individual education plans for students with special educational needs: (23)

- improving formal links between the learning support department and other departments: (62)
- improving marking and assessment in some subjects: (52)
- improving opportunities for students' spiritual and cultural development, including meeting statutory requirements for a daily act of collective worship: (37, 40)
- improving resources in some subject areas; (69, 136, 162)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed

154

Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils

46

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
6	18	37	33	6	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll

Y7 – Y11

Number of pupils on the school's roll	945
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945

Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	100
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100

Special educational needs

Y7 – Y11

Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	24
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24

Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	161
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English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	6

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	32
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	50

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	9.0
National comparative data	7.7

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.3
National comparative data	1.1

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
		2000	85	98

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	54	51	59
	Girls	79	59	51
	Total	133	110	110
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	73 (69)	60 (67)	60 (65)
	National	63 (63)	65 (62)	59 (55)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	37 (20)	41 (45)	29 (24)
	National	28 (28)	42 (38)	30 (23)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	47	56	54
	Girls	70	57	57
	Total	117	113	111
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	64 (61)	62 (69)	61 (63)
	National	64 (64)	66 (64)	62 (60)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	28 (23)	41 (43)	32 (36)
	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	80	76	156

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	31	73	76
	Girls	47	75	75
	Total	78	148	151
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	50 (47)	95 (93)	97 (95)
	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	41 (39.7)
	National	38.4 (38)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	3
Black – African heritage	2
Black – other	
Indian	
Pakistani	1
Bangladeshi	
Chinese	1
White	934
Any other minority ethnic group	4

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage		
Black – African heritage		
Black – other		
Indian		
Pakistani		
Bangladeshi		
Chinese		
White	22	1
Other minority ethnic groups		

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y11

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	55.3
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	17

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y7 – Y11

Total number of education support staff	16
Total aggregate hours worked per week	418

Deployment of teachers: Y7– Y11

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	77.0
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	24.3
Key Stage 4	20.0

Financial information

Financial year	1999/2000
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	£
Total income	2,143,701
Total expenditure	2,242,252
Expenditure per pupil	2,446
Balance brought forward from previous year	149,374
Balance carried forward to next year	50,823

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	945
Number of questionnaires returned	152

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	28	57	10	4	1
My child is making good progress in school.	38	52	7	1	3
Behaviour in the school is good.	16	58	13	3	10
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	17	63	14	5	2
The teaching is good.	20	70	4	1	5
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	24	63	11	3	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	45	49	4	2	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	55	44	1	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	22	56	18	1	3
The school is well led and managed.	41	51	3	0	5
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	31	61	3	1	5
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	35	51	10	1	4

* due to rounding figures may not add to 100

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

ENGLISH

72. Results in the 2000 national tests at the end of Year 9 were above average nationally and above average when compared to similar schools. The performance of girls was significantly better than that of boys. Since the last inspection, the results have risen sharply and faster than the national trend, but with a dip in 1999. There has been a wide mismatch between test results and teacher assessments. The results in English were higher in 2000 than those in mathematics and science.

73. In GCSE English language in 2000, results were in line with the national average. English literature results, an examination for which the school enters most students, were well above the national average and significantly better than at the last inspection. During recent years, the attainment of boys in English literature has improved notably and the gap between boys' and girls' attainment has narrowed. The gap remains in English Language where girls perform better than boys. Taken together, the English examination results are better than mathematics or science, though the language results alone are lower.

74. In work and lessons seen, standards of English in Key Stage 3 are above average. Some students are working at high levels and with a good degree of independence. By Year 9, students show confidence in oral work in response to classroom activities that are well structured and assessed by the teachers. Students know the importance of good presentation in speaking, of addressing their audience and of listening politely to others. Students read well for information using the library and the Internet. A Year 9 class displayed good research skills in investigating the lives and works of challenging writers, aided by very good support from the librarian. Students make good use of the opportunities for wider reading at the start of some lessons and in tutor periods, and this has had an impact on improving reading of boys in particular. Students plan and make notes for their written work and, with good teacher guidance and support, their writing is often fluent and well structured. All Year 9 students had written at length on 'Macbeth', studied for the national test. They show a competence and confidence in writing about stories, plays and poems; literature is the focus of much of their written work. However, too many students at all levels of attainment show weaknesses in their spelling, punctuation and expression. Where students draft and edit their work thoroughly, the standard of writing improves, but there is a lack of consistency in the extent of drafting and the use of drafting books. Although many of the lower attaining students and students with special educational needs are still struggling with basic skills, they receive good support and make good progress.

75. From the work and lessons observed, standards of English in Key Stage 4 are above average. Students are confident speakers and plan their oral work seriously. They read and study literature in meticulous detail, particularly the higher attainers, who show a firm grasp of the vocabulary and phrases needed to analyse poetry and compare short stories. Students in Year 10, studying the poem 'Wind' by Ted Hughes, showed themselves articulate and sensitive in a class discussion, attentive and moved by individual words and single lines. Another Year 10 class, having read 'Lord of the Flies' by William Golding, spent a lesson poring over a passage about a leading character, Jack. They examined in fine detail the impact of each descriptive word and learned much from their discussion about the craft of the writer. A lower attaining group were similarly interested in reading aloud from the abridged version of 'The Woman in Black', encouraged by the planned visit to see the play next term.

76. Students enter the school in Year 7 with broadly average attainment in English. An increasing number of students have learning difficulties and very low reading ages and also a small group of

students has attended the summer school for the talented and gifted. From this start, all students make good progress and achieve well as they move through the school. Higher attaining students respond well when given opportunities for independent working, though average and lower attainers tend to rely heavily on their teachers. Students know how well they are doing against national criteria by the regular use of assessment sheets in Years 10 and 11. Younger students work with their teacher on setting individual targets, and when these are written into their books to remind them, their progress is more rapid.

77. Students' attitudes are nearly always good in Key Stage 3 and always good and often very good in Key Stage 4. Boys dominate the lower attaining sets throughout the school in English and create some behaviour problems in Year 8. However, Year 11 students' attitudes are markedly good towards their work and the school. Students showed genuine appreciation of teachers' efforts in their last week before study leave and spoke of accepting the offer to come back for individual help. Students from Year 10 help those younger students with reading difficulties in a one-to-one 'buddy' scheme during tutor time, a scheme that is being extended to include higher attainers also pairing up with younger students. Students gain from the good relationships and the responsibility helps their personal development.

78. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall and often very good, especially in Key Stage 4. Teachers' knowledge of literature is good, and the enthusiasm with which they teach it is a strength. Planning is good when the various needs of all students in the class are taken into account including the higher attainers and those with special educational needs. Learning is more effective in lessons where the teacher makes the objectives clear and progress in meeting those objectives is discussed with the students. The emphasis on literature is evident in the schemes of work and has reaped rewards in GCSE but has resulted in a lack of balance in other important areas of language and media. The use of many small exercise books is a weakness; it is more difficult for teachers to keep track of work left unfinished and for students to follow up comments in the marking. The lack of common practice in areas such as assessment is also a weakness, overcome in part by the good teaching and experience of individual members of the department.

79. The English suite of classrooms is very good. Excellent displays of students' work and competition entries in the rooms and corridors demonstrate an atmosphere of confidence and success. The use of ICT is increasing, though there is a reliance on home computers for students to word-process their work and research the Internet. The library is well used but the stock is too small for the growing numbers in the school. Improvement since the last inspection is good. Results have improved in GCSE, and standards have risen in literature and structured oral work. The underachievement of boys has been addressed by adapting teaching styles and reading materials used, though there is still work to do in English language.

80. Very recent changes in the leadership of the department are already having a good impact on team direction and development. Whilst acknowledging the strengths of the staff, the head of department is working towards the development of a more coherent approach. There has been good improvement since the last inspection and capacity for further improvement is very good.

81. Across the curriculum, literacy provision and standards have improved since the last inspection with some good opportunities for developing reading and writing in a number of subjects. Good guidance on writing in history helps students structure their work. In design technology and science, teachers give students writing frameworks. There is a strong focus on written accuracy in Key Stage 3 modern foreign languages, and teachers of most subjects occasionally note spelling and punctuation errors in their marking. However, the approach to spelling is inconsistent, in spite of the spelling policy, and marking of other errors is erratic. Teachers miss opportunities to ask students to read aloud or to

set work which involves writing for different purposes. The school has a literacy policy and a Basic Skills Quality Mark. Regrettably, as yet, there is no teacher from each subject to implement and oversee literacy provision, and to monitor the standards and progress achieved by the students.

