

INSPECTION REPORT

CARNFORTH HIGH SCHOOL

Carnforth

LEA area: Lancashire

Unique reference number: 119748

Headteacher: Mr P A Legon

Reporting inspector: Mr P Rabbett
4240

Dates of inspection: 6th – 11th November 2000

Inspection number: 188241

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive Community
School category:	County Maintained
Age range of pupils:	11 - 16
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Kellet Road CARNFORTH Lancashire
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Appropriate authority:	Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr J G Marsden
Date of previous inspection:	29 th April 1996

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Mr D Lumb 3703	Team Inspector	Mathematics	
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Mr W Hart 8552	Team Inspector	Design and technology Information technology	
Mr G Henshall 27082	Team Inspector	Modern languages	
Mrs C Evers 8873	Team inspector	History Equal opportunities	
Mrs H Boyle 30749	Team Inspector	Geography	
Mr R Battey 2866	Team Inspector	Art	Assessment
Mr F Peacock 8360	Team Inspector	Music Special educational needs	
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Mr M Elson 10448	Team Inspector	Religious education	Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Carnforth High School is a mixed, comprehensive school for pupils in the 11 - 16 age range and has 629 pupils on roll. The school population fluctuates annually due to demographic changes and the pattern of recruitment by selective schools locally. There is comparatively little movement of pupils into and out of the school. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals at twelve per cent in 2000 is below the national average. A significant majority of pupils travel in to school by bus every day, many from small rural communities. There are five pupils for whom English is an additional language. Twenty three per cent of pupils have special educational needs, above the national average. Eight per cent of pupils have a statement of special educational need which again is above the national average. The school caters for the full ability range. Pupils' attainment on entry to the school is broadly average, although there are fewer higher attainers than usual.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Carnforth High School is an effective school which achieves satisfactory results at the end of Key Stages 3 and 4. Its strengths outweigh its weaknesses. Governors and staff are committed to improving standards and create a positive climate for learning, which ensures that pupils achieve in line with expectations through the good quality of most of the teaching. The school provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- Standards are at least satisfactory and, in some subjects, high by the end of Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 as the good quality of the teaching challenges and motivates pupils and ensures that they make good progress in their learning.
- The school's positive ethos successfully fosters good behaviour, friendly relationships, and encourages constructive attitudes to learning.
- The school provides a wide range of learning opportunities, including a good range of extra-curricular activities, especially in music, physical education, modern foreign languages and science, which contribute to pupils' social development.
- It has very effective systems, which are well integrated, for monitoring and supporting pupils' academic and personal development to enable them to achieve high standards.
- It makes good provision for pupils' personal development through the well-constructed personal and social education programme.
- The school's good partnership with parents and its close links with the local community enhance the opportunities available for its pupils.
- There is strong and effective leadership and management from the governors and the headteacher and a shared commitment throughout the school to raising standards.

What could be improved

- The subject departments are not engaged sufficiently in monitoring of individual pupil performance, reviewing strengths and weaknesses and taking action to improve the quality and consistency of teaching. Heads of department and other middle managers are not monitoring the work in their areas of responsibility with sufficient rigour or consistency.
- More able pupils are not making as much progress as they should.
- Standards of behaviour by a small minority of pupils in Years 8 and 10 are unacceptable.
- The quality and range of learning resources, particularly access to ICT across the curriculum are insufficient to meet the needs of all pupils.
- Reports to parents do not provide sufficient information on attainment and progress.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has maintained, but not improved significantly, its results at the end of Key Stages 3 and 4. The quality of teaching has improved considerably in music, religious education, modern foreign languages and English.

The school has made good progress in implementing most of the key issues identified in the last inspection report. Insufficient progress has been made in improving the provision for more able pupils. New policies and procedures are in place and the school has compiled a register of able pupils, but there has been little impact of this work on day to day teaching across the curriculum. The attainment of boys is now much closer to that of girls except in English.

Senior and more experienced staff have taken on a number of additional roles and responsibilities but the quality and range of support for the headteacher and governors from the senior management team continue to have weaknesses. Departmental evaluation and reporting to the governing body is inconsistent. Whilst there is exemplary practice in some departments, the school's procedures do not ensure that common expectations are shared across all departments. The school's policy on pupil behaviour is thorough and effective in many cases, but it is implemented inconsistently and, so, a minority of pupils continue to have a disproportionate impact on some lessons. Attendance and punctuality have improved significantly.

The school does not meet, in full, the statutory requirements for a daily act of collective worship.

The school has shown that it has the capacity to improve what it does. It has a clear view of its priorities and targets for further development, and is well placed, through the strength of its leadership, to improve its performance in the future.

STANDARDS

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

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

Results in the national tests in 2000 for 14-year olds in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science were average in English and science and were above average in mathematics. Results were below those achieved in previous years. The test results in English were closely matched to those of similar schools (based on the proportion of pupils identified as eligible for free school meals), but were above average in mathematics and science. There was very little difference in the performance of boys and girls in these two subjects, but boys were below average in English. More able pupils are not making as much progress, particularly in mathematics.

The GCSE results have been above average since the last inspection, with the rate of improvement from year to year broadly in line with the national trend. There has been a dip in attainment in 2000. The strongest subjects at GCSE with results that were significantly above the national averages, were art, science, design technology, geography, French, music and physical education, where the results were above average. The weakest subjects were history, German and religious education. There were considerable differences between the performance of boys and girls, with girls outperforming the boys in English Language, literature and physical education. Boys outperformed girls in mathematics and history. In 1999, the school's GCSE results were broadly average when compared with similar schools.

Most pupils are making good progress in their learning and are achieving satisfactory standards in relation to their attainment on entry to the school. The school has set itself appropriately challenging targets for raising standards even further.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good: pupils enjoy school and value the independence they are allowed.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good: pupils are generally courteous and they move sensibly around the school. Relationships in the school are very positive. A small minority of pupils continue to be disruptive.
Personal development and relationships	Good: pupils work well together and are keen to show initiative and take responsibility.
Attendance	Satisfactory: the school has made significant progress in tackling authorised and unauthorised absence.

Pupils show a high degree of independence and work at a good pace, showing interest, commitment and enthusiasm for their work. Occasionally, the poor attitudes and behaviour of a small number of pupils affect other pupils' learning but most teachers manage these pupils effectively to minimise any disturbance. The vast majority of pupils respond well to the school's high expectations and positive ethos.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

There has been an improvement in the quality of teaching since the last inspection, particularly in English, modern foreign languages, religious education and music. Teaching is at least satisfactory in 94 per cent of lessons; in 67 per cent it is at least good; and in 24 per cent it is very good and sometimes excellent. This consistency in the teaching contributes to the satisfactory progress that pupils make in their learning and the standards they achieve. There are examples of very good and sometimes excellent teaching in many subjects. There are weaknesses in the teaching of mathematics. The skills of literacy and numeracy are taught satisfactorily, but not always consistently across subjects. The small amount of unsatisfactory teaching is confined to Year 8 and Year 10 in the main

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good: all pupils have access to a broad and balanced curriculum, although the provision for more able pupils is not effective; the range and quality of extra-curricular opportunities, especially in music, physical education, modern languages and science, are good.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good: support is generally effective in helping pupils make progress, but teachers do not always use this support as well as they might in lessons.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good, overall: the personal and social education programme is well constructed; there is good provision for pupils' social development, spiritual development and moral development, and satisfactory provision for their cultural development, although not enough is done to enable pupils to appreciate the diversity and richness of other cultures.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very well: there are good systems and processes for supporting and monitoring pupils' academic progress and personal development.

The school's partnership with parents is good and there are very good systems for communicating and sharing information with parents, but further improvement in reporting pupils' progress and achievements is required. Careers education and guidance are good, as are links with the local primary schools and the community.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good: the headteacher provides strong leadership, but requires more effective and consistent support from his deputy and other senior managers; the governors are fully involved and are very well informed; middle management is mostly good, although there are some weaknesses in the consistency in which they monitor progress and implement policy and procedures.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Well, although the provision for collective worship does not meet requirements; they have a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good: there are good systems for monitoring and reviewing pupils' performance and setting targets, but there are some weaknesses in the consistency and rigour of middle managers in monitoring the quality of teaching.
The strategic use of resources	Good: financial expenditure is linked to the school's priorities and is carefully monitored; clear targets and priorities are set.

The school has sufficient, well-qualified teachers, enough technical help other than for information technology and adequate numbers of administrative staff to ensure that it runs smoothly. The buildings are well cared for and are sufficient to meet the needs of the curriculum. The recent programme of refurbishment has significantly improved the quality and level of provision. Suitable procedures are in place to ensure that the school gets best value from its expenditure, enabling it to provide good value for money.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school expects children to work hard and achieve their best. • The good progress that their children make. • The school helps children to become mature and responsible. • The good quality of the teaching. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The consistency, extent and quality of homework. • They are well informed about their child's progress. • The range and availability of extra-curricular activities.

Most parents are very pleased with the school and the education it provides. Inspectors' judgements support the positive views expressed by parents. Parents' views on homework are mixed. Some feel there is too much homework; others feel that there is too little. The inspection team found that suitably challenging homework is set in most subjects but that it is not always set according to the homework timetable, which puts added pressure on pupils, or set regularly in some cases. Parents would like to see a broader range of extra-curricular activities, but travel time and distance stop a number of children participating. Most pupils were satisfied with provision and felt there were ample opportunities. The school has accepted the need to be more thorough in reporting to parents.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1. Standards in the school are generally satisfactory. Pupils achieve average results in the National Curriculum tests and GCSE examinations and most pupils are on course to meet the expected standards in English, mathematics and science and in other subjects by the ages of 14 and 16. In nearly all subjects, the majority of pupils are making satisfactory progress in their learning and achieving standards that might be expected of them when account is taken of their attainment on entry into the school in Year 7. More able pupils, however, do not make as much progress as they should.
2. The school's results in the National Curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 3 in 2000, based on the average points score, were average in English, mathematics and science. In English, the proportion of pupils reaching the expected Level 5 or above was at the national average and above average at Level 6 or above. In mathematics, the results were above the national averages at Level 5 or above, but below average at Level 6 or above. In science, the results were above average at both thresholds. Taking all three subjects together, the school's performance in 2000 was at the national average. Over the past four years, the results, overall, have improved broadly in line with the national trend. The results in the three core subjects over the past four years have been above the national averages, but have fallen in 2000.
3. When compared with similar schools (based on the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals), the results in 2000 were in line with the national averages in English, but were above average in mathematics and science.
4. In English, girls' performance at Level 5 or above was better than that of the boys. There was little difference in the performance of boys and girls in mathematics and science. In English, the performance of the boys was significantly lower than that of the girls and well below average when compared with boys' performance nationally. There is evidence that girls are performing less well in mathematics than previously.
5. On the evidence of their work, pupils' attainment by the end of Key Stage 3 is above the standard expected nationally in science, average in English and mathematics, broadly reflecting the test results in 2000. Their attainment is above the national expectation in art, design and technology, geography, modern foreign languages, PE and RE and is in line with expectations in history and music. Attainment is below average in information technology. In art, pupils are achieving far better than expected because of strengths in the teaching. The average attaining pupils, and the majority of the lower attaining pupils are making satisfactory progress in their learning in relation to their attainment on entry to the school in Year 7. The progress of pupils with higher attainment on entry is less secure, as they are not always challenged sufficiently in lessons by the work or by their teachers. Most pupils with special educational needs are making satisfactory and sometimes good progress in their learning and their achievements are broadly in line with expectations in the light of their prior attainment.
6. Pupils achieve above average standards in public examinations at the age of 16. Since the last inspection in 1995, pupils have progressively achieved above average results, with a sustained rate of improvement from year to year. There was, however, a significant dip in 2000 in comparison with a continuing upward trend nationally. In 1999, the school's results were well above average when compared with similar schools.
7. At five or more grades A*-C and one or more grades A*-G, the results in 1999 were above the national averages and were in line with the average at five or more grades A*-G. The performance of girls at five or more grades A*-C and five or more grades A*-G and for the average points score was close to the national average. Boys' results on similar measures were above national averages over a three year period. In 1999, there were particular strengths in the GCSE

examinations in art, chemistry, physics, design and technology (resistant materials), where the results were significantly better than the national averages. In biology, French, geography, music and physical education the results were also above average. They were broadly average in English, science and mathematics. The results were below average in history, German and religious education.