MATHEMATICS

82. At the end of Year 9, results in the national tests in mathematics have remained static over the last four years and, in 2000, were in line with national averages. Students' attainment on entry to the school was close to the national average, so that overall achievement is in line with expectations. The number of students reaching the expected level 5 was below the national average and well below similar schools, while the number of students reaching level 6 was in line with national averages and similar schools. There is little difference between the performance of girls and boys and attainment in mathematics is below that of English and science. Past difficulties in recruiting suitably qualified staff have had a negative impact on standards.

83. On the basis of the students' work and the lessons observed, standards of work attained at the end of Key Stage 3 are in line with expectations. The work covers all of the attainment targets with an appropriate emphasis given to using and applying mathematics through tasks such as the 'Pool Table' and the 'Painted Cube' investigations. Number work is well rehearsed and students can identify algebraic patterns and solve linear equations. They identify the symmetries of different shapes but their drawing and construction work is less well developed. Higher attaining students can solve simultaneous equations and quadratic equations as well as use trigonometry to calculate the angles and sides of a right angled triangle.

84. GCSE results have increased in line with national trends and 54 percent of the students entered in Summer 2000 gained an A*-C grade in mathematics which was above the national average and well above similar schools. The attainment of girls and boys is very similar and the performance of mathematics is above English language and science. On the basis of their Key Stage 3 test scores, students are doing better than would have been expected so that achievement is good.

85. On the evidence of the students' work and the lessons observed, standards of work attained at the end of Key Stage 4 are above expectations. The work covers all of the attainment targets with an appropriate emphasis on using and applying mathematics which contributes to students' growing familiarity with algebraic techniques such as pattern spotting and finding general terms in linear sequences. Students' mental skills are constantly practised but remain a weakness for many who prefer to guess answers rather than think them through carefully. For example, in a Year 10 lesson, a student quickly responded that $48 \times 2 = 72$ then tried $48 \times 2 = 80$ before considering the question carefully and coming up with the correct answer. Students' drawing and construction work is still insufficiently developed although their revision practice and success in the coursework component compensate for such deficiencies and result in the higher standards at this key stage.

86. Overall the quality of teaching and learning observed was satisfactory at Key Stage 3 and good at Key Stage 4. Teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge and high expectations of student involvement and commitment to the subject. Lessons start promptly with a useful numeracy activity, which quickly concentrates students' attention and provides a good link to previous work. In a Year 9 lesson on drawing quadratic graphs, very good classroom management was supported by activities which were time constrained, transitions which were handled well and explanations which reiterated important learning points. In Key Stage 4, the teachers have a good knowledge of the syllabus and examination requirements so that the work is much more focused in these years and this has a positive impact on GCSE results.

87. Some weaknesses in teaching and learning remain, however. In a significant minority of lessons, and especially where teaching is deemed to be unsatisfactory, there is too much teacher direction and insufficient attention given to the spread of ability in the class. In Key Stage 3, especially in Year 7 and Year 8, there is insufficient challenge especially in the top sets where teaching takes little account of prior knowledge so that students learn little that is new to them. Teacher talk dominates too many lessons and common errors are not anticipated in the teaching so that, in a Year 7 class, the teacher did not attempt to reason why so many students incorrectly believed that 2^5 was equal to 64 and thus properly address this common misunderstanding.

88. Students with special educational needs show satisfactory achievement. They are sensitively supported in the classroom with help from the teacher, the learning support assistants and other students. Learning support assistants work very well with the teacher and offer good support and encouragement to individuals and groups of students. In the majority of lessons, there is little difference between the performance of girls and boys. Girls work consistently well in lessons and their careful presentation means that they do not cover so many questions, although their work does provide them with a useful revision tool. On the other hand, boys are more voluble and demanding of the teachers' attention but their presentation is scruffy and untidy so does not provide them with work that might easily be used for their revision.

89. Students' attitudes and behaviour are good at both key stages. In the majority of lessons, students are positive about their work and fully involved. They behave well and respond to challenges when these are presented to them. Students have a very good rapport with the teacher and enjoy good working relationships with one another. In a relatively small number of classes, students demonstrate unsatisfactory attitudes to their work and lack commitment to their studies. For example, in a Year 10 lesson, a significant number of students refused to involve themselves in the lesson and talked throughout the teacher explanation so that their learning, and the learning of other students in the class, was seriously inhibited.

90. The curriculum meets statutory requirements although the provision for literacy within mathematics is unsatisfactory. The department is aware of the school's literacy policy but poor spelling such as "algebra" is not picked up by teachers and there is little evidence of teachers using literacy to develop students' competence or extend their subject specific vocabulary. The provision for ICT is satisfactory although inconsistent across the department. The schemes of work make reference to LOGO, spreadsheets and databases and particularly good use of ICT was noted in a Year 9 lesson where students were encouraged to use spreadsheets to identify the largest box which could be made from a given size of paper.

91. The provision for numeracy across the curriculum is satisfactory and particularly effective in design and technology where students' number, shape and data-handling skills are used to good effect. Across the curriculum, number work is developed well in languages for costing exercises and in history, where students make use of matrices and Venn diagrams. Measurement skills are highlighted in food technology where students weigh ingredients as well as estimating quantities in designing recipes of their own. Students undertake questionnaires, tally charts and graphs (also using ICT) in design and technology and make use of bar charts and graphs in languages to record and illustrate results from surveys. There is a numeracy policy and the department has a well-written 'Graphical Presentation of Data' policy which details how graphs and charts should be used across the curriculum.

92. The leadership and management of the subject are good. Leadership ensures a clear educational direction and the head of faculty engenders a good team spirit among his core team of teachers. The

team has a shared commitment for improvement and a capacity to succeed. The head of faculty has a very good idea of the department's strengths and weaknesses and uses data well to identify areas for further development and improvement. He provides good support for new staff and recently qualified teachers in the department and has managed the considerable difficulties surrounding the recruitment of suitably qualified mathematics teachers well.

93. Progress since the last inspection has been good. Students' attainment in the national tests remains broadly in line with national averages and attainment in GCSE examinations has risen to above national averages. There is now less difference between the performance of girls and boys than mentioned in the last inspection report. Students' work on investigations is much improved and there is a suitable emphasis on coursework tasks which develop students' thinking skills although too many students still over-rely on teachers and do not develop good independent working habits. Assessment and record keeping are much improved and regular end of module tests are carried out. Centrally kept records are tracked against National Curriculum attainment targets and levels. The department is well placed to continue to improve and to raise standards.

SCIENCE

94. Results in the national tests at the end of Year 9 have fluctuated. In 2000, they were similar to the last inspection, being close to the national average but below those of similar schools. Boys and girls have performed similarly over the last three years. The results in science are below those for English and above those for mathematics. Evidence of the students' work and lessons observed showed that the attainment of the current Year 9 is close to the national average. Students of all abilities know facts and key words from the full range of national curriculum targets. The higher ability students are able to apply their knowledge well. Weaknesses were observed in the skills needed for investigational work. In a higher ability set, students were vague about how to research ideas whilst in a lower ability set several students were unable to use their research to design an experiment. In a middle ability set students understood the need for fair tests, but found the idea of a variable more difficult. Some students were unwilling to take responsibility for their own learning and teachers showed a great deal of patience in dealing with them. There were also weaknesses in the use of ICT.

95. GCSE results have risen over the last three years and are better than those reported at the last inspection. In 2000, the proportion of students gaining grades A*-C and A*-G were close to the national average. The results in science were below those in English and mathematics. The evidence of the students' work and lessons observed showed that the attainment in the current Year 11 is close to the national average. There are strengths in scientific knowledge and the use of technical vocabulary. The higher and middle ability students have the literacy and numeracy skills to enable them to access the science curriculum. Higher ability students are able to explain aspects of science well. In a top set revision lesson, students' excellent attitude and concentration enabled them to cover a wide range of topics demonstrating their very good standards of knowledge and understanding. Lower ability students have more limited literacy skills and find explaining science more difficult. In their last lesson before GCSE, students in a low ability set worked at foundation level examination questions. Some students said that they found the work particularly difficult because they missed lessons regularly to attend a work-related programme. Investigational work was relatively weak for all abilities and there was little evidence of ICT being used to assist learning.

96. When compared to their earlier attainment, students' achievement in science is satisfactory. Students' attainment on entry to the school is close to the national average, and results in end of Key Stage 3 national tests and GCSE are also close to the national average. The setting arrangements from Year 7 onwards allow students to progress at levels appropriate to their ability. In a higher ability set,

Year 7 students were keen to answer and ask questions. They worked enthusiastically at their practical work on metal/acid reactions, recording their observations effectively. Some students understood that the hydrogen must have come from the acid and some could see trends in the reactivity of metals. In Year 8, lower ability students were very responsive to the teacher's questions. Students were able to draw diagrams showing the structure of solids, liquids and gases. One girl suggested that in the expansion of solids 'the heat energy has made the particles spread out more so they take up more space'. Another girl predicted that the cooling of solids would cause the opposite of this to happen. Students knew the importance of key words and were interested in the applications of expansion and contraction in everyday life. The written work of students showed that higher ability students have the literacy skills to record and explain their work in detail. Middle to low ability students find written work more difficult and their books are noticeably less well kept. The writing frames provided in some lessons provide opportunities for these students to develop their writing skills.

97. Students with special educational needs make good progress because the setting arrangements enable teachers to structure the work differently to match the needs of students more closely. Support teachers are targeted to the students with individual education plans so that their progress can be encouraged and monitored. For example, in a Year 8 lesson on light, the learning support assistant helped students to work out that their light box was broken and got them another one quickly. However some difficulties arose in some larger middle ability sets which have a wider ability range, including students with behaviour needs. In a Year 9 lesson on investigations, several students were unwilling to work independently and went off task. If tasks were not well matched to student ability then students became noisy or restless.

98. Overall the teaching and learning observed was satisfactory. It was good in Years 10 and 11 and some very good and excellent teaching was seen. Teachers have good subject knowledge enabling them to conduct good question and answer sessions which students enjoy and respond to enthusiastically. They plan their lessons well so that students can acquire the knowledge and vocabulary that they need. The good relationships in classrooms coupled with the high expectations of teachers create a good learning environment where students can concentrate on their work. For example, in a Year 10 higher ability set students worked well on an experiment to investigate the connection between the change from liquid to gas and boiling points. Students made careful observations and were able to plot their results as a graph and made good progress. Teachers know their students well and monitor performance using their database. Teaching in Years 10 and 11 is good because teachers have very clear learning objectives, which they explain to students. They have a very good knowledge of examination requirements and explain these clearly to the students. Teachers build consistently on the knowledge and understanding that students have gained in Years 7 to 9. On occasion, particularly in Key Stage 3 learning objectives were not clear and work was not matched to students' individual needs. This resulted in lessons lacking pace and challenge for the more able in each set.

99. Students' attitudes to science overall are good. They are very good in Years 10 and 11. The attitudes of Year 11 students in their last few lessons were most impressive. Students are very willing to work hard. In some lessons they worked in silence as they concentrated on the tasks they were set. Students were enthusiastic learners and showed excitement when learning was challenging. For example, in a Year 10 low ability set, students were using keys to sort insects into groups. Students responded well to the well-structured task and worked independently. They were very keen to contribute orally to the list of general characteristics that might allow you to sort out insects, such as segmented body, antenna, and wings. Students clearly enjoyed practical work. They worked safely and efficiently during practical sessions and were responsible about clearing up. At times, the behaviour of a few students was unsatisfactory. This behaviour was usually found in the sets with a wide range of ability where students had no support or tasks were not sufficiently matched to student

need.

100. Overall improvement is satisfactory because standards have been maintained at Key Stage 3 and GCSE results have improved. However, there have been weaknesses in the leadership of the department which overall is unsatisfactory. The leadership and strategic management are weaknesses leading to inconsistency and lack of overall vision. Staff work as individuals rather than as a coherent team and there is a lack of an agreed consistent approach within the department. However, responsibilities that have been delegated have been taken up very effectively by science staff. For example, although the development of departmental resources has not been planned effectively, existing resources have been recently catalogued and teachers are now in a position to use them more effectively. The department database is used well by teachers to follow student progress and ICT is being developed. The teaching staff are well qualified and used effectively. A very good technical staff supports them. The commitment to improvement is good amongst teachers within the department and a real strength is the department's potential for growth and development. Accommodation is barely adequate at present with seven lessons not being taught in laboratories. The effect of a larger group of Year 7 students joining the school in September needs to be considered and action taken to ensure that students are taught in specialist accommodation.

ART AND DESIGN

101. Teacher assessments, made at the end of Key Stage 3 in 2000, showed standards to be above the standard expected for students' ages. The same high standards were not mirrored in the quality of work provided by the school, suggesting that teacher assessments had been over generous. Attainment of students currently in Year 9 is below the standard expected by age 14. At entry in Year 7, most students have limited skills and not all the experiences required by the National Curriculum. Their progress year on year has been, and to some extent still is, very variable and dependent on the quality of the teaching students receive. This has led to wide-scale underachievement. Skills, knowledge and understanding in the subject have not been progressively planned and developed and significant numbers do not reach their potential. Achievement is therefore unsatisfactory. In the lessons observed during the inspection, good teaching has had a positive impact on students' achievements enabling some to make good progress in lessons. They spoke with understanding about the work of surrealist artists commenting on the subject matter and the dislocation of images and showing interest and curiosity in the way certain artists, like Dali for example, achieved this. A student identified as low attaining could give a good explanation of a myth and was able to make the connection with Dali's painting of the Metamorphosis of Narcissus. However, for many, the experiences of previous years have left them with little confidence about their capabilities and poor attitudes - to their own work and the subject - that are proving difficult to turn around.

102. The weaknesses at Key Stage 3 have had a negative impact on attainment and progress at Key Stage 4. Students have been ill prepared for the rigours of an examination course and have to be taught routine skills and work habits that have not been taught systematically in younger age classes. They begin the course at a disadvantage and too few go on to attain the standards they reach in their other subjects. Since the last inspection, GCSE results have fallen from average to well below the national average in 2000. Students did less well in art and design than in their other subjects. Attainment of students who have just completed their GCSE course is below average. No Year 11 classes were seen during the week of the inspection but the work shows some imaginative responses to the examination task and good quality work in sketch books. In sharp contrast however, much of it shows weaknesses in investigation and experimentation, painting and drawing skills. The students who have been entered for the examination include a small number who regularly miss art lessons to attend work-based courses and several others who have a poor record of attendance and/or who have not

completed an element of the course. Their portfolios contain less work than the rest and the low level of some of the work reflects the interruptions to learning. Achievement by Year 10 students is patchy. In one class a lot of progress had been made and students were achieving very well. In the other, students wasted time, were easily distracted and did not produce the work they were capable of. Achievement is therefore unsatisfactory overall.

103. Students who have special educational needs, in all year groups and both key stages, make insufficient progress. In some classes, the teacher makes good use of available information to plan work that takes suitable account of language and behaviour. In other classes, insufficient awareness of differing levels of need leads to weaknesses in concentration and productivity of both higher and lower attaining students.

104. Overall students' behaviour and their attitudes to learning are sound. Where teaching was effective in motivating, helping students make progress and encouraging them to recognise what they had achieved, students behaved well and showed good attitudes to learning. Students enjoy practical activities and when taught how to refine and make improvements they gained in confidence and were willing to try more ambitious work. In a minority of lessons, where the work was lacking in pace, did not challenge them or where they did not get the guidance and teaching they needed to make progress, they lost interest, wasted time and produced little work of substance.

105. Teaching and learning are unsatisfactory. In the past it has not effectively ensured students are taught, and that they learn, what the National Curriculum requires or that students make progress year on year. This situation has resulted in underachievement at Key Stage 3 and in GCSE examinations. The situation in the past year has become more positive, firstly by the appointment of an additional subject specialist who has expertise across a wider range of materials and media and secondly by the introduction of a scheme of work for Key Stage 3 lessons. Nevertheless, inconsistency in the quality of teaching and learning presently gives some students a better chance than others of achieving their potential. Where teaching was most effective, clear objectives for learning had been identified and at the end of the lesson a brief summary and questions reminded students what had been achieved and what was to follow. For lower attaining students it was a good opportunity to consolidate what they had learnt. Students left the lesson with a realistic sense of how they were progressing and, because they knew where the work was leading, some higher attaining students were able to extend their ideas further in their own time, for example by arriving for the next lesson with examples of research or images manipulated on the computers. In this way students were able to learn very effectively from one another. Learning was also very effective where teachers demonstrated techniques and used exemplar material to raise expectations. Students made very good progress where the teacher had carefully marked and assessed their work and provided comments that had an appropriate balance of praise and suggestions for further work. For the teacher, the assessments were used very effectively to set differentiated tasks and provide one-to-one support that matched students' learning needs. Where teaching was less successful no such adjustments had been made to lesson plans. Objectives for teaching and learning had not been clearly identified and students were given inappropriate and repetitive tasks that failed to challenge them. Such activities had a negative effect on students' attitudes to the subject and on their behaviour. Expectations of work were not high enough and, although behaviour was generally well managed, the teaching failed to generate sufficient interest and motivation.