8. There were considerable differences between the performance of boys and girls in the GCSE examinations in 1999. Girls achieved higher standards in English language and literature and PE. Boys achieved higher standards in mathematics and history.
9. Current and recent work indicates that pupils' attainment by the end of Key Stage 4 is above national expectations in art, design and technology, geography, music and RE. They are in line with expectations in English, science, history and physical education. Their attainment in information technology is below the standard expected nationally, both in the GCSE course and when used more generally across other subjects to support pupils' learning. This is a consequence of work that is not sufficiently coordinated and does not build systematically on their earlier experiences. The higher attaining pupils in art, modern languages and RE are making good progress and achieving very high standards. In many instances, these high standards are the result of some extremely effective teaching, which ensures that pupils have appropriately challenging work. In information technology, although pupils make satisfactory progress in consolidating their existing skills, they make insufficient progress in extending their skills and applying them to new problems and situations.
10. Students' attainment in their coursework is above expectations in science, art, geography and history, and in line with expectations in English, design and technology, modern languages, music, physical education and business studies. In mathematics, their attainment is well above the standard expected, with students making good progress in this subject.
11. Pupils speak and listen well. Their reading skills are satisfactory and their writing skills are generally good. The contribution made by subjects other than English to the development of pupils' language and literacy skills is variable. In science, drama, modern languages and physical education, pupils are given frequent opportunities to develop their skills in speaking and listening through discussion, debate and explanations to the class. Although some reading is required in most subjects, there were few occasions in which pupils read aloud in lessons. In history and English, pupils are given further opportunities to undertake extended writing for a variety of purposes and in these and some other subjects note-taking is actively encouraged. Some departments correct pupils' spelling and punctuation errors, but there is little evidence of a whole-school approach to developing their writing skills.
12. Pupils deal competently in most subjects with the everyday demands of numeracy. They handle number and measurement, mentally, orally and in writing, satisfactorily in history and design and technology, and well in mathematics and science. Pupils use calculators accurately. Pupils apply spatial concepts appropriately in design and technology. Their application is good in geography, for example in the use of graphing. It is also good in mathematics in the study of shape. Pupils make good sense of information presented numerically and graphically. Standards of graph work in science and geography are good. Pupils handle statistical information in everyday contexts well - for example, in analysing comparative data.
13. There have been some improvements in the use of information technology across the school since the last inspection. Pupils are developing skill and confidence in the use of a variety of computer applications and this is taking place in an increasing number of subjects. However, in Key Stage 4, as the work is not sufficiently co-ordinated across the school, pupils' skills are not developed systematically enough which results in their being below the level they are capable of achieving.
14. Pupils with special educational needs are generally making satisfactory progress in their learning in all subjects. In some subjects, for example design and technology and physical education, they make good progress in all years and also in information technology at Key Stage 3. In general, their skills in reading, spelling and writing are developing appropriately, although some of the work is not sufficiently focused on their specific needs.

15. The school is not maintaining its above average standards at Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4. In most subjects, there has been some improvement since the last inspection and this has been particularly marked in English, music, religious education and modern foreign languages. The school has set itself appropriately challenging targets and is on course to meet them in GCSE examinations. It has made some progress in raising the relative attainment of more able pupils, but this has been slow and this group of pupils remain well behind their peers in other schools.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

16. The attitudes and behaviour of most pupils in the school are good as they were at the last inspection. Pupils respond well to the opportunities offered to them and have good relationships with each other and with staff.
17. The large majority of pupils have good attitudes to learning. They show interest in their work, sustain concentration and apply themselves readily to the tasks set. Many pupils come to lessons with positive attitudes and a willingness to learn. They ask and answer questions, join in discussions and contribute well during lessons. Most pupils are good-humoured and relaxed. They are generally enthusiastic about lessons. In science, Year 7 pupils were highly motivated during their lesson on looking at food as an energy source, asking interested and sensible questions. In mathematics, Year 7 pupils enthusiastically approached the topic of factors and multiples. Year 8 geography pupils have a mature approach to their learning, listening carefully when studying population growth in India. In a Year 8 design and technology lesson, pupils concentrated well in their work on designing and making fabric bags. In a Year 9 French lesson, pupils worked with determination on the challenging exercise of comparing household chores in France and Africa. Year 11 pupils responded wonderfully well to their poetry work in English, and high levels of interest, enthusiasm and enjoyment were seen in art, music, physical education and religious education lessons. However, there is a small number of pupils, particularly in Years 8 and 10, whose attitudes to lessons are not good. Some need constant attention from the class teacher to keep them on task as occurred in a Year 8 music lesson where some pupils aimlessly banged on drums rather than being constructively creative. The low expectations in some Year 10 mathematics lessons resulted in some pupils not being engaged in their learning and their disruptive and poor behaviour affected the progress of others in the lesson.
18. The behaviour of the majority of pupils in lessons is good. Pupils understand the 'code of conduct' and consider it to be fair. Pupils are mostly supportive of one another in lessons, often helping and supporting each other. However, there is a small number of pupils, particularly in Years 8 and 10, with significant behaviour problems which can cause disruption to lessons and to learning when not handled appropriately by staff. The behaviour of most pupils around school is good. Pupils generally socialise well outside the classroom and the atmosphere is good-humoured. Younger pupils feel comfortable. They say they settled into the school quickly and that people were friendly and helpful. There is some boisterous behaviour at lunchtimes and breaks, but is mostly good-natured. The short lunch break and small dining room result in some jostling but once seated, pupils eat together in a sociable atmosphere. Anti-bullying advice is given a high priority in tutorial time, assemblies and personal and social education lessons. Pupils report there is little bullying and are confident that it will be dealt with quickly and sensitively if it does arise. Pupils are generally loyal towards the school. There is little graffiti or vandalism.
19. During the last academic year there were no permanent exclusions and 21 fixed term exclusions involving 16 students. So far this year, there have been 4 fixed term exclusions. This is below average for a school of this size. The school has a policy of inclusion and works hard with those pupils whose behaviour is unacceptable. Exclusions are the final stage in an effective and structured approach to dealing with unacceptable behaviour and are not a sanction that is used lightly. All exclusions are fully documented. Parents are involved at all stages and generally support the school's approach and methods.
20. Relationships between staff and pupils and between pupils themselves are good and create a supportive and caring atmosphere. These good relationships have a positive impact on pupils' response and attitudes in lessons. Pupils are valued both as individuals and for their contribution

to the daily life of school, as can be seen by the way in which the staff, prefects and year councils work together. Pupils respect each other's feelings and are willing to listen to opinions different from their own. Discussions in personal and social education and religious education lessons were often lively and illustrated well pupils' acceptance and tolerance of others. Pupils are often polite and friendly and enjoy having visitors to their school and lessons.

21. Pupils respond well to the opportunities to take on responsibility within school. Two pupils from each tutor group in Years 7 to 10 are elected as representatives on the year councils. They meet often and pupils feel that they have a genuine voice and can have an impact on the workings of the school. Recently, pupils were asked to vote on whether the experiment of changing the time of the morning break had been successful or not. Year 11 pupils can apply to become prefects and once appointed take their role seriously. They support teaching and lunchtime staff well at breaks and lunchtimes and help in the running of open evenings and productions. During the open evening for prospective Year 6 pupils and parents, prefects are assigned 'families' and act as their guide for the evening giving a first hand account of life in the school. Year 11 pupils organise a number of events themselves through the year; for example, the Year 11 disco, and the Christmas party for elderly residents in the community. A group of Year 10 pupils have attended training by Childline and offer a 'buddy' service at lunchtimes, offering advice, help and support for pupils.
22. Attendance at the school has improved since the last inspection and is satisfactory. The attendance rate for 1999/2000 was 90.05 per cent which was broadly in line with the national average. Unauthorised absence increased last year to 1.3 per cent, but was due to the very poor attendance of a very small number of pupils. School figures show that fewer than 10 per cent of pupils have an attendance rate of less than 90 per cent indicating that the majority attend well. Pupils register with their tutors in the morning and afternoon and most subject teachers take a register each lesson. Registers are marked accurately and absences are recorded correctly. Registration times are used well and provide a purposeful and effective start to the day ahead.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

23. The overall quality of teaching is good and makes a significant contribution to the good progress that the majority of pupils make in their learning in the majority of subjects. The school has improved the quality of teaching since the last inspection, when it was also good, overall, by reducing further the proportion of unsatisfactory teaching and increasing the proportion of good or better teaching. Significant progress has been made in subjects identified as weak in the last inspection. These improvements are due to the emphasis that the school has placed on developing strategies for improving teaching and learning, the sharing of good practice, the appointment of new teachers to the school and the school's systems for holding departments to account for pupils' performance in national tests and public examinations. However, good quality teaching has not been sustained in all subjects, particularly mathematics.
24. Although the teaching is good, overall, at both key stages, there are significant differences between them and also within and across subjects. The teaching at Key Stage 3 is better than the teaching in Key Stage 4. At Key Stage 4, 94 per cent of the teaching is at least satisfactory, with a half good or better. Slightly less than a fifth of the teaching at this key stage is very good and occasionally excellent. At Key Stage 3, however, there is a higher proportion of good and very good teaching. The teaching is satisfactory or better in 94 per cent of lessons, good or better in just over three-quarters of lessons and very good or excellent in over a quarter of lessons. All of the unsatisfactory teaching occurs in Year 8 and Year 10.
25. Although there are some differences between the key stages, the teaching is good, overall, in art, design and technology, modern languages and music, and satisfactory in the remaining subjects. At Key Stages 3 and 4, although there are examples of satisfactory and very good teaching, the teaching in about one third of mathematics lessons is unsatisfactory, overall, mainly because teachers place insufficient emphasis on developing pupils' knowledge and understanding of mathematics, setting appropriate expectations and conducting lessons with pace and enthusiasm. Unsatisfactory teaching in mathematics occurred across the key stages and with both high and low achieving groups. In addition, time in lessons is not always used effectively and some teachers are not firm enough in handling pupils' disruptive behaviour.