106. The present arrangements for the management of the subject are unsatisfactory. The leadership and management are not effective in ensuring that the subject makes a sufficient impact and a positive contribution to students' cultural education. Variation between the quality of teaching and learning is leading to inequality of opportunity. Urgent action is needed to: address unsatisfactory achievement and falling standards in examinations; moderate students' work across classes and year groups;

monitor progress year on year using data and teacher assessments and ensure students are provided with sketchbooks - in line with Key Stage 3 National Curriculum requirements. The 50-minute lessons give insufficient opportunity for students to learn to concentrate, reflect on their achievements and practise and refine skills. There has been insufficient improvement since the last inspection.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

107. Teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 indicate that the school's results are close to the level achieved by students at this stage nationally. This broadly matches the standard of work seen during the inspection. These results are due to the well-structured courses for all pupils in design and technology in Years 7 to 9.

108. The design and technology programme has a good balance of projects. Students in Years 7 to 9 design and make products in food, resistant materials, basic electronics and graphic products. Students use the design process well when they develop ideas of their own. They show an ability to analyse and draw conclusions from existing products and gain a wide range of basic skills in making.

109. Students' achievement in Years 7 to 9 is at least satisfactory. They work through a range of assignments for example making wooden puppets, novelty clocks and garden tools. They design meals for particular situations such as preparing ready made meals suitable for sale in a supermarket and designing popular dishes from other countries. Students test and evaluate their own product at each stage of its development. They are well supported in planning their work using structured worksheets. Students design surveys to gain the views of others as part of their work and use numerical data in the form of charts, graphs and food calculations. In graphics lessons, students work at a particularly high level throughout Years 7 to 9. They are taught a range of two- and three-dimensional drawing skills and apply these well to their own design ideas. All students extend their skills and techniques considerably and also apply them in other areas of technology. An example of this was seen in a Year 9 lesson, where students used graphics skills to design their novelty clock. Higher attaining students combined these skills well with notes to explain each stage of their work showing depth and detail in their writing. All students used a good range of technical vocabulary in their written tasks when explaining their work. Lower attaining students applied all the basic skills to improve the overall presentation and quality of their work. Students used ICT well to research and present information in their design projects as well as processing information they collected on surveys. They were familiar with presenting the data in the form of graphs and charts.

110. GCSE results in 2000, indicate that the proportion of students achieving GCSE grades A*-C was broadly in line with the national average and those of similar schools. There has been an improvement in the overall design and technology A*-C grades since 1999. The proportion of girls achieving grades A*-C is significantly higher than that of boys. Students continue to achieve better results in graphic products than they do in other design and technology subjects.

111. In the work seen during the inspection, standards of students in Year 11 are above the level expected nationally. This is higher than the standards suggested by the GCSE results in 2000, reflects the trend of improving standards this year and represents good achievement. All students use a wide range of investigation and research skills, and evaluate strengths and weaknesses effectively as they progress with their design ideas. They develop work of very good quality, including a range of making skills that takes account of large-scale manufacturing processes. For example, Year 11 students in graphic products designed a variety of rooms such as a nursery, a lounge extension, a bowling alley and a bedroom. All students worked to scale and some used human scale well to extend the depth and accuracy of their planning. Coursework included a good level of numeracy in both the planning and

making as well as collecting and processing the views of others. They considered the data well in the development of their own ideas and presented the information using ICT to show how the information was used to influence their work. Good use of ICT was also seen in modelling ideas using specialist software to produce three-dimensional models of the rooms. Higher attaining students produced good quality products that included advanced modelling skills supported with accurate, well-developed plans. Folder work included the testing of processes, materials and finishes as students developed their final designs. All the work reflected a high degree of research. Students evaluated their work well against the specification they formed for the designs. Higher attaining students worked accurately and in depth, although coursework in food technology was less structured. Lower attaining students designed products well suited to the courses and were supported by their teachers to complete work to match the requirements of the examination.

112. Overall the quality of teaching and learning was good. A significant number of very good lessons were seen in resistant materials and graphic products. Teachers have a good knowledge of their subject and used interesting methods, enabling students to understand basic skills. This was seen in a Year 7 resistant materials lesson, where the teacher used the manufacture of puppets as a basis for students to develop the basic skills of measuring, marking out, cutting and drilling wood as well as developing designing skills to produce a variety of interesting and personalised puppets. The students worked enthusiastically and learning was good. Teachers usually plan their lessons well and have high expectations of their students. However, higher attaining students are not always challenged sufficiently by the work, as often it does not extend their knowledge and skills effectively. Their progress in mixed ability classes is less secure. Middle attaining students and those with special educational needs make satisfactory progress because of the extra support they receive. Some teachers succeed in challenging students of all levels of attainment, but this is not consistent across the department. This is also true for the boys who achieve less well than the girls. The department has recognised the need for strategies to raise the level of boys' achievement but this is at an early stage of development. All teachers place a good emphasis on developing technical vocabulary when students record their findings; this is having a positive effect on the development of students' literacy skills. Students form good relationships with their teachers and work hard for them. They behave well because they know what standards are, and are not, acceptable. The pace is appropriate in most lessons. The revision programme for Year 11 students consisted of a variety of tasks to sustain interest and consolidate understanding. In one lesson students were analysing the features of a disposable camera to develop suitable packaging. They were actively engaged in a range of activities that enhanced their analytical skills as well as developing their sketching and annotation skills further.

113. Good progress has been made since the previous inspection. Standards are now in line with the national average in Years 7 to 9 and just above the national average in Years 10 and 11. Achievement at Key Stage 4 is now good. Teaching is also good with some lessons of very good quality. There is still the need to develop work in computer-aided manufacture and the school has obtained funding to purchase new equipment.

114. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The newly appointed head of department and second in department have worked well with other staff to improve the quality of planning and teaching. A strong focus on raising standards is shared by all, in what has become a strong departmental team. The adequacy of accommodation and learning resources is good. There are concerns about the percentage of curriculum time allocated to the subject. At present statutory requirements are not met for all students to follow a design and technology course in Years 10 and 11. An appropriate system is in place to monitor and record attainment and targets are set for individual students. This is beginning to have a positive effect on standards.

GEOGRAPHY

115. The results of teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 were in line with those reported nationally. The work seen during the inspection is consistent with the teachers' assessment of standards. The students are able to use technical terms accurately and have a sound knowledge of the places and themes studied. They are developing good geographical skills but are not given enough opportunities to practise these. For example, they are able to find where places are located but do not use atlases often enough. Students are able to identify human and physical features in the landscape and links between processes, such as the dramatic effect a change in weather can have on death rates. In a Year 9 lesson on population pyramids, they were able to give reasons for the different patterns and showed interest in the issues that emerged. Students make steady progress and their achievement is satisfactory.

116. At Key Stage 4, GCSE results in 2000 were in line with the national average and just above the average for similar schools. There has not been a significant improvement since 1996, the year of the last inspection. The proportion achieving grades A*-C remained similar. The ratio of students gaining the higher grades A*-B was above the national figure. The proportion of students gaining grades A*-G was in line with the national average. Results were above the school average and students do better in geography than in most of their other subjects. The margin by which girls outperform boys has fluctuated quite dramatically over recent years. In 2000, this was wider than that reported nationally.

117. The evidence of previously completed work and the lessons observed showed that Year 11 students' attainment is in line with the nationally expected level. The coursework of higher attaining students showed that they are able to organise and manage geographical enquiries and work independently. The work of the majority was descriptive and did not answer such questions as, 'How?' and 'Why?' do patterns change. Lower attaining students in Year 11 had difficulty in recalling facts about the weather and climate of Britain and their understanding of the processes involved was weak. When compared to their earlier attainment, students' achievement in geography is satisfactory.

118. Students with special educational needs make steady progress and their achievement is satisfactory. Most teachers have a good understanding of their needs and use this in the planning of their lessons. However, in some lessons the matching of work to students' needs is not always effective and their progress is constrained. The teaching of too many classes is shared, and while the higher attaining students can cope with this, the progress made by others is restricted.