26. There are many examples of very good teaching in several subjects, including English, drama, mathematics, science, art, design and technology, geography, history, modern languages, music, physical education, and RE. Where it is very good, pupils make particularly good progress in their learning and achieve high standards.
27. Where learning is most effective, teachers use the following strategies consistently and well. They plan and structure the work thoroughly to ensure that time in lessons is not wasted; set challenging learning intentions which are shared with pupils and provide a variety of tasks to challenge and stimulate pupils' thinking and help them learn. In the better lessons, teachers use their subject knowledge very effectively to ensure that the work is pitched at an appropriately challenging level and make very good use of open-ended questioning to explore pupils' understanding and to make them reflect and think more critically. A feature of the most successful teaching is the way that teachers link current work with that undertaken in previous lessons, develop and build on pupils' ideas, giving them time to reflect on and clarify their ideas and the way that they relate the work to pupils' own experiences and to every day life. This last feature ensures that pupils have a context in which to place their learning, enabling them to engage more effectively in the tasks as they see a relevance to what they are doing.
28. The learning support teachers and assistants are a strength of the school. They have high expectations of their pupils. Individual education plans are very full and specific to each pupil. Subject departments use these targets and their own to inform learning. Support teachers and assistants give the right blend of help and challenge and there is close liaison between them and subject teachers. This enables most pupils with special educational needs to make good progress in many subject areas. The local education authority provides additional support for pupils with hearing impairment and those with speech and language difficulties.
29. The weaknesses in the small number of lessons that were less than satisfactory are varied. They stem mainly from weaknesses in lesson planning, unclear purposes to the lesson and to the tasks being undertaken and poor skills in managing some pupils' behaviour, which in several lessons was disruptive and affected the learning of a large number of pupils in these classes. In addition, some of the teaching in these lessons is characterised by a limited range of teaching approaches, focusing too heavily on individual pupils to the exclusion of the class as a whole, a lack of challenge in the activities provided, and work that does not meet the needs of individual pupils sufficiently.
30. Teachers' subject knowledge is generally good and never less than satisfactory. In the most successful lessons, they use this knowledge effectively to provide work to stimulate, motivate and challenge their pupils. Other than in a significant minority of mathematics lessons, where it is generally unsatisfactory, teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are satisfactory and in most subjects good or very good for the majority of pupils. Expectations of more able pupils are generally too low. In the best teaching, teachers expect pupils to learn and to apply creative and intellectual effort to their work and they instil high standards of accuracy, including the correct use of technical language, and focus strongly on developing pupils' literacy and numeracy skills. This focus on developing basic skills was particularly successful in a Year 10 design and technology lesson, which involved mainly pupils with poor literacy skills. Pupils are given few opportunities to apply newly acquired IT skills across the curriculum.
31. Most lessons are carefully planned and have clear purposes to ensure that pupils acquire and extend their knowledge, skills and understanding in a systematic way. Planning is generally good in science, design and technology, geography, history, modern languages, music, religious education and physical education and satisfactory in the remaining subjects. Most teachers use a range of teaching and organisational strategies which are appropriate to the subject and to the content being covered, in order to interest pupils and ensure that they remain on task, are productive and make good progress. In the majority of lessons, teachers maintain a brisk pace to ensure that the time in lessons is used effectively to maintain pupils' concentration and motivation. They also make effective use of the limited resources to support pupils' learning.

32. Nearly all teachers have established good relationships with their pupils and, in the vast majority of lessons, manage their behaviour well through making their expectations clear and ensuring that pupils respond appropriately. Teachers praise and encourage pupils and give them constructive and positive feedback on their performance in order to help them understand what they need to do to improve their work. Day-to-day assessment of pupils' progress is very good in art and history and good in nearly all other subjects. In information technology, it is unsatisfactory, overall, especially at Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4. Marking is mostly undertaken regularly, although not with a common approach across subjects. In the best marking, pupils benefit from constructive, diagnostic comments and clear guidance on what they need to do to improve their work. Homework is set regularly for the most part, although not always according to the homework timetable and is effective in supporting, extending and enhancing class work.
33. Pupils are generally making good progress in deepening, broadening and applying their knowledge, understanding and skills. They are making very good progress in art. Most pupils are keen to learn and concentrate well during lessons, which ensures that they make good gains in their learning. In most, but not all, instances, they are working to their capacity because of the demands that teachers make on them. In some lessons, the failure to match the work to the varied needs of pupils, even within setted groups, results in some of the higher attaining pupils making insufficient progress. Provision for information technology across the curriculum is weak and so they are generally making unsatisfactory progress.
34. The school has made some progress in improving provision for more able pupils, although the development programme has been affected by changes of staff responsibility. It has now identified pupils effectively and maintains a register to track their progress. Provision for these pupils is good in art, science and English, but is only satisfactory at best in other subject areas. Planning to meet the needs of more able pupils is insufficiently detailed across the curriculum and key stages in most departments. More able pupils are given special help in some instances, as in modern foreign languages and RE.

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

35. The curriculum provided for pupils is generally broad and balanced. It is satisfactory at Key Stages 3 and 4. In Key Stage 3, all pupils, including those with special educational needs, have equal access to the full range of National Curriculum subjects as well as drama and a personal and social education course. At Key Stage 4, a choice of subjects ensures greater variety to meet the needs, interests and aptitudes of the pupils. Most pupils enter GCSE examinations, although a Certificate of Achievement is available, in addition, to a small number of pupils. Some pupils are also disapplied from modern foreign languages to follow the Valued Youth programme. Early indications are that this course is proving successful with pupils, their teachers and partners in the community. A small number of pupils are disapplied from design and technology to enable them to take separate sciences. There is no provision for pre-vocational courses at Key Stage 4, which narrows the opportunities available for some pupils who might benefit from such programmes.
36. There are effective strategies for teaching literacy and numeracy. Planning supports the curriculum well. It is most effective in subjects such as science and art and least effective in information technology where elements of the National Curriculum programme of study are not explicitly identified.
37. The total curriculum time is in line with nationally recommended figures. The time allocated for subjects is broadly in line with the national averages and is very generous for PE at Key Stage 4. There is below average time for music in Key Stage 3. Pupils and teachers generally make good use of curriculum time and movement between lessons is efficient.
38. Within the school's overall curricular provision, there are some deficiencies. Although statutory requirements with regard to information technology are met at both Key Stages 3 and 4, there is insufficient monitoring of that provision to ensure that all elements of the programme of study are undertaken in the appropriate depth. Very few pupils take a second modern foreign language in

Key Stage 4. Weaknesses are evident in information technology, where control is extremely limited and not developed across the curriculum. The 10 day timetable provides the flexibility for a broad and balanced curriculum, but some Year 7 and 8 teaching groups have subjects timetabled in clusters over two days. This hinders continuity in their learning.

39. Since the last inspection, there have been some improvements to the curriculum, such as the revisions to the music curriculum, religious education programme and to modern foreign languages. Several additions to the PSE programme have proved effective, but it is still planned as a series of topics to be covered rather than an integrated and developmental programme. The governors' curriculum committee meets regularly to oversee the curriculum. Its members are well informed and contribute very well to curriculum debate. They visit departments and are fully involved in the review and evaluation of attainment and progress of each department.
40. Overall, the provision for extra-curricular activities is satisfactory with some particularly good aspects. There is a very good range of sporting clubs and activities which offers variety and interest to many pupils. The use of specialist coaches not only enhances the curriculum but enables the more gifted and talented pupils to develop their skills further. Many pupils represent the school in competitions and last year over 50 per cent of pupils took part in the opportunities offered. Similarly, in music, pupils can join groups, learn to play specialist instruments and take part in competitions and productions. During the inspection, a Samba Group played extremely well and with great enthusiasm in an assembly, despite it being their first public performance together. The Young Musician of the Year saw pupils from all ages and range of abilities play to their best. Last year, Year 11 pupils put on a production of 'Sparkleshark' and Year 10 performed in 'Kids in the City'. There is a computer club, Good News club and homework club. Extension clubs for French, religious education and art make a good contribution to the attainment of the higher attaining pupils. However, there are few opportunities in science, history and geography for pupils to further develop skills through extensive field studies and access to outside specialists.
41. Links with the partner primary schools and with sixth form provision are good, overall, and benefit the transfer arrangements for pupils. There is programme of visits and familiarisation opportunities and the school supplements these links with effective communication with parents before pupils transfer to the school. Liaison with the contributory primary schools is excellent; there are effective preparatory programmes in, for example, science and modern languages. The school has very good links with the community, which makes a very positive contribution to the learning opportunities available to pupils and to their progress and attainment, particularly through the work experience programme.
42. Overall, the provision for personal and social education is good, as was reported in the last inspection, but has the capacity to be very good. Currently, the programme comprises a number of distinct modules led and organised by individual staff. The content of each module is good, covering relevant and appropriate topics which support and enhance pupils' personal development. Lessons are taught by experienced and specialist staff and the quality of teaching in lessons seen was often good. A strength of the programme is the structured way in which outside guests are drawn into the curriculum which gives an extra layer of expertise from which pupils benefit. These guests are experienced, well prepared and have a clear understanding of their role. As yet, there is little cohesion across the modules, as there is no personal and social education department as such. There are no regular meetings of all those involved, so planning, monitoring and evaluation are not as advanced as they should be and many of the resources are dated and need replacing. With the greater emphasis on citizenship, the school is in a position to develop the personal and social education department in a more formal and structured way.
43. Within the personal and social education programme, the careers education guidance module is well organised and managed. From Year 8 to Year 11, pupils follow a programme in which they have the opportunity to learn about work through well delivered lessons, an effective relationship with Career Link and a good range of current and relevant resources. The careers convention for pupils and parents in Year 10 is well organised and supported and provides plenty of information and advice to help prepare pupils for the next stage of their education. The work experience placements in Year 10 are well organised and supported by all staff. Pupils report that they feel well prepared for life after Year 11. The sixth forms to which many of the pupils go, are extremely complimentary about the maturity and responsibility of Carnforth pupils. The provision for pupils'

personal and social education, and careers education and guidance is good and makes a positive contribution to their attitudes, values and personal development. At Key Stages 3 and 4, all pupils follow a programme which includes health education and places appropriate emphasis on sex education and substance abuse. Elements of the sex education programme are also appropriately taught in science. The quality of teaching of the personal and social education programme is usually satisfactory and engages the attention of pupils.

44. At the time of the last inspection, provision for pupils' personal development was generally satisfactory. Provision for social development was a strength, but provision for spiritual development was a weakness and featured in the report as a key issue for action. Since then a member of staff has been given responsibility for pupils' spiritual development. This has led to a statement of policy and an audit across the curriculum. Provision for pupils' social development remains good. Provision for their spiritual and moral development has become good and for cultural development remains satisfactory.
45. The school's response to the reported weakness of its contribution to pupils' spiritual development was rapid and effective. Religious education was re-established under strong leadership and with good teaching so that pupils now learn about beliefs and values and know how to reflect on their own experience. Across the rest of the curriculum, teachers receive and value pupils' ideas and the quality of relationships implies an awareness of each person's individual worth. The arrangements for a daily act of collective worship in assembly or during tutorial time are as variable as they were at the time of the last inspection. Some assembly takers and some tutors use the act of collective worship with integrity and so promote pupils' spiritual awareness. The school fails to meet its statutory obligation in not offering all pupils access to a daily act of collective worship.
46. The school is good at promoting the principles which distinguish right from wrong. There is a framework of values expressed in the code of conduct which regulates behaviour and reinforces positive attitudes. Pupils understand and respond to the system of rewards and sanctions and regard it as fair. The school fosters fairness, honesty, respect for the truth and consideration for others. Religious education and the programme of personal and social education make a significant contribution through their attention to moral issues. Across the curriculum as a whole, teachers encourage pupils to see the moral dimension of life and to develop a sense of personal responsibility.
47. The school provides well for pupils' social development. Relationships between teachers and pupils are good and encourage mature behaviour and self-discipline. The many opportunities to exercise social responsibility include being form representatives, prefects, buddies and librarians. There are year councils in each key stage and other opportunities for pupils to participate in the life of the school as a whole. The school is a community in which pupils develop the skills they need in adult life. The programme of personal and social education provides a range of relevant topics, including careers education. In lessons, there are many opportunities for discussions and activities in groups.
48. The school's contribution to pupils' cultural development remains satisfactory. The range of extra-curricular activities is extensive. It includes visits to galleries and museums and opportunities to take part in drama productions and concerts. Within the curriculum, the contribution of art, music and religious education is strong. Annual visits to France and Germany are also significant. The undeveloped aspects are the culture and traditions local to the school and its surrounding community. By recognising what is distinctive of their own experience pupils could become more aware of differences. There are not enough opportunities for pupils to appreciate the richness of the ethnic and cultural diversity of life in contemporary Britain.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

49. The level of care the school provides for its pupils is high and well supports the good relationships throughout the school. Appropriate and effective child protection procedures are in place. The harmonious and supportive atmosphere created ensures that all pupils quickly learn to feel secure. Parents are justifiably appreciative of this feature of school life.

50. Pupils benefit considerably from the time, energy, thought and the well organised systems staff use to identify and promote each pupil's individual personal developmental needs. There are good links between the heads of upper and lower schools, year tutors, review tutors, heads of subject departments, teachers and support staff working in the school. The good recording of pupils' personal needs and progress, with close parental involvement, ensures that information about pupils' needs is communicated effectively and quickly. For example, all pupils in Years 7 to 10 have grade cards completed twice a year and an annual report. These grade cards inform the pupils on their levels of academic attainment and have effort grade and behaviour grades as relevant. Comments are made on their progress and copies are sent to parents for their comments and signature. The implication of the grades is fully discussed with pupils. Teachers act as review tutors. Their role is to monitor standards of achievement and behaviour. All pupils have targets and the review tutor, with the close involvement of pastoral and subject teachers, discusses with pupils how effectively they are meeting their targets and what to do, if necessary, to improve. All pupils' records are passed on from year to year as the pupil moves across the school. Formal opportunities, such as the regular minuted staff meetings, make sure that information is communicated and that all staff, including support staff, have opportunities to be fully aware of the pupils' needs, making, as relevant, their contributions. All staff are fully committed to identifying and meeting the needs of each individual. Pupils themselves are all very confident that there is someone there for them to go to should a problem arise and that they will be given time to receive the appropriate help and support. This formal structure, coupled with the informal communication throughout the school, ensures that information about pupils' needs is communicated effectively and quickly to all staff and pupils. Reporting to parents is insufficiently detailed to give them a clear picture of progress and attainment in each subject. Pupils are rewarded through merit stickers and letters of commendation. One pupil in each subject receives an annual commendation from the headteacher.
51. The school is particularly good with its procedures for working with other agencies and involving people from the community in its work. Parents are invited to observe lessons. The education welfare officer visits the school twice a week to discuss pupils' needs. The school has close links with social workers and the police, who are closely involved with the school staff in discussing meeting pupils' needs. The oversight the headteacher has in this role makes a significant contribution. Here, he is very well supported by staff. The school nurse, who sees all Year 7 pupils for health interviews, interviews them and asks them to complete questionnaires. She asks parents to make their comments. It is an indication of the school's level of concern that, despite limited funding, it has allocated an extra four hours of the nurse's time weekly. Pupils give a positive feedback regarding this support and it makes a good contribution to their personal welfare. Outside speakers are frequently invited to talk to pupils. During the week of inspection, an assembly was held for Year 11 pupils. Here, the Chief Executive of the local city council was invited to talk to the students. Due to the careful briefing by the school's head of upper school, this outside speaker had very well prepared his input. He gave a clear message, illustrated by his own life, of how important it is for pupils to get qualifications whilst at school.
52. The school has good arrangements for promoting good behaviour. Here, it has improved since the last inspection. It now has strategies to set consistently high standards of behaviour throughout the school. However, the code of conduct is not applied consistently. It is clearly understood by all members of the school community. Staff willingly undertake their supervision duties. They are alert at all times to the behaviour and demeanour of the pupils. There is a clear sanction system, behaviour contracts and a good recording of incidents and details. Any matters concerning oppressive behaviour, including all forms of harassment and bullying, are quickly dealt with. The bullying incident monitoring forms and the awareness of staff make a significant impact in ensuring that pupils and staff live and work together in a comfortable and relaxed atmosphere.
53. The school has good procedures for monitoring and promoting attendance. Through its now well developed systems and the close effective involvement of the educational welfare officer, it has well met the key issue identified in the last inspection report, to introduce more rigorous procedures for monitoring and improving attendance and punctuality. Attendance is improving slowly and few pupils are late. Most lateness usually results from transport difficulties. Some pupils travel long distances to attend the school. If pupils are late, their arrival is recorded accurately and their lateness is tracked efficiently and dealt with.

54. On entry to the school, pupils are assessed thoroughly in non-verbal and verbal tests and reading and literacy tests. The results of these are used to decide if they have special educational needs. There are good individual education plans in place which are appropriately and regularly reviewed. The special educational needs co-ordinator provides all staff with relevant profiles of the pupils' needs. The school successfully involves parents, teachers and support staff in discussions about pupils' needs. This information is used well to set targets in individual education plans.
55. Departments assess pupils' academic attainment and progress regularly and appropriately. The sharing of targets and levels of attainment with the pupils, by involving them in the evaluation of their own work, does much to support the good progress they make. The need identified in the last inspection report, to co-ordinate pupils' progress more effectively and to use such records to inform teaching and reporting to parents, has been well met. The practice of informing parents at least three times a year on their children's progress enables them to be fully involved. However, the yearly report is lacking in relevant detail regarding the skills and levels pupils are acquiring. The procedures for marking pupils' work are sound in most subjects, but, sometimes, marking is used insufficiently to guide pupils, regarding what they need to do to improve their work.
56. The school conducts a very thorough analysis of National Curriculum results, looking for and examining trends. It has now met the need to monitor the attainment of boys more closely, as identified in the last inspection report. It is effectively identifying any patterns and taking appropriate steps in many departments to analyse and act upon the reasons for any variation in attainment between boys and girls.
57. Procedures for assessment across the school are good. The use of assessment to guide its planning is satisfactory. There are examples of good practice, but the use of assessment data and information is unevenly applied across the school. For example, the art department very effectively grades and decides the national curriculum level of the work of pupils. It shares this judgement with pupils to support their progress. It involves them well in evaluating each other's work. Before grades are recorded, an agreement is reached regarding the standards obtained and reasons for these between teacher and pupil. Other departments, such as science, also show aspects of good practice. Through discussion in department meetings before and after topics are studied, supported by end of topic tests and the levelling of marks and grades, decisions are taken regarding how plans should be modified to better support the needs of pupils. Good practice is also seen in English, where, as a result of assessment information, schemes of work are constantly reviewed to ensure relevance and differentiation for different levels of attainment. Some departments, such as geography, do not effectively use assessment to inform curricular planning. The good procedures the school has for monitoring and supporting pupils' academic progress and their personal development, now need to be more widely applied to monitor and evaluate the consistency across the school of the use of assessment information to guide curriculum planning. This work has not impacted effectively on planning for more able pupils.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

58. The school has maintained the good partnership with parents reported in the last inspection and is constantly looking for ways to develop the relationship further.
59. Parents have positive views about the school. They feel that staff are approachable and helpful, that problems are dealt with quickly and sensitively and that the school is helping their children to become mature and responsible. They feel that the standard of teaching is good, the school has high expectations and that their children are making good progress.
60. Parents receive a good range of good quality information about the school and its philosophy and approach. The prospectus is attractive in appearance and provides detail on how the school works and what parents can expect. The annual report from governors contains all the information that parents are legally entitled to know. The handbook for parents is a good quality production which is practical, helpful and useful. Letters home keep parents up-to-date with events and activities. All around the school, there are displays of pupils' work and photographs of activities and events, giving a good flavour of school life. When possible, pupils' achievements are reported in the local

newspaper, giving the school and pupils the recognition they deserve and keeping the school in the public eye.

61. Parents are kept informed about their children's progress through two grade cards, two parents' consultation evenings and a written report each year. Progress is indicated through national curriculum grades or GCSE levels, an effort level and occasionally a behaviour grade if behaviour has been a cause for concern. The annual reports were criticised at the last inspection for not giving sufficient information on pupils' strengths and weaknesses. There has been some improvement since then, but progress is insufficient. The comments from subject staff are general rather than specific to the subject. It is often difficult to tell from the comment alone, to which subject it refers. Reports still do not clearly indicate what pupils can do well within each subject and do not give clear, specific and practical targets which can help pupils improve, or show how parents can help pupils to improve. Parents have the opportunity to reply to the report in writing and are invited to a consultation evening to discuss it further.
62. The school is keen to encourage parents to take an active part in their child's education. As tutors stay with the same group through the years, parents have a stable point of contact, resulting in good relationships. The informal communication between staff and parents is good and all contact with parents is recorded and kept within the pupil's individual file. Attendance at parent consultation evenings is very good in the lower school and good in the upper school. The school offers those parents who cannot attend either an alternative time or a written summary of progress. Displays of work and sample activities are provided, so that parents can see exactly what pupils have been doing. The home-school agreement is in place and clearly indicates what the school and parents can expect from each other. Parents were consulted through a survey by the governors and their views affected the final draft of the contract. The return rate for the signed contracts is very good with over 90 per cent of parents in all years signing and returning the contract. Parents receive copies of the homework policy and timetable each year and their help is requested, through providing an appropriate environment in which pupils can work at home and by signing the homework planner every week. Most parents do sign regularly and some use the planner as a means of communicating with tutors or subject teachers. Parents also receive the discipline policy and are involved in the monitoring of behaviour and punctuality through acknowledging and signing slips.
63. The school provides further information and advice through curriculum booklets in Year 7, option choice evenings, revision plans and advice and a clinic for Year 11 pupils and parents. Each term, parents are invited to an open afternoon in which they can observe lessons and see first hand what is going on in the classroom. The number of parents who take up the offer varies and those that do find it interesting and helpful. The school is committed to continuing this opportunity and staff are fully behind it. The school also works hard with Year 6 parents with a succession of open days, evenings and meetings to give them a good flavour of and insight into the school and how it works.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

64. The school is well-led and managed by the governors and headteacher working in an effective partnership. The headteacher plays an effective role in determining the educational direction of the work of the school, particularly in relation to promoting high standards. He is, however, not supported as effectively as possible by the deputy head, who spends a disproportionate time on routine administrative tasks. Overall, the senior management team convey a sense of purpose and a clear commitment to improving standards and the quality of education within the school. Other senior managers make an effective contribution to the day-to-day management and organisation of the school. Since the last inspection, there is improved delegation to staff with management responsibilities, but there is not a thorough and comprehensive follow-up to ensure that tasks are completed well.
65. The school's aims of promoting pupils' achievement, ensuring concern and respect for individuals and the community, self-discipline and a sense of responsibility are evident in the work of staff and the response of pupils. Pupils take some pride in belonging to the school and there is a clear sense of corporate identity and shared purpose.