119. Overall, the teaching and learning observed was satisfactory. Teaching was more effective at Key Stage 4 because the teaching was focused on the requirements of the examination and the raising of standards. Teachers had good subject knowledge and so gave clear explanations, their emphasis on location developing the students' strong sense of place. They questioned students skilfully to check and extend their understanding. Books are marked conscientiously with useful information on how to improve and teachers keep good records. As a result students are aware of their progress and how well they have done. The increasingly effective use of assessment data has resulted in the improved monitoring of students' progress. Where teaching has weaknesses it does not provide enough opportunities for students to develop the level of independence and proficiency in research skills required in the completion of geographical enquiries. While teachers encourage students to make use of computers, for example downloading information from the Internet, and have identified opportunities in the new schemes of work, the use of ICT in the lessons is unsatisfactory. Though access to the designated rooms is limited the department has not made best use of that time which is available or adopted a systematic approach to ICT. Spellings, grammar and punctuation are checked in marking and wordlists and writing frames are used to support and improve literacy. Such work should be given greater priority, however. Similarly, too few opportunities are taken to develop students' numerical

skills. For example, use could be made of the very good guidance on the drawing of graphs available from the mathematics department. As was the case at the time of the last report there are not enough opportunities for students to link theory and practice through fieldwork.

120. The students' attitudes reflect the quality of teaching. For example, Year 10 students responded very well to a lesson on flooding; a range of resources were used and the insights achieved through the teaching enhanced their understanding of the complex issues involved. At Key Stage 3, students' response to written work can be careless and the presentation poor, as teachers' expectations are not high enough. Students generally settle down in lessons and respond well. However, the unsatisfactory behaviour of small groups of students, usually boys, does have an impact on their achievement and the effectiveness of teaching and learning at Key Stage 3.

121. For a number of reasons, some of which were beyond the school's control, there have been major changes in staff and in the allocation of responsibilities resulting in a period of considerable instability. Timetable arrangements, resulting in the sharing of groups, have had a negative effect on continuity in teaching and learning. Temporary arrangements for the leadership and management of the department have resulted in teachers not working closely as a team. However, good progress has been achieved in the preparation of new schemes of work at Key Stage 3 and standards and students' achievements are satisfactory. Despite the many difficulties faced by the department, improvement has been satisfactory since the last inspection.

HISTORY

122. The results of teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 were broadly in line with those reported nationally. The standard of work of students currently in Year 9 is consistent with the teachers' assessments. In their written work and orally students are able to demonstrate a good knowledge and understanding of the events, people and periods studied, as seen when Year 9 students were quizzed on the 'Provisional Government' and the Bolshevik revolution. They used terms accurately and were able to develop their answers. In another lesson students were able to interrogate and evaluate resources in identifying the causes of the revolution. They develop a wide range of subject skills and are able to apply these in their work. Students are making generally good progress and achieving well. There are a small number of students, mostly boys, who underachieve as a result of their unproductive attitudes to learning.

123. GCSE results have varied only slightly over the last three years. In 2000 the proportion of students gaining grades A*-C was in line with the national average and above that for similar schools. The proportion achieving grades A-G was above the national figure. This is a popular option subject with a large majority of the year group choosing to follow the course. Of the small number entered for the Certificate of Achievement, over half were awarded merits. The attainment of girls was above the national average and that of boys slightly below. Girls outperformed boys by a wider margin than that reported nationally though this difference has fluctuated over recent years.

124. The evidence of students' work and the lessons observed showed that Year 11 students' attainment is in line with the nationally expected level. The higher attaining students produce written work of a very good standard; work on Northern Ireland shows a mature analysis of the events, arguments are clearly presented and supported with relevant evidence. All students benefit from the investigation of Farnham Castle. They compile first-hand evidence used to support their suggestions of changes that have taken place. Lower attaining students produce effective summaries of events and personalities involved in changes, for example in tracing how Hitler achieved power. Students' good factual knowledge and understanding of terms was clear in a lesson where they revised 'Renaissance

Medicine'. They developed a very good overview of change at this time. The students' rate of progress and their achievement are good.

125. Students with special educational needs make good progress. Teachers have a thorough understanding of their needs and plan work at different levels. Student achievement is good as a result of the good teaching that encourages lower-attaining students to participate.

126. Overall, the teaching and learning observed was good, half was very good or better. Teachers have good subject knowledge and so gave clear and interesting explanations. Students are aware of the objectives of the lessons and teachers' planning ensures that links are made with previous work. The frequent and thorough marking of work is evident in the students' knowledge of their attainment and the progress they are making. In almost all lessons, a good balance was struck between the contribution of teachers and the involvement of students. As a result, students show initiative and are able to work independently. The classes are well organised and managed, the relationships between students and teachers are good. Students make good progress as a result of teachers' high expectations of them. Subject skills are taught very effectively, the students' understanding of these and competence in their use being the most significant strength of their learning. In a lesson on the impact of the Norman Invasion, Year 7 students were aware that events might be interpreted differently and recognised change and continuity. Teachers deal very well with sensitive and controversial issues, making a significant contribution to students' personal development. In a Year 10 lesson on the role of women in Nazi Germany, students were able to draw on their own experiences to deepen their understanding of attitudes at this time. The department makes good use of a range of visits, including a visit to First World War battlefields.

127. Students have many opportunities to improve their literacy skills in history. Reading aloud is a feature of most lessons and students are given very clear guidance on the way in which they should write up their work. Writing frames are used with lower attaining students. Teachers encourage students to use specialist subject vocabulary from Year 7 and word lists are posted on classroom walls. Few opportunities are provided for students to practice numerical skills and the use of ICT is unsatisfactory.

128. Students respond positively to the good teaching. They work hard in lessons and sustain their concentration, persevering to complete tasks and investigations.

129. The strengths noted in the previous report have been sustained. Students have the opportunity to develop the skills necessary for working on their own and more challenging materials have been provided for those attaining at a higher level. Day-to-day assessment now provides information as to how work may be improved but outcomes are not used sufficiently to refine subject planning. The improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory.

130. Subject teachers work well together and are ably led. The departmental development plan is realistic and is focused on improvement. The increasing use of data has resulted in the more effective monitoring of student progress. Teaching is monitored through observation and the scrutiny of students' work; good practice is shared. The revision of the scheme of work for Key Stage 3, in order to meet the requirements of 'Curriculum 2000', is not yet complete. The department has both the capacity and commitment to achieve further improvement.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

131. The results of teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 were above those reported nationally.

However, evidence from the inspection indicates that these assessments were inaccurate, and tended to over estimate what students achieved. The standard of work in Year 9 is in line with national expectations in word processing, desktop publishing, use of spreadsheets and databases, with some very good web page design for the Internet. However, there is insufficient use of ICT for measuring and control applications. Students have only a limited amount of time in the rotational timetable for ICT lessons and this has a negative impact on the standards that can be achieved. Students join the school with a range of experience in ICT. They have also had different experiences of ICT as they have moved through the year groups, because of the timetabling arrangements. Nevertheless, achievement in Year 7, 8 and 9 ICT lessons was satisfactory. Students have opportunities to use and develop their ICT skills in some other subjects. In a Year 7 learning enhancement lesson, students used CD-ROM very well to research information on a wide range of subjects. Year 9 students used a variety of sources of information, including the Internet, to research a chosen science topic and spreadsheets to enter information about the solar system. Students also use computers effectively in support of their work in mathematics and modern foreign languages. However, there is insufficient planning for use of computers in a number of other subjects and consequently students' achievement is limited.

132. 2001 is the first year in which students have been offered a GCSE examination course in ICT and a relatively small proportion of the year group are currently taking the examination. Evidence of students' work and observation of lessons indicates that standards are above average because the wide range of activities is well planned and there is very good support. Course work indicates that a structured approach has been followed in investigating their chosen project and students are being well supported by their teachers. Students have researched their topic, considered and selected appropriate software for the task, produced user guides and tested their solutions. Standards vary with ability but achievement in the examination course, given that students have had limited previous experience in ICT, is good. However, even the students who are following this course do not get the opportunity to use the full range of ICT applications, particularly in measurement and control. As in Key Stage 3, students are using computers to support their work in some other subjects. A particularly good lesson was observed in mathematics in which a spreadsheet was used very well to model an investigation activity. This developed and used students' ICT skills very well and considerably enhanced student's ability to predict and hypothesise. Students make good use of ICT for enhancing the presentation of course work projects in a number of subjects. Further developments are also taking place in science and modern foreign languages due to the commitment of specific staff. However, the ICT experiences which students receive through all of their subjects in Key Stage 4 are inconsistent and uncoordinated and therefore, overall, achievement of students over the key stage is unsatisfactory.