66. The school promotes equality of opportunity and access for its pupils and students, by a clearly defined policy that is regularly reviewed. Teachers deal sensitively, but firmly, with any examples of biased behaviour or prejudiced comments. The school makes good efforts to provide a range of opportunities for pupils and students, full access to all elements of the curriculum. However, in some subjects, for example English, girls perform better than boys and girls' performance in mathematics has declined relative to that of boys. Overall, the school has made good progress in narrowing the differential between girls and boys. The school's policy on equal opportunities is not sufficiently reflected in the planning of teaching and learning. There is an absence of displays and other resources to raise pupils' awareness of life in an ethnically diverse society.
67. The governing body undertakes its role in the governance of the school effectively and plays an influential role in its strategic management. Governors are strongly committed to the school and are highly supportive of the headteacher and staff with whom they have good relationships. They have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in the school and, through their working practices, are effective in holding the school to account for the standards and quality of education it achieves. They are helped in this work by the good quality of the reports and other information they receive from the headteacher. Reports from departments vary in quality, with the science department demonstrating very effective accountability. Other departments do not present reports which enable governors to gain a clear oversight and understanding. The governing body meets nearly all of its statutory responsibilities well, but, as identified in the last inspection report, it does not yet meet, in full, the requirements for a daily act of collective worship.
68. The school monitors and evaluates its performance effectively in the main, although there are some inconsistencies. The analysis and use of performance data in identifying strengths and weaknesses, especially in relation to pupils' progress are particularly effective. There is very effective targeting of support to individual pupils and tracking of their performance subsequently. However, there is very inconsistent use of the review of attainment and progress by departments to identify strengths and weaknesses in teaching. The direct monitoring and evaluation of teaching occurs, both by senior managers and by heads of department, but not in any consistent way or not always using agreed criteria to ensure that the process is sufficiently rigorous. Senior staff do not always take appropriate action where there are weaknesses in teaching or in departmental performance. In other respects, subject managers lead and manage their departments well in most cases. New appointments of heads of department in English, religious education and modern foreign languages have enabled the school to make effective progress on issues identified in the last inspection. Although there are clear and effective systems in preparation for reviewing the performance of teachers, they have not yet been fully implemented.
69. The school is clear about its priorities and targets. It makes good use of data from the standardised tests taken in Year 7 to set targets for pupils and for the school as a whole. There are particularly thorough systems in the school to monitor the progress of individual pupils and to compare the school's performance against that of other schools and against its past performance. Most of these comparisons are made against other schools in the local education authority rather than against national figures, as the school finds the local data more helpful in measuring how well it is helping pupils to make progress. Development planning to address the identified priorities are firmly embedded into the school's systems and staff and governors are fully involved in their identification and in the processes of planning. Departmental and other development plans include objectives, timescales, resources, in-service training requirements and success criteria. As set out, they do not always include the school's overall priorities. Success criteria are not always sufficiently explicit. Although senior managers and other staff are very clear about the school's priorities, there is no clear strategy for ensuring how they are to be embedded in the work of departments or how they are to be monitored and evaluated. This is a relative weakness.
70. The school has sufficient well-qualified and experienced teachers. There are generally sufficient special educational needs support staff to meet the needs of pupils with special educational needs. In information technology, the limited technical support puts an added burden on the work of the subject co-ordinator. Administrative and clerical staff are sufficient to meet the school's needs and they make a positive contribution to the smooth running of the school. The amount and range of staff in-service training are satisfactory and the induction of new staff and newly qualified

teachers is effective. Initial teacher training students are well supported through an appropriate programme of experiences and the mentoring arrangements.

71. Although dispersed in separate teaching blocks, the school has good accommodation to meet the demands of the curriculum. In some subjects, such as science the accommodation is good. However, there are some poor elements, such as the changing areas where the shower accommodation is not appropriate for the needs of pupils. The library provides satisfactory accommodation for independent work and research. Outdoor areas provide good sporting facilities, including shared use of a swimming pool with the community. Playground surfaces are poor, but currently usable. Office and staff accommodation are very good. The accommodation is used effectively and, in some cases, makes a significant, positive impact on the pupils' learning. Standards of cleaning, caretaking and decoration are good and there is virtually no litter or graffiti around the site.
72. The school has a satisfactory range of resources to meet the needs of the curriculum and to support pupils' learning. The provision for information technology has improved since the last inspection, but there is still very limited access to the equipment by all departments. The school library, which has a wide-ranging stock of fiction and non-fiction books, provides scope for individual research and other forms of independent learning, as well as opportunities for pupils to extend their literacy skills and to gain access to other information. It is, however, somewhat under-used. A number of departments have their own resource areas.
73. The school uses its resources prudently, based on very good, realistic, financial planning. The governors contribute significantly to the planning by maintaining a strategic overview and bringing to discussions a wide range of relevant experience and expertise. Financial planning is effective at school and departmental levels and the school's educational priorities inform budget setting. Priorities are clearly identified and correspond with the school's current needs. There is a satisfactory link between educational and financial planning and specific proposals are costed appropriately. Priorities are related to raising standards of attainment, but with relatively high staffing costs there is very little surplus to support developments and the implementation of new curricular plans, syllabuses and schemes of work.
74. Systems of financial control are good. There is an appropriate degree of liaison between the headteacher, senior management team, heads of department, the bursar and governors. Financial information is readily available and reports are analysed regularly by the headteacher and the chair of governors as well as being presented to meetings of the full governing body. Financial procedures are well established and controls are operated with a high degree of efficiency. The most recent auditors' report concluded that financial administration is satisfactory. Its minor recommendations have been addressed effectively.
75. Suitable procedures are in place to ensure that the school obtains best value for money before committing itself to expenditure. Assessments are made of the cost effectiveness of proposed expenditure and the headteacher and governors give appropriate emphasis to evaluating the subsequent impact of the expenditure they have approved and its effects on the policies they have agreed.
76. Funds are appropriately devolved to departments and there is a development fund for curriculum development. These funds are sufficient to enable departments to operate effectively. The use of funding for staff development is decided through the application of criteria and informed by overall school priorities and targets set for individual staff. The school carefully accounts for the funds and grants it receives and, in all cases, they are used for the purposes designated.
77. Overall, the school makes good use of its staffing, accommodation and other resources. Pupils benefit greatly from the efficient way that staff and rooms are deployed, so that they gain the full advantage of specialist teaching and accommodation. The school uses its resources to good effect to support pupils' learning and expenditure is concentrated on meeting educational needs, rather than on superficial trappings. Day-to-day administration is unobtrusive, but efficient, and enables the school to achieve its ends with the minimum expenditure of time and resources. Overall, in terms of its level of expenditure and the high quality of education provided, the school provides good value for money.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

78. To enhance the good quality of education that pupils receive, the governors, headteacher and staff should:

(a) ensure that heads of departments and other middle managers monitor and evaluate the work in their areas of responsibility more effectively, tightening existing practices to ensure greater consistency of approach:

- applying consistent criteria, especially in relation to classroom observation;
- making better use of assessment data and the outcomes of monitoring and evaluation to improve practice and performance;

ensure that senior managers are used efficiently and effectively to support and challenge colleagues in undertaking this work.

(paragraphs 9, 57, 61, 64, 67, 68, 69, 99, 134, 142, 167, 177 and 178)

(b) raise further standards of attainment of able pupils by:

- ensuring that planning meets the needs of more able groups and that all aspects of the programmes of study are covered in sufficient depth to develop pupils' higher order learning skills;
- systematically identifying and addressing weaknesses in teaching to meet the needs of more able pupils;
- promoting higher expectations of what pupils can achieve.

(paragraphs 1, 2, 3, 5, 15, 25, 29, 30, 33, 34, 96, 105, 120, 126, 130, 132, 138, 139)

(c) improve standards of behaviour of the minority of pupils whose actions are significantly disrupting the work of others by:

- ensuring that the school's behaviour policies are clearly understood and applied consistently, rigorously and early.

(paragraphs 17, 18, 25, 29, 52, 62, 84, 87, 94, 96, 123, 156, 165)

(d) improve the range and quality of learning resources to meet the learning needs of all pupils, particularly through access to ICT across the curriculum.

(paragraphs 5, 9, 13, 38, 72, 99, 100, 124, 144, 147, 151, 160)

(e) improve further the quality of reports to parents to ensure they include clear information on pupils' attainment and progress.

(paragraphs 50, 55, 61, 160, 167, 178)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	155
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	57

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
5	19	43	27	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	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	629	0
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	75	0

Special educational needs

	Y9 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	52	n/a
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	149	n/a

English as an additional language

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	5

Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	18
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	29

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	9.1
National comparative data	7.9

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.7
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	60	65

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	29	40	37
	Girls	48	44	38
	Total	77	84	75
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	61 (76)	67 (66)	60 (65)
	National	63 (63)	65 (65)	59 (59)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	25 (18)	32 (37)	28 (27)
	National	28 (35)	38 (36)	23 (27)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	30	33	38
	Girls	49	44	38
	Total	79	77	76
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	63 (72)	61 (68)	61(60)
	National	64 (62)	64 (64)	60 (61)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	37 (18)	30 (34)	26 (18)
	National	31 (31)	37 (37)	28 (30)

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	86	67	153

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	32	74	80
	Girls	34	63	64
	Total	66	137	144
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	43.5 (53)	89 (91)	94 (99)
	National	46.3 (44.6)	90.7 (89.8)	95.7 (95.2)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	36.8 (41.6)
	National	38 (37.8)

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

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	1
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	2
Chinese	1
White	624
Any other minority ethnic group	2

(Unclassified)

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	21	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y11

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	39.5
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	15.9

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y7 – Y11

Total number of education support staff	6
Total aggregate hours worked per week	147

Deployment of teachers: Y7- Y11

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	79%
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	21.0
Key Stage 4	17.7

Financial information

Financial year	1998/99
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	£
Total income	1,688,227
Total expenditure	1,706,692
Expenditure per pupil	2,590
Balance brought forward from previous year	65,529
Balance carried forward to next year	47,064

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out

626

Number of questionnaires returned

262

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	41	47	9	2	0
My child is making good progress in school.	45	46	5	0	3
Behaviour in the school is good.	23	56	9	1	8
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	28	55	13	2	0
The teaching is good.	32	61	0	0	2
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	38	46	10	2	3
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	58	37	2	1	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	64	32	2	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	32	53	9	1	3
The school is well led and managed.	29	55	4	1	8
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	37	55	5	0	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	23	45	14	6	13

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

ENGLISH

79. Pupils' standard of attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is in line with that found nationally. In National Curriculum tests in 2000 the percentage of pupils reaching level 5 and above was at the national average and the percentage reaching at least level 6 was above the average. Results at level 5 were less good than those in 1999, but performance at level 6 and above was significantly improved. Girls did better than boys in 2000 and the average points score of all pupils was close to that of pupils in schools with a similar proportion of free school meals. The overall trend during recent years has matched closely the national one. By the end of Key Stage 3, taking into consideration levels of literacy on entry, pupils maintain sound progress.
80. The general standard of attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 is in line with the national expectation. In GCSE in English language in 1999 the percentage of pupils achieving grades A*-C was at the national average and in English literature it was above. Girls performed better than boys. Although roughly in line with their respective national averages, boys and girls do less well in language and literature than they do in some other subjects. Results in 2000 were less good in both language and literature than they were in 1999.
81. The great majority of pupils throughout the school listen attentively and work productively in pairs and small groups. The quality of speech is above average and, by the end of Key Stage 3, most pupils use the spoken form of standard English. They answer questions willingly and clearly. Pupils in Year 7 were articulate and confident in their work in drama. They improvised lively stories in pairs and developed extended and coherent narratives. High attaining pupils in Year 11 extended their understanding of poems through sensitive and mature role-play in which they demonstrated good control over a range of appropriate speech. When talking to adults, pupils are courteous and confident.
82. Overall attainment in reading is in line with that found nationally and the standard of reading comprehension throughout both key stages allows pupils to enjoy a wide range of literary and non-literary texts. In their study of *Macbeth*, pupils in Year 11 showed a sound understanding of the background to the play in Elizabethan society, particularly with regard to attitudes towards witchcraft. By the end of Key Stage 4, the majority of pupils identify accurately features such as plot, character and themes in plays and novels. Pupils are regularly encouraged to read aloud and, on the whole, they do so with understanding and clarity. The use of video materials enables lively discussion of the comparative effectiveness of the written word and the visual image.
83. The general standard of written work is in line with the national expectation. It is, in the main, carefully and neatly presented. Pupils throughout both key stages draft their writing effectively, often using word-processing to assist them. This is a major step forward since the last report. At the end of Key Stage 3, the quality of written work varies considerably, with girls generally presenting their work more neatly and accurately than boys. Most pupils make steady progress during Key Stage 3 and, by Year 9, produce writing with sound control over sentence structure, expression of ideas and details of spelling and punctuation. A number of average and lower attaining pupils make frequent errors with these aspects of their writing. High attaining pupils in Year 11 produce written assignments which are imaginative in content, skilfully crafted, fluently expressed and technically accurate. Much of this very good work springs from the study of literature, but the best is in personal reflective writing. Pupils throughout both key stages write successfully for a range of readerships and purposes. Much lively and attractive written work is displayed in classrooms.
84. Most pupils throughout the school are well motivated and eager to learn. In most lessons, they work with enjoyment and commitment. There is, however, a minority of pupils, especially in Year 8 and Year 10, who are disaffected and who do not sustain concentration. Such attitudes adversely affect the pace and quality of their own learning as well as that of others. Relationships

in the classroom are generally positive, with some high attaining pupils achieving high levels of concentration and effort.

85. The general quality of teaching throughout both key stages is good. It is good or even better in two thirds of lessons at Key Stage 3 and in one half of lessons at Key Stage 4. There is some excellent teaching at both key stages. Teachers' knowledge of their subject is good. Their planning and preparation of lessons are very good. They explain tasks clearly and pupils know precisely what standard is expected of them both in their work and behaviour. Teachers use a wide range of lively and creative methods. They are particularly skilful in their use of vigorous questioning and they press pupils to extend and justify answers. Tasks are well matched to pupils' level of attainment. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is managed with particular sensitivity and care. Pupils' work is marked consistently and conscientiously, with much useful diagnosis of errors and helpful comment. Clear targets for improvement are set.
86. The curriculum meets statutory requirements. A recently established initiative to improve standards of literacy in Year 7 is proving successful in providing continuity and progression with the work of feeder schools at the time of transfer. This policy is extending to Year 8 and Year 9. Drama is taught during one term out of three throughout Key Stage 3. The subject is now closely integrated with English and pupils' oral skills, self-confidence and self-awareness are benefiting. Continuity and progression in the development of a whole range of drama skills are, however, restricted, because of limited coverage in the timetable. Drama is a popular course for the GCSE. The formation of effective schemes of work for English has been another significant improvement since the last inspection. Departmental documentation is thorough and helpful. The department has recently gone through a difficult period resulting from long-term absence, but staff have remained totally committed. They share a clear sense of identity and purpose. The head of department's skilful management has been crucial during the past year. She is very supportive of colleagues. The department is very well led with a combination of vision and dedication.
87. In most subjects across the curriculum, pupils' listening skills are good, except where the behaviour of a few disaffected pupils, mostly boys in Year 10, causes disruption, as it does, for example, in mathematics. Pupils listen attentively in science, art, geography, history, music and religious education. In science, discussion is encouraged as an important way of learning and pupils make confident presentations.
88. The great majority of pupils read well enough to enable them to understand textbooks and other materials. In geography and religious education, pupils are encouraged to read aloud and to extend their knowledge and understanding through reading. There is good emphasis in science on the meaning of technical vocabulary.
89. Written work is, in the main, carefully presented in most subjects. There is some extended writing in science, geography and history, but, in other subjects, pupils are given too little opportunity to write at length. Work sheets are widely used and limit the use of sentences. The innovatory literacy policy in Year 7 is having a positive effect across the curriculum, but there are inconsistencies in the use of language in some curriculum areas.

MATHEMATICS

90. Overall, attainment in mathematics is near to the national average at the end of both Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4.
91. The majority of pupils entering the school achieve level 4 or above in National Curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 2. This is the nationally expected level. Over the period 1997 to 1999, results in the Key Stage 3 assessments in Year 9 have been in line with the national averages. In 2000, results are again near to the national averages. When compared with pupils in similar schools, the performance is above average for level 5 and above and below average for level 6 and above. There is no significant difference in attainment between boys and girls.
92. GCSE results over the period 1996 to 1999 have either been below or near to the national averages as measured by the proportions of pupils achieving either A* to C or A* to G grades. This is

particularly good when considering that the percentage of the year groups entered for GCSE is 98.5 per cent in comparison with a national entry of 94.7 per cent. Results in 2000 show a fall in the percentage of pupils gaining A* to C grades from 45.9 to 40.3. With the exception of 1999, in the last four years boys have achieved at a higher level than girls. This is the reverse of the situation nationally where girls perform better than boys. Analysis of results, using the Lancashire Value Added Project, shows good results especially for lower attaining pupils.

93. The level of attainment shown in external tests and examinations is demonstrated in most of the lessons seen and in the written work examined. At the end of Key Stage 3, average and higher attainers show a very good basic knowledge of algebra and solve equations well. Higher attainers show confidence in open-ended investigation work. Lower attainers show a good awareness of the properties of shapes and although their computational skills are limited, use calculators well. At Key Stage 4, higher attainers again show good skills in investigation work and apply trigonometric values well in the solution of problems. Their knowledge of statistical techniques is good. Average attaining pupils show an understanding of percentages, although calculators tend to be used to do calculations. However, pupils show that they can estimate the solution with some degree of confidence. Lower attaining pupils show prowess in the probability work and are well able to understand the underlying structures.
94. The progress of most pupils within the school is satisfactory and often good. However a significant minority of pupils in Year 10 are making poor progress due to disaffected attitudes to work. The progress of pupils in some classes in Year 8 is being adversely affected by low expectations on the part of teachers and inappropriate match of task to pupils' need. Otherwise the confidence with basic number and calculation work shown by many pupils in Year 7 can be seen to provide a solid foundation from which pupils can progress to topics ranging from investigation puzzles to operations on negative numbers in Year 9. The below average performances of girls in GCSE examinations show that this progress is not maintained by all pupils in Years 10 and 11. However, pupils in Year 11 show good expertise in standard form, cumulative frequencies, transformation geometry, correlation and measures of control tendency and trigonometry. Progress in investigation across both key stages is good. Pupils with special educational needs generally make satisfactory progress. This progress is being improved by the introduction of mathematically specific targets from IEPs. Levels of numeracy rise for all pupils through the key stages and the majority reach average levels at the end of Key Stage 4.
95. The attitudes of pupils towards the subject are generally good. Pupils show interest in their work. Enthusiasm is high. Pupils are generally well behaved in class. There are positive relationships between pupils and towards the teacher. Concentration in written work and when listening to the teacher is good. A good working ethos has been established in many classes. In contrast to this very positive picture, which was found in 13 of the 16 lessons seen, attitudes were poor in the other three lessons.
96. Although the overall quality of teaching is satisfactory across both key stages, unsatisfactory aspects were found in five of the sixteen lessons seen – one in Year 7, two in Year 8 and two in Year 10. The unsatisfactory aspects include poor planning, ineffectual language, overuse of worksheets, poor control and classroom management, low expectations, slow pace, slow start to the lesson, too high a level of tolerance of poor behaviour and inadequate strategies for catering for disaffected pupils. At the opposite extreme, teachers show good planning, reflecting the schemes of work, a stress on the importance of algebra and its contribution to creating confidence in number work, excellent open ended investigations which challenge the pupils to think and good use of questions to introduce and develop a topic.
97. The current steps being taken to introduce, evaluate and improve the use of subject specific targets for SEN pupils are a major development within the department. Many lessons lack a good structure – a crisp beginning, a middle that sustains motivation and a well-rounded end. Objectives are rarely shared with the pupils.
98. The overall standard of numeracy within the school is in line with the level expected and pupils cope well with the everyday demands in mathematics, science, geography, design & technology and other subjects. Data collection and the presentation of statistical information in everyday

situations are satisfactory. Pupils show good calculating skills in shopping and working out exchange rates in modern foreign languages. Calculators are used well as appropriate. The mathematics department stress on algebraic expressions is well used in Year 10 science in the study of momentum.

99. The leadership and management of the department are mainly satisfactory, but there are a number of weaknesses that balance out the strengths. Day-to-day management is good. Available resources are well used and the accommodation is bright and inviting, creating a suitable learning environment. Staff are well qualified. A generous staffing for SEN pupils in Year 7 allows two teachers and, on some occasions, a teaching auxiliary, for each lesson. Unfortunately the value of this is undermined by poor timetabling, resulting in pupils who need regular daily lessons receiving three lessons within a sequence of six consecutive periods. There is no clear policy for the introduction of numeracy into Years 7 and 8 (and later 9). Although the use of ICT is clearly identified within the schemes of work, there is little evidence of the use of computers due to the outdated state of the current machines in the department and the pressure on the ICT facilities within the school. This reduces the opportunity for pupils to make sufficient progress in ICT within the National Curriculum and national numeracy strategy. Departmental yearly planning is very general and lacks clear targets, costings and success criteria. There is no reference to improving the attainment of girls in Key Stage 4 – a major challenge for the department. Monitoring, evaluation and development of teaching within the subject are not well developed. The procedure for assessing pupils' attainment is satisfactory. Information is well used in Key Stage 4 in deciding which pupils should aim for foundation, intermediate and higher levels in the GCSE examinations.
100. Since the last inspection, the standards of girls in GCSE examinations have declined in comparison to boys. The progress of some pupils is still restricted. The pupils' attitudes to learning are still mainly positive. However, there is more evidence of poorer attitudes than reported previously. The quality of teaching has declined since the last report which had no mention of the unsatisfactory aspects reported here. The good picture of use of computers no longer applies. The previous report included no reference to the current weaknesses in the leadership and management of the department.

SCIENCE

101. By the end of Key Stage 3, the standards are above the national average. In the 1999 National Tests the proportion of pupils achieving level 5 and above was 65 per cent with 27 per cent at level six or more, both figures being above the national average. In 2000 this declined to 60 per cent at level five with twenty eight per cent at level six or more. Observation of lessons and examination of pupils' work suggest that standards are above the national average. Standards in science are above those found in similar schools. When the results over recent years are considered as a whole, they show no significant trend. The relative performances of boys and girls are very similar, but boys attain more of the higher and lower levels.
102. At the close of Key Stage 4, the schools' standards are broadly in line with national averages for grades A* to C when taken as a whole. Where the three sciences are studied separately standards are very high: in 2000 a hundred per cent A* to C grades were achieved in both chemistry and physics, with biology not far behind at 90 per cent. In the double award course, 46 per cent obtained these grades. This is below national average. There is little difference between the performances of boys and girls. Over recent years, the Key Stage 4 science results have shown a rising trend. The schools' performance in science is similar to English, but better than that found in mathematics.
103. Achievement at the end of Key Stage 3 is good. Pupils enter the school with Key Stage 2 levels which, taken together, are slightly above the national average, though topics have been covered to widely differing degrees. By the end of the key stage, many are performing significantly above national average. Progress is most rapid in experimental science where pupils acquire many useful skills for the planning, carrying out and recording of experiments. For instance, Year 7 pupils are involved in designing experiments such as the one to discover whether the best insulating materials, from a selection that they have been given, are natural or man made. They

are able to pursue this practically and to show that they can handle apparatus, including thermometers and timers, with reasonable accuracy. Year 8 undertakes some more complex tasks, like the class whose members were competing to design and build the most effective solar cooker for use in the third world. Here pupils showed appreciation of the need for controlling variables to ensure a fair test, that repetition was necessary for accuracy and that evaluation was essential, together with considerable enthusiasm and ingenuity. As the key stage progresses, greater volumes of written work are produced and topics are covered in more detail, resulting in increasing skill levels and a greater range of knowledge. Year 9 pupils can demonstrate a very sound knowledge of the origins and properties of the three rock types and how they are interrelated in the rock cycle by processes such as weathering, sedimentation, heat and pressure.