133. Students have very positive attitudes towards their work and behaviour is good in all lessons in all year groups. Students are very motivated, show considerable interest in their work and are keen to use computers. Consequently they remain on task, show confidence and competence in their own work and share their expertise willingly. A good, purposeful working atmosphere is evident in most lessons and this enables students of all ability to feel and be supported.

134. The quality of teaching and learning in ICT lessons is very good in Key Stage 3 and good in Key Stage 4. Teachers have very good subject knowledge. This results in very well planned lessons and very good use of a range of teaching methods. Very good use is made of the data projection touch screen to illustrate teaching points to the whole class. Students and resources are managed very well and this creates a very positive learning environment in which all students are able to learn effectively and at a pace appropriate to their ability. Work is well planned, creating time for teachers to provide good individual support, observe how well students are learning and then to use this information to adjust the course of the lesson. Consequently time is used well and students' learning is more focused. Students use computers well to support and develop their use of language when word processing

documents and there are good opportunities to develop their mathematics skills in spreadsheet and data base work. Although good use is made of the limited lesson time available insufficient use is made of homework and these opportunities to enhance learning are missed.

135. The overall curriculum in both key stages is unsatisfactory because it does not meet statutory requirements and students' access to ICT is fragmented and limited. Although the Key Stage 3 ICT course provides coverage of most aspects of the National Curriculum there is insufficient work on measurement and control applications. The present course, linked to the rotational timetable for design and technology subjects, is unsatisfactory because some students do not get to their ICT module until the end of the year. Only a small proportion of students in Key Stage 4 take the GCSE option and consequently the majority do not have sufficient access to the National Curriculum. The school's intention for students to access ICT through the use of computers in other subjects is not sufficiently defined and co-ordinated. Some subjects such as mathematics, science, modern foreign languages and design and technology have some planned ICT work and students often use computers to present their course work, but there is insufficient overview or co-ordination of what needs to be taught or which subjects will be responsible for teaching, assessing and recording it. The school has set out a clear intention to develop ICT within the school but this has not yet been completed. The improved ICT course in Key Stage 3, continuing improvements in resources and an active working group of teachers are indications that management of ICT is improving but more needs to be done to plan and deliver ICT across the school. Overall, the management of specialist ICT is satisfactory, whereas the co-ordination and management of ICT across the curriculum is unsatisfactory. Whilst there have been considerable improvements in both resources and the Key Stage 3 course, overall improvement since the last inspection is unsatisfactory because National Curriculum requirements are not being fully met.

136. Resources for ICT have improved and are continuing to develop, though the number of computers currently available is low for a school of this size. Lack of access to computers is one reason given by teachers of other subjects for not developing their use of computers. Current accommodation is good and a new computer room is being built. Current staffing for ICT lessons is good and there are other teachers who use computers well in their subjects.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

French, German and Spanish

137. The Year 9 teacher assessments in 2000 for French and German were well above the national average. Nearly 80 percent of all students achieved Level 4 or higher. This included 86 percent of the girls and 69 percent of the boys. These standards are confirmed by what students achieved in lessons during the inspection and from a scrutiny of students' written work. By the end of Year 9, students achieve very well in the four language skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing. Listening skills are good in some lessons because of the extensive and consistent use of the foreign language at normal speed and the frequent exposure of students to recorded material. In a Year 8 French class, for example, students were fully challenged by the teacher's excellent use of the foreign language for all classroom communication and probing questioning technique. In some lessons, however, teachers switch between English and the foreign language and do not offer a substantial model of the foreign language as a natural means of communication. Most students can repeat words and phrases with good pronunciation and intonation. Many students can reply confidently with good accents to questions from the teacher and can initiate short dialogues in pairs. There was, however, little evidence of students themselves using the foreign language spontaneously with the teacher or to each other in groups. In many lessons teachers do insist, however, that students give reasons for absence or lateness or make requests, such as to ask for a new book, or give the results of marks in tests, in the foreign

language. Reading skills are fairly well developed, with the use of worksheets to supplement the textbook. In several lessons students read out loud with confidence, used dictionaries to look up words and many able students were able to deduce the meaning of unknown words from their context. All students make good progress in their writing skills through Key Stage 3. They start by copywriting in Year 7 with a lot of emphasis on accuracy, including accents and capital letters. By Year 9, most students have good basic writing skills and higher and average students write accurate texts containing different tenses in both French and German. More able learners display a good grasp of word order and prepositions with correct case agreement in German and in French they are able to write dialogues and descriptive texts using perfect, imperfect and conditional tenses, modal verbs, adjectives and adverbs. This attention to accurate writing and focus on grammatical structures results in French and German contributing well to students' general literacy.

138. In the 2000 GCSE examinations, the percentage of students attaining A*-C grades in French and Spanish was also well above the national average. Results in these two languages have also been above average over the past two years. The number of A*-C grades in German was substantially below the national average. The results in German last year were, however, lower than in the previous two years. In 1988 they were substantially above the national average and in 1999 they were broadly in line with the national average. At GCSE in 2000 more girls than boys achieved the higher grades. Generally students did considerably better in French than in their other subjects.

139. At the end of Key Stage 4, the standards of many learners are above average in French, German and Spanish and students achieve well. When given the opportunity, students are capable of understanding lessons delivered at normal speed in the foreign language and listen attentively to recorded texts to extract details. In lessons in all three languages, some teachers used the foreign language for nearly all classroom interaction. Many students are able to participate with great fluency in role plays and presentations. In a Year 10 Spanish class, students conducted a lengthy, fluent survey on eating habits. They used the language with enthusiasm and obvious enjoyment. At the end of Year 11, higher attainers can use a range of tenses and structures, state opinions and give reasons. They are capable of using previously learned material in new situations and can cope with the unexpected and unknown.

140. In writing, lower attainers produce shopping lists, label pictures, write simple role-plays containing perfect and imperfect tenses and record transactional dialogues such as at the doctor's. A few do not always complete written homework assignments. Higher attainers produce some impressive extended writing which is frequently redrafted using ICT. They use subordinate clauses routinely and are confident using all basic tenses in defined situations. They produce work which is accurate and varied. They are also able to produce lengthy and fluent projects on a range of topics. The appropriate emphasis placed on the understanding of grammatical patterns enables all students to increase their grasp of the structure of language, self-correct their work and achieve greater accuracy. Again at Key Stage 4 the attention to accuracy and focus on grammar result in modern foreign languages contributing well to the development of students' literacy.

141. Most students are very enthusiastic language learners, eager to demonstrate their skills. In several classes they were fully engaged by a range of language games and communicative activities. They show high levels of concentration and perseverance and consult dictionaries with confidence. In a Year 9 French class students were motivated by the surprise element of having to repeat chorally either in rows, groups of boys, groups of girls or individually. They contribute fully to all lesson activities, settle down to work briskly and remain on task. Many students show interest in the subject by asking questions for clarification. In a few lessons some boys were not well motivated. They did not always listen carefully and were not interested in improving their skills.

142. Overall, the teaching and learning in French, German and Spanish is good. It was good or better in about three-quarters of lessons, and never unsatisfactory. At Key Stage 3 teaching was good or better in nearly all lessons, with some very good or excellent. At Key Stage 4 teaching was sound or better in all lessons, and good or very good in nearly half. The department has some excellent linguists and two native speakers. Some teachers use the foreign language extensively in lessons and to great effect, both as a medium of instruction and for routine interaction, but this approach is not consistent within the department. All lessons are very well prepared and nearly always delivered enthusiastically and at a brisk pace, with good use of varied resources, including the overhead projector, cassette recorder, video, high quality resource sheets and flashcards. On some occasions the overhead transparencies were not clear enough to be fully effective. Good use is generally made of deadlines to motivate students and keep them on target. In several lessons students were challenged and motivated to repeat words and phrases accurately by being set very short deadlines in which to commit vocabulary to memory. The content of most lessons is carefully graded and matched to the needs and interests of the age group, with frequent change of task and good coverage of the four skills. Most teachers make good use of pair and group work and have positive relationships with their students. There is generally a productive atmosphere in lessons, and effective teaching combined with good motivation, enables most students to progress in the acquisition of new skills. The very best lessons were delivered with skill and enthusiasm and consisted of a wide variety of logically-linked activities which flowed seamlessly from beginning to end. In the few lessons that were only satisfactory, there were occasional problems with insecure relationships and unchallenging activities.