104. Achievement in Key Stage 4 is satisfactory, overall, and good for those engaged in the separate sciences. Teaching and written work show a steady expansion of breadth, which, together with a further deepening strengthens their scientific skill levels and promotes a more profound understanding. This is exemplified by Year 10 pupils whose studies of pressure in liquids and gases are extensive and require them to utilise concepts, such as pressure equals force divided by the area over which it is applied to explain a wide range of phenomena, many of which are demonstrated to them. Those undertaking the three sciences separately are taken even further. By the end of the key stage, they can demonstrate sound understanding of such subjects as the covalent mechanism of the addition reactions of the alkenes and the application of the principle of the conservation of energy when predicting the result of collisions.
105. In both key stages, pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress, which often becomes good when they can be supported. The higher attaining pupils are presented with more difficult work due to the setting system, but are sometimes not challenged within their sets to go further. Whilst achievement in the use of information technology is developing well it is, at present, limited by the lack of up to date equipment in the department.
106. Most pupils clearly enjoy and take a pride in their work, especially the practical. They generally behave well and work hard, so long as there is plenty for them to do. They usually work well in groups with all members keen to contribute to the common aim. Such was the case with a group who had constructed a large chicken wire container for their solar cooker and were proposing to coat it with papier-mâché at home. Apparatus is handled with respect and increasing precision. They are keen to answer questions, but, with some significant exceptions in certain groups, pose few of their own.
107. The quality of teaching is good in Key Stage 3. Very nearly all the lessons observed were satisfactory or better. Over half were good or very good, with 18 per cent in the latter category. Periods are well planned with crisp objectives that are made plain to the pupils. Classes are well managed and disciplined; they usually show a variety of teaching strategies and a good balance between theory and practical. Most lessons start with a check on what was learned last time, they involve the pupils and, by skilful questioning, draw out their knowledge, amplify it and synthesise it into useful extensions of their learning. When practical work is presented, pupils are concerned with designing suitable experiments so that when they set out they are clear not only about what they are doing and how, but, more importantly, why. Many of these good features are exemplified by a Year 9 lesson concerning the Earth and space, it included teacher presentations, questioning, videos, demonstrations, written answers, pupil discussions and role play all woven into a rich and interesting tapestry. In Key Stage 4, where lessons are less successful, pupils' understanding is not rigorously checked and, consequently, they set out upon tasks following a recipe which may produce the right answer, but benefits them little. Pupils are questioned, but not involved in generating ideas. Here, too, teachers show an over reliance on textbooks, worksheets and copying. Almost all work is marked and teachers often provide comments to improve the work next time. Such helpful comments could be distributed more consistently. Homework is usually set and provides a useful extension to pupils' learning.
108. The management of the department is very good and effective. The subject leader is enthusiastic and efficient: the members of his team work well together to develop courses and to raise standards. There are very good and clear systems of assessment; these are well used to benefit the individual and to modify curriculum delivery. The courses fulfil all the requirements of the

National Curriculum and GCSE, they are taught within a set system to allow access to high levels and grades. The curriculum is good, but it is not at present enhanced by either a programme of visits or the use of field courses and fieldwork. Science is supported by a competent technician, who works very hard to deploy and to maintain the resources, but she is hard pressed and has no time to develop apparatus or to carry out big maintenance tasks. The resources are adequate and are supplemented by a good variety of books in the school library. The only weak resource area is in information technology where sufficient modern equipment is in such short supply that it is impacting on standards. The laboratories are adequate, although some are too small to accommodate the size of certain classes.

109. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. Attainment at Key Stage 3 remains above the national averages, but the school is now producing more level sixes and sevens. At GCSE, attainment for double science is below the national average, but there is little difference between the performance of girls and boys. In the single sciences, attainment in chemistry and physics is now well above the national averages and biology is above the national average. The reduction in technician levels has been unfavourable; problems with classes too large for laboratories and the need for laboratory refurbishment remain. There are now more textbooks, which are well used. Marking has improved and moderation is good. There are now very good systems of assessment and they are employed well to benefit pupils.

ART

110. At the end of Key Stage 3, most pupils are working at above the level expected nationally of pupils aged 14 years. Across the department there is no significant difference in the attainment of girls and boys. Results in GCSE examinations at the end of Key Stage 4 have maintained a trend of being consistently much better than the national average especially for A* to C grades. In the year 2000, as in past years, the school improved the percentage of pupils getting A* to C grades. 79 per cent of pupils attained these grades A* to C, compared with 74 per cent in 1999, 69 per cent in 1998 and 68 per cent in 1997. In the year 2000, out of the 42 pupils entered for the GCSE examination, over 40 per cent of the pupils entered achieved A* to C grades with approximately 12 per cent achieving A* to A grades. Evidence from scrutiny of work in progress in Year 11 indicates that the department is on line to further improve the level of attainment in the year 2001, when it has a target for 100 per cent of the pupils entered to achieve A* to C grades.
111. In the recently introduced GNVQ intermediate examination, pupils are working towards achieving a well above average pass rate. Since the last inspection, standards in art at the end of Key Stage 3 have improved and high standards have been maintained at the end of Key Stage 4.
112. In work seen during the inspection, the standards achieved by pupils at the end of Key Stage 3 and 4 are very good and are above the level expected of pupils of the same age nationally. Pupils of all abilities are making very good progress, developing very good drawing and painting skills and very well apply designs in their clay work. High standards are demonstrated in Year 7, where pupils develop designs, which they evaluate before applying them to their making of clay tiles. They clearly understand the process of moulding clay, how to use slip to build up their clay designs and how it is fixed. Pupils in Year 8 display similar high standards, applying their very good drawing and painting skills. This is well illustrated in their applied analysis of work based on studies of Hauslert Wasser; outcomes are imaginative and demonstrate a good understanding and control of the essential elements of line, tone, texture, rhythm and shape. Colour is well used to express their emotions and they give good levels of concern to the composition and balance of their pictures. Pupils in Year 9, when completing a poster project influenced by the work of Van Gogh, very successfully use their chosen media to compose posters of a high standard. They well judge previous visual information, analysing their style and that of the artist very successfully. Pupils at Year 10, following a GNVQ course influenced by the work of artists such as Lichtenstein and Kandinsky, show above average levels of attainment in their designs for a party invitation. In making a good analysis of the work of the artist and their own input, they produce a good range of designs in two and three dimensions. Pupils in Year 11, on a range of tasks preparing themselves for their GCSE examination, show a very good understanding of the use of shape related to life forms, with a very good applied emphasis on design and composition. They explore their ideas critically, responding very well to new possibilities and meanings. Samples of work show a good

range of two and three-dimensional work and pupils' drawing skills are now at least good and have improved since the last inspection. Pupils with special educational needs are achieving standards in line with their peers and above those expected nationally. When the need arises, they are very well supported in lessons where a policy of total inclusion is very effectively delivered. The highest attaining pupils also achieve very high standards. Evidence of these high standards are illustrated where a Downs Syndrome pupil attained a pass grade at GCSE and where high attaining pupils attain A* grades at GCSE.

113. The attitudes and behaviour of pupils throughout the school are consistently very good. At times they are excellent as was illustrated in a Year 8 lesson where pupils, including a hearing-impaired pupil, listened very carefully to how they could improve their technique to develop shape, composition and rhythm of life to their work, associated with their chosen media. Through the excellent continuous evaluation of their work by the teacher, they responded in an excellent manner to self-evaluate and level their own work and each other's work, awarding and agreeing on grades with the teacher. The hearing-impaired pupil receiving excellent levels of support from the support assistant, joined in with confidence to grade his work with the teacher's and fellow pupils' involvement. Across all years, pupils always sustain high levels of interest, motivation and enthusiasm for their work, working always with high levels of understanding at a very good rate. Since the last inspection, the behaviour and interest pupils show in their work have improved.
114. Teaching is consistently very good and is sometimes excellent. In all the ten lessons seen, during the period of inspection, it never fell below very good. The two teachers in the department very effectively manage the subject. They use similar, effective teaching styles and promote, very successfully, high standards of creativity, imagination, craft skills and an awareness and understanding of art and artists covering a wide range of different cultures and backgrounds.
115. Expectations are very high. Lesson planning is very clear and purposeful and lessons progressively develop the pupils' growing skills and standards. All lessons are very well focused and are notable for the high quality of teachers' demonstration of skills across the classes and the support that individual pupils receive. The emphasis on the progressive development of work and the use of sketches to promote design and composition, together with the experimentation with new techniques and ideas, have a positive impact on the development of high standards of individual imaginative work. Assessment and targeting of individual needs are evident through the effective support and evaluation each pupil receives as they progress. Regular homework tasks are very well incorporated into pupils' work and are thoroughly evaluated with an appropriate insistence that work is completed on time, as it is an integral part of the tasks pupils are completing. Within its present limited resources, the department is using computers well.
116. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural dimensions of learning in art are planned for very well through the study of a very wide range of artists representing various cultures. Displays have improved since the last inspection. They show very good evidence of studies of African, Aboriginal and Thai art, with pupils' work very well interpreting the styles used. A Year 9 ceramics lesson illustrated the pupils' very good awareness of African art in its making and design elements. Pupils were very successfully using clay to make coiled and moulded models and pots according to their developed designs. The very good attention to cross-curricular themes is illustrated where pupils have written poems about their art work and successfully use measurement and estimation in their designs.
117. The school provides for all pupils a very good range of opportunities of expressing art in the community, through a wide range of visits to art galleries, visits for first-hand observations and working with artists in residence. The popular art club has a very good open access policy. At all stages pupils use an appropriate art vocabulary and are beginning to express their opinions and judgement very well, showing a good level of confidence when talking about the work of artists and their own work.
118. The school has overcome the accommodation difficulties seen at the last inspection. The department spends its money prudently and offers very good value. Staff are generous with their time to ensure that planning, preparation and care for pupils is effective. The art department offers its pupils an exciting and most valuable range of opportunities. It is a strength of the school.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

119. Standards of attainment in design and technology are well above average in external examinations. There has been an upward trend in examination results since the last inspection. Both boys' and girls' results are above average by the end of Key Stage 3. Standards in lessons seen, during the inspection week, in both the upper school and the lower school have also been above average. The teachers are well informed about the examination and test requirements and manage the lessons well so that all pupils have a good opportunity to learn.
120. By the time they reach the end of Year 9 pupils are able to design and make a range of good quality products. When designing, pupils modify recipes and they produce good annotated diagrams and accurately describe plans and time deadlines. When making, the pupils follow the example set by their teachers and pay good attention to accuracy and precision; for example by sewing accurately in straight lines. When finishing freshly sawn Perspex they use file, wet abrasive paper and then Brasso exactly as they were shown. Pupils' competence with power tools, such as drilling machines and cookers is also above average and they work safely. Together, these skills result in a range of good quality products, from macaroni cheese and apple flapjack to air powered boats, key fobs and maze games with electronic timers. However, the pupils are not quite so confident when asked to make comments about the quality of their research and to explain why they sometimes had to change their original plans.
121. Attainment in KS4 is also above average. Pupils have many good ideas that they then thoughtfully develop into a series of practical steps that result in good quality products. They suggest fourteen ways of modifying the recipe for making bread. Their research into aspects such as the Chinese decorative art, when making and designing wall hangings is also good. The pupils have well above average skills with both hand tools and power tools; for example, they take care when using a scroll saw and use bevel chisels independently, accurately and without undue force. These older pupils have good awareness of the need for high quality products to give consumer satisfaction. Ideas from subjects such as science enable girls to explain adequately the function of ingredients such as carbohydrates. These older pupils talk very well but they lack confidence when challenged with questions about more difficult aspects of design, for example key decision points in working schedules. Boys of above average ability are not as good as they should be in applying theoretical ideas and justifying decisions.
122. The quality of the teaching is mostly good, never unsatisfactory and often very good. Teachers demonstrate a sound understanding of their subject. Teachers give good demonstrations so that pupils can independently make good products such as electronic circuit boards and fabric bags. Teaching methods are effective and the careful structuring of learning activities enables all pupils to address the tasks set, with many developing original and creative ideas. Most pupils work at a good pace and show interest and independence. Pupils write and talk about their work and many show drawing and presentation skills of a high quality. Resources are well managed and time is used to good effect. Pupils with special educational needs make progress in line with their peers and often perform above expectation. The management of pupils is good and they communicate their high expectations clearly. Even the youngest pupils strive hard for long periods of time and know they must meet clear criteria for quality. The pupils are prepared for thoughtful activity by good questioning, discussion and direct teaching. As a consequence they are used to making choices about how to enhance the appearance of a key fob or to vary the taste and appearance of a shepherd's pie.
123. The design and technology curriculum provides good access to the National Curriculum. Schemes of work are well planned and detailed, but lack sufficient reference to the use of information technology, particularly with reference to control technology and numeracy. Pupils are already using aspects of information technology in their work, but progression in their information technology experience is insufficiently systematic. Assessment of work is satisfactory in the main, but there is insufficient comment on pupils' work to show what they have achieved and what they must do to progress further. More able pupils do not receive the guidance and encouragement which will enable them to attain consistently at the highest levels.