143. Students study either French and German from Year 7 and high attainers can opt to take a second foreign language in Year 8. The number choosing to study both languages at Key Stage 4 is fairly low. A GCSE Spanish course is also an option in Key Stage 4 for the most able and a Certificate of Achievement course is offered in Spanish. The programme of visits abroad ensures that the department makes a strong contribution to the cultural development of some students and also enhances their linguistic skills. The department benefits from very good leadership, which ensures that the good quality of teaching and learning is maintained. The head of department is a very good manager and administrator. The language teachers work well together as a team, documentation is very good, and schemes of work are in place. Good assessment procedures ensure that students' progress is carefully monitored. Both teachers and students are very clear about National Curriculum levels and GCSE grades, which contributes to the achievement of high standards. On the other hand, five classes are taught by more than one teacher and this has some negative impact on standards.

144. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. The department now has very good accommodation and resources. Teachers use a wider repertoire of teaching strategies. The department makes good use of ICT to raise standards. It has introduced a very successful Spanish course as a full option in Year 10. Attainment at Key Stage 3 has increased considerably and standards in GCSE Spanish and French are higher.

MUSIC

145. In teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2000, students' attainment was in line with standards expected nationally. These assessments were borne out by the findings of the inspection. Standards of attainment by students in the current Year 9 are in line with national expectation. Most students are able to improvise effectively on percussion and keyboards when composing expressive sounds on a given theme. For example, in the first lesson on a creative arts project on the theme, 'A Vision of Hell', students showed well-developed skills of listening. They worked successfully in groups to create imaginative sound pictures reflecting the mood of the theme. In recorded examples of previous work, some students achieved above average standards in a 12-bar blues project. These

performances showed a good grasp of the chord structure. Other students used the blues scale for melodic improvisation. In group performances, they co-ordinated melodies and accompaniments rhythmically and confidently. Students have a good grasp of technical language, such as 'riff' and 'ostinato'. Music makes a small but positive contribution to the development of literacy through students' written evaluations of their work and reviews of topics they have covered.

146. Comparatively small numbers of students take GCSE music, which makes comparisons with national statistics of little significance. Results have been below the national average for the past two years. In the previous year, results were well above average. In the current Year 11, expectations for GCSE are average. In the lessons observed, students showed secure knowledge of the characteristics of Latin American music and a good knowledge of the characteristics of baroque music. Their ability to take down melodies from dictation was below average. The range of styles and accomplishment in composing and performing reflects the level of students' personal interests and experience. Examples heard of students' composing showed a good awareness of style and musical structure, and included an expressive piece in which the student used characteristics of a nineteenth century romantic style very effectively.

147. Students' achievement in relation to their prior learning is generally good in Years 7 to 9. Staffing difficulties, which limited music provision for some students in Year 8 for part of this year have now been resolved. There is no difference in the achievement of boys compared with that of girls. Students enter the school with comparatively low levels of musical accomplishment. They make good progress in developing a working knowledge of the basic elements of music. They develop skills and knowledge well through a series of interesting projects. The practical nature of the work enables students with special educational needs to make good progress. In Year 7, students knew basic facts about Indian music and could improvise fluently using an authentic Indian scale. In Year 8, they could play the bass part of Pachelbel's 'Canon', and a few students learned very quickly to play the chords as well. Recorded examples from an African project showed that students could compose and perform complex percussion rhythms securely and add vocal 'call and response' parts accurately.

148. GCSE students achieve very well in relation to their previous learning, enhanced by the individual attention that the small size of the groups allows. Students increase their knowledge and understanding in Year 10 by studying, for example, Beethoven's "Pastoral Symphony". This was a means of learning the characteristics both of the period and of how a composer can depict a storm musically. Students then use the piece as a stimulus for their own composing. In Year 11, students used their technical knowledge and vocabulary efficiently in revision tasks for GCSE.

149. Students behave very well in lessons. They are attracted by the interesting nature of the activities. When dispersed for practical work, students collaborate efficiently together and maintain a good pace of work. They are very responsible in their use of equipment.

150. Teaching and learning are good in Key Stage 3 and very good in Key Stage 4. The pace, vigour and enthusiasm of the teaching motivate students strongly. They learn efficiently and purposefully in groups. Relationships amongst students, and between them and the teacher, are very good. Students readily acknowledge that behaviour in music lessons is very good. Teachers use their very good knowledge and musical skills to promote a good pace of learning. Planning is excellent and teachers develop students' musical knowledge and understanding through applying it to imaginative practical tasks. These tasks are invariably interesting, and they challenge appropriately students of all levels of accomplishment. This stimulates students' creativity. Teachers provide constructive support for individuals and groups, which encourages students to persevere and refine their work.

151. The very good schemes of work enable students to become skilled in musical theory, composing

and performing and to become acquainted with a wide range of music from different eras and countries. However, the subject requires additional resources to enable students to develop their skills in ICT through music. Music provides very good opportunities for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Procedures for assessment are developing well and are closely linked to the school's requirements and the levels of attainment specified in the National Curriculum. The good use of data from assessment is allowing the introduction of target setting for individual students. Day-to-day organisation is very efficient and the accommodation provides a stimulating learning environment. The teacher in charge of music, provides a model of good practice in terms of enthusiasm and quality of teaching. A good programme of extra-curricular activities, instrumental teaching and regular performances is being developed. There has been good improvement since the previous inspection. Capacity for further development is good.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

152. End of Key Stage 3 teacher assessments in 2000 indicated standards below the national average. However, evidence from lessons observed indicates that the standard of work attained by the majority of students at the end of Year 9 conforms to the national average in all areas of the physical education curriculum and their achievements are satisfactory. Most students are able to apply the techniques, skills and competition rules to several aspects of the curriculum, including badminton, athletics and gymnastics. Basic skills are sound for a majority of the students and provide a platform for future development. In athletics, many students have sound basic technique in several athletic events including triple jump and high jump, although skills by the end of Year 9 are not as refined or standards as high as would be expected given previous teaching time devoted to these activities. In badminton students have good basic racquet skills and in gymnastics many girls are able to develop a simple sequence of movement displaying good technique, control and quality of movement. The ability of students at the end of Key Stage 3 to observe and analyse performance is above national expectations.

153. GCSE results for 2000 were in line with the national average. Evidence from lessons observed indicates that current standards are similar and overall students' achievements are satisfactory. Students in a Year 11 GCSE practical lesson were able to apply several aspects of their theory lessons to the practical aspects of physical education. These included the analysis of performance and use of different training methods. In a Year 10 lesson on athletics, students were able to modify their running style to improve their technique in sprinting.

154. Students' attitudes to learning are usually positive at both key stages. Most are enthusiastic, well behaved, and co-operative, demonstrating a real enjoyment of the subject. They are attentive and able to sustain concentration. Relationships between students and between students and staff are good. Opportunities for students to take responsibility and to undertake different roles such as coach or official are still developing.

155. Teaching and learning were satisfactory at Key Stage 3 and good at Key Stage 4. In the best lessons a secure knowledge of the subject is regularly conveyed to students through perceptive observation of performance, appropriate intervention and good teacher-directed question and answer sessions. In an excellent Year 7 lesson, all students were taught the importance of health related fitness through a very imaginative and active practical approach which also developed their fitness. The teacher spent time with all students individually and was continually assessing what had been learnt. In a very good Year 11 lesson, students reinforced their existing theoretical knowledge of several aspects of the GCSE course. They participated in a series of practical activities involving a display of their knowledge in different training methods and analysis of performance. In this lesson there were several opportunities for students to work independently, to assess their own learning and

to take some responsibility. Teachers consistently remind students how to prepare for and recover from specific activities and stress the benefits of regular exercise. Thorough planning, incorporating varied teaching strategies and an appropriate sequence of activities involving both individual and collaborative learning, is also a feature of many lessons. Boys in a Year 8 lesson were underachieving where the objectives for the lesson were inappropriate and where work was not consistently challenging. Discipline and class management is good ensuring that the pace of most lessons is brisk. Assessment of performance during lessons by students and teachers is regularly used to enhance teaching and learning although ICT is not yet being utilised. Specific activities to extend the highest attaining students were often not apparent in lessons observed. Consequently these students were not always appropriately challenged.

156. The recording of assessment at Key Stage 3 is thorough although it does not yet involve students and is not setting targets for individual students using specific criteria linked to schemes of work. However, excellent procedures for assessment involving students now exist at Key Stage 4. Attainment is recorded along with involvement in extra-curricular activities, involvement as official or coach and details of achievement in their health and fitness programme. All of this is validated by a Certificate of Achievement. The curriculum meets statutory requirements at both key stages and the range of activities at Key Stage 4 provides a good preparation for post-16 leisure activities. Schemes of work are good working documents but do not consistently provide specific guidance on developing the potential of higher attaining students and do not always give appropriate opportunities for progression and continuity. The department is making a contribution to the development of students' literacy through their use of 'key' words. Staff within the physical education department provide a good range of extra curricular activities, and fixtures with other schools provide opportunities for students to extend and develop their skills and interests. Many students are involved in inter-form competitions. School teams compete with other schools in a range of sports and some students achieve representative honours.

157. The leadership and management of the department are good and day-to-day organisation and communication within the department is very good. A good departmental handbook clearly identifies policies and procedures. All staff are good role models, are committed and give generously of their time. Development planning is thorough and provides the appropriate detail to assist the department in meeting their targets. Formal observation of teaching in the department is now being used to assist in monitoring the effectiveness of the department and in sharing good practice. Accommodation in the department is good and is a significant factor in the range of activities that can be offered to students although playing field provision is inadequate. There has been good improvement since the time of the previous inspection.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

158. Attainment at the end of Year 9 is broadly in line with the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus. Most students achieve the expected standards. In Key Stage 4 about two thirds of the year group now take the short course GCSE examination in religious education. In 2000, 63 percent achieved A*-C grades, which is above the national average. Girls attained far more highly than boys, with 79 percent of gaining the higher grades, compared with 47 percent of boys. Results have risen very significantly over the last three years. Standards of current Year 11 students are generally above expectation.

159. Current Year 9 students learn a substantial amount of information about Christianity and other religions. Most students develop good standards in note taking, and their understanding is often revealed in substantial writing. Students have a good understanding of the importance of rites of

passage that mark out the different stages in a person's life. They understand this in relation both to their own lives and in different religions, such as Hinduism. Students give their own, often perceptive, views in writing, for example about 'my idea of heaven'. In some lessons, students develop their understanding well through class discussion, but occasionally the poor attitudes of a few students restrict opportunities for this. In Year 11, students study religious and social issues in Christianity and Judaism. They are able to compare them in discussion. Students give their own views and develop their oracy well, for example by contrasting the different attitudes towards social and religious issues encountered in orthodox and reformed synagogues. Written work is generally of a good standard, especially that of girls. In general and throughout religious education, students are more confident when dealing with factual topics than when reflecting on their own values, which they tend to express only briefly.

160. In Years 7 to 9, students show satisfactory achievement in relation to their previous learning and make steady progress. In Year 7, they learn why people are drawn to religious faiths. They understand religious symbolism and they know the chief facts about the world's major religions. They understand the effects of prejudice and persecution, particularly in relation to the Jews. They know the literal meaning of 'holocaust' and its significance in the history of Judaism in the 20th century. In Year 8, students develop research skills and gain substantial knowledge about Buddhism and Sikhism. They give their personal view about the possession of wealth and develop their range of writing, for example by explaining the significance of the Qur'an in the form of a play. In Year 9, students develop research skills further, for example when investigating the roles of women in different societies. Factual work is more substantial in Key Stage 4, where students make good progress because they are clearly focused on examination requirements. They achieve well in relation to their prior attainment. Through the key stage, they consolidate their factual knowledge well and select arguments carefully to support their points of view. Their written views are often thoughtful, for example when they outline their attitudes to divorce. Some otherwise good written work is marred, however, by careless spelling.

161. Most students behave well in religious education lessons. In Key Stage 3, a few students exhibited negative attitudes to religious education, and this limited their progress. Students' attitudes were good in lessons observed in Key Stage 4, and students were generally prepared to make worthwhile contributions to class debates.

162. Teaching was satisfactory in Key Stage 3 and good in Key Stage 4. There is one specialist teacher. Several non-specialist, but experienced, teachers of religious education, make a good contribution to the teaching. Teachers have good subject knowledge and high expectations of students. Lessons are carefully prepared and use a satisfactory range of appropriate resources. Time is carefully apportioned to ensure a good pace of working. Where a teacher encountered poor behaviour, this was dealt with tenaciously so that the progress of the majority was not affected. Occasionally, lessons needed a more interesting beginning, especially when a new topic was introduced. The range of videos, artefacts and textbooks needs extending to remedy this. Some worksheets were usefully adapted to meet the needs of lower-attaining students, who generally made similar progress to the remainder of the class. There is scope for extending the use of worksheets of differing degrees of difficulty to enhance students' progress over the full range of ability. Marking is inconsistent. Where key words are mis-spelt, they are not always corrected. Teachers' written advice is seldom followed, for instance when students are instructed to finish incomplete work. Students' learning is satisfactory in Key Stage 3 and good in Key Stage 4. Despite inconsistencies in Key Stage 3, most students concentrate well, and work carefully to achieve good standards.

163. A newly qualified teacher organises religious education satisfactorily on a day-to-day basis. She has a good knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses in provision. There is little use of ICT at present and this has been identified as a main area for development. Other priorities are to improve the

match of work to students' varying abilities and to develop the use of assessment as a more constructive aspect of teaching. The challenging schemes of work meet statutory requirements for each key stage and provide good opportunities to enhance students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Religious education is part of the humanities faculty, but there has been too little recent intervention by the faculty to ensure that standards of behaviour are consistently good throughout the constituent subjects. Opportunities for teachers to share ideas are informal and monitoring of religious education is inadequate at present. Improvement in the provision for religious education has been satisfactory since the previous inspection. The short GCSE course in Key Stage 4 is now well established. There is a good capacity for developing religious education further.

DRAMA

164. The standard of work of students currently in Year 9 is below the national average. In Year 7, students learn to work well together in devising short performances. They use simple drama techniques such as frozen pictures and mime. In one Year 7 lesson, students acting out a restaurant scene, had prepared very good menus using the computer. Excellent masks made by Year 7 students, of Rama and Sita, were evidence of good links with the teaching of art. Moving into Year 8, students' use of drama techniques fails to build enough on skills practised in Year 7. Students work well together but their characters and interpretations of settings lack any depth. In Year 9, students' improvisations are superficial and lack enough planning and reflection. Students do not show the confidence or independence to use the range of drama techniques required at this stage. Written work shows more effort, and there are opportunities for script writing using computers, but, as in practical work, ideas are frequently insubstantial and undeveloped.

165. In GCSE drama in 2000, results were well below the national average. Girls gained higher grades than boys but both girls and boys did worse in drama than in most of their other subjects. Results have fluctuated considerably since the last report, but results have been below or well below average each year.

166. In Key Stage 4, only one lesson was observed in Year 10, although written work was examined from Years 10 and 11. The standard of performance and written work was below average. Many students were insecure in their use of drama techniques indicating a lack of consolidation of learning from Key Stage 3. For example, students working on survival of an air crash attempted to alter the sequence, to include a dream and a flashback. However, they were unable to use with conviction the techniques touched on in earlier years to indicate abstract ideas, like tension, fear, disbelief.

167. Through Key Stage 3 and, for those taking GCSE, achievement is unsatisfactory. Skills are not thoroughly learned and progress is too slow, particularly for higher attaining students. Students' attitudes to drama vary but overall are satisfactory. Students enjoy the practical aspect and many enjoy taking part in the annual school performance. They work well together in groups and are sensitive to those students with special educational needs. However, too many students show a lack of enthusiasm and make the minimum of effort. They are prepared to do as directed and little more and this affects the outcome of all students when working in groups. Students have an understanding of the role of audience and are forgiving of each other's errors. They evaluate their performances at the end of each lesson, but at a very simple level.

168. Overall the quality of teaching and learning is unsatisfactory. Whilst teaching in the lessons observed was satisfactory, over time teaching has not ensured that students make sufficient progress year on year. Teachers' lesson plans are thorough, with interesting themes and regular assessment. Use of ICT has increased since the last inspection and good links with art established. Teaching

experience and good knowledge of the subject are shared. The main weakness is that expectations are too low, particularly for higher attaining students. There is too much emphasis on the activity rather than what is to be learned. In question and answer sessions and evaluations, teachers are not probing and fail to involve the students in enough serious thought about their work and this leads to underachievement.

169. The drama studio is a very good space. Students' use of the sound and lighting equipment offers them the chance to take responsibility, show trust, and is a good extension of their work and their understanding of theatre. The documentation of the department is excellent, and the links with art are developing with new staff. The full use of examination data in analysing students' achievements is at an early stage.

170. Standards and results have not risen since the last inspection and there are weaknesses in teaching and management. Therefore overall improvement is unsatisfactory. The first priority for the department must be to offer a greater challenge in the teaching in order to raise the standards of the students.