124. In the vast majority of lessons, the behaviour of the pupils is good and sometimes very good, but there are small groups of pupils, for example in Year 9, whose behaviour reduces the impact of the teaching somewhat. In some lessons, the objectives need to be stated simply, but more precisely, so that lessons end on a high note with pupils knowing that they have achieved well.
125. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. Attainment is higher. The pupils work precisely and make good quality products. The tasks set are interesting and they are becoming more challenging, for example, with the introduction of electronics in Year 7. DT projects are somewhat enhanced with ICT, but much more remains to be done. Pupils with special needs do better now and some progress has been made in developing approaches to benefit the highest attainers. The subject is highly regarded by the pupils and it has a high profile in the school, because there is very good leadership and management and good team work. Links with parents and the community are good and developing.

GEOGRAPHY

126. Pupils' overall levels of attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 in 2000 are above the national average on the basis of teacher assessment. Inspection evidence points to a limited but consistent improvement in standards since the previous inspection. There is little difference between levels achieved by boys and girls. During the inspection, the majority of pupils worked above, and in a significant number of cases well above, national average. Higher attaining pupils achieved standards below that of their peers nationally.
127. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 in GCSE examinations in 1999 is well above national expectation for the proportion achieving A* - C grades and A* - G grades. There is no significant difference in the attainment of boys and girls. Results are above those of similar schools and pupils perform better in GCSE geography in comparison to their achievements across the curriculum. Standards have been maintained since the last inspection with marginal improvement in the proportion achieving A* and A grades.
128. Pupils are making better progress than expected, overall, across Key Stage 3. By Year 9, the majority of pupils have good knowledge and understanding of geographical processes and analyse and interpret information well. They make good use of these skills in written work and in class discussion. This was illustrated well in a class who could account for high birth rates and over population in India and China and deduce the socio-economic factors leading to policy making decisions. Pupils select and collect information from resource material accurately and efficiently.
129. In Key Stage 4, the majority of pupils, including those with SEN, make good progress. By Year 11, they have a good understanding of the methods of geographical enquiry, of collecting and analysing information and of how to reach valid conclusions. They demonstrate competent graphicacy and numerical skills, using a wide range of techniques and graphs to analyse statistics. Pupils have a very good understanding of the relationship between people and the environment in which they live. They make sound connections between theory and the everyday world. A Year 10 group demonstrated sophisticated understanding of the concept of renewable and non-renewable energy in determining the appropriate sources for power station supply. Pupils understand geographical terms and use them fluently in both written and oral work.
130. Higher ability pupils in some classes underachieve due to the low level of tasks set. This is particularly common in Key Stage 3. The progress of such pupils is hindered further by insufficient opportunity for developing key skills, communication, oracy and problem solving, in particular. Overall, good progress is made within GCSE groups where pupils consolidate knowledge, prepare effective coursework and develop good study skills.
131. Pupils have a positive attitude to learning in geography. They are attentive, self-disciplined and work hard. They behave responsibly, arrive promptly to lessons, are well organised and settle to work quickly. Pupils' good manners and courtesy towards teachers are impressive. Pupils respond readily and sharply to teachers' instruction and their very good behaviour, attitudes and relationships are strengths of the department and have a profound effect on progress.

132. The quality of teaching across both key stages is satisfactory with a significant proportion of good lessons seen. The quality of teaching in Key Stage 3 is good in five sevenths of lessons seen and satisfactory in the remainder. The quality of teaching in Key Stage 4 is satisfactory in four sevenths and, with the exception of one unsatisfactory lesson, good in the remainder. Teachers have a wide knowledge of their subject enabling them to present well structured and clear explanations. They ask appropriate and relevant questions to ensure that all pupils gain a clear understanding of the topic, but the questioning of more able pupils is insufficiently rigorous to extend their analysis and response. In discussions, teachers make good use of geographical terms, presenting good role models for their pupils. Effective support and guidance given to all pupils is particularly good in Key Stage 4, supporting the thorough preparation of coursework and development of examination skills.
133. Successful teaching is characterised by skilful management of pupils through good discipline and brisk pace of work, supported by the creative use of resources and suitable variation of task for all but higher attainers. The best lessons are typified by high levels of concentration and interest, full use of available time leading to purposeful learning. In less successful lessons, pupils are rarely inspired to demonstrate enthusiasm. Progress is hindered by over narrow control by the teacher that inhibits pupil interest and opportunity to work creatively. There is insufficient range and depth of task, unclear aims and inadequate planning of lessons. Tasks are not sequenced to match the learning requirements of pupils with differing levels of understanding and potential.
134. Satisfactory progress has been made since the last inspection. The head of department continues to set high standards through effective preparation, guidance and support for GCSE examination candidates. The department has set clear aims and objectives and has incorporated literacy, numeracy and ICT within schemes of work, lesson plans and future projects. These programmes are not, however, applied consistently across the department and all teaching groups. The team of geographers pay insufficient attention to sharing good practice and collaborative planning. The head of department has not addressed the needs of more able pupils within Key Stages 3 and 4. It now remains for the department to: develop systems of assessment and academic monitoring which are then used to inform curriculum planning; ensure greater consistency in the quality and variety of teaching and learning, and develop an enriched curriculum for all pupils with a particular focus on the needs of the more able.

HISTORY

135. By the end of Key Stage 3, pupils' attainment, overall, is in line with that expected nationally, a similar standard to that reported at the time of the last inspection. Teachers assessed their pupils as being well above the national average in 1999 and, in 2000, as significantly above the 1999 average. However, the system for assessing pupils' work is weak and has resulted in an unrealistically high percentage being assessed as at or above average. The overall standard of work seen during the inspection was in line with that seen nationally. Higher attaining pupils reach standards which are just above average.
136. Pupils in Key Stage 3 see the reasons for actions taken by people in the past, as, for example, in a lesson on the making of the Domesday Book. Pupils use a variety of sources adequately to describe and explain the past. In a lesson on factory conditions, for example, pupils in Year 9 could use contemporary drawings to make valid deductions about the treatment of children in factories. Many, however, tended to make only superficial deductions and some were unsure as to whether the pictures were primary or secondary sources. They had a satisfactory understanding of chronology and could place events accurately on a timeline. They are developing a satisfactory understanding of historical cause and consequence.
137. Pupils taking the GCSE course in Key Stage 4 reach an overall standard that is broadly in line with the national average, a similar standard to that reported at the time of the last inspection. The performance of boys has improved on that reported at the last inspection. The overall percentage achieving grades A*-C in 1999 was below the national average. Pupils performed better, however, in their history examinations than in the other subjects they took and boys' performance was above the boys' national average. The overall results in 2000 were worse than those of 1999 and well below the 1999 national average. This decline is almost certainly, in part, the result of the

department's decision to take a third examination paper rather than the coursework option, which proved to have an adverse effect on pupils' attainment in the examination. The coursework option has been re-instated for the pupils taking the examination in 2001.

138. The overall standard of work seen by the end of Key Stage 4 was in line with that expected nationally. Pupils successfully give valid reasons for events, but few have sufficient depth of understanding to make complex links between causes. Most use sources adequately for information and make simple deductions, but most do not effectively explain whether a source is reliable and why, or whether it is useful to a historian. In a lesson on the sinking of the Lusitania, for example, most pupils were unable to explain why different sources gave different evidence about the sinking.
139. The quality of teaching is satisfactory, overall, but with a high proportion of good and very good lessons. This is similar to the standard seen at the last inspection. The pace of lessons, which was criticised at the last inspection, is now usually good. Teachers have secure knowledge of their subject and communicate it clearly and with enthusiasm. As a result, the majority of pupils acquire good knowledge and understanding about the past. In most lessons teachers have appropriately high expectations of pupils and set suitable work. In a minority of lessons, at Key Stage 3, however, the work is not sufficiently demanding for the highest attainers. Work set for one higher-attaining group in Year 9 as follow-up to a video about Richard Arkwright did not require much depth of thought or understanding. They do not have sufficient opportunities to work at the analysis and evaluation of historical sources, or to consider different views about the past. The work set for lower attaining pupils is appropriately demanding. Short tasks followed by a brief check on what pupils have completed keep many pupils with short concentration spans focused on their work. In some lessons, the last five minutes are used effectively to check what pupils have learned.
140. Teachers manage their pupils well and ensure that there is a good working atmosphere in which all pupils who wish to learn may do so. The successful management of some pupils with behavioural problems in Key Stage 3 was especially noteworthy and resulted in their making good progress in lessons. In a lesson about the Gunpowder Plot, a short role play exercise was very effective in maintaining pupils' interest and attention. Teachers use audio-visual resources well to extend and deepen pupils' knowledge and understanding, as for example in a Year 11 lesson on reactions to the Treaty of Versailles in 1919 and in a Year 8 lesson on the Gunpowder Plot. In both lessons, the teacher paused the video frequently to check that pupils had understood what they had seen.
141. Most pupils respond well to the enthusiasm of their teachers, show interest in their work, and many want to know more about the work they are doing. Higher attaining pupils taking GCSE sometimes take up opportunities provided in lessons for extension work. As a result, most pupils make satisfactory progress in acquiring new knowledge and understanding. A minority of pupils in some lessons at both key stages are less enthusiastic, occasionally attempt to prevent others from working and do not learn much themselves. The majority try hard, even with work they find difficult.
142. The subject meets the statutory requirements at Key Stage 3. The leadership and management of the department are satisfactory. There is a clear commitment to improving the attainment in public examinations. There are, however, some weakness in the management. The development planning lacks clear targets, priorities and costing and there is no formal monitoring of the teaching in the department. The scheme of assessment for Key Stage 3 is unsatisfactory and has resulted in unrealistically high grades being awarded at the end of Key Stage 3 for the past two years. The contribution made by the department to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. A recent change of centrally-provided ICT hardware has meant that much of the department's software is no longer useable and hence little use is made of ICT. Insufficient use is made of the local environment.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

143. Whilst standards are above average in some aspects of information technology for example word processing, attainment across the whole range of subjects is below average. GCSE examination

results in Information Studies were above average last year because pupils' word processing skills were good. However, only about a quarter of the year group took these exams.

144. Standards of attainment in ICT as a discrete subject are above average by the end of Year 9 and are average by the end of Year 11. In most of the other lessons across the curriculum and both key stages, pupils were unable to demonstrate the expected levels of attainment. The equipment in the computer rooms has only recently become reliable and the staff are fully stretched.
145. By the end of Year 9, pupils are able to use desktop publishing skills to produce booklets on convenience or 'junk foods', use databases and spreadsheets. Good skills were apparent when they entered not only numbers but also formulae for problem solving later in the week.
146. By the end of Year 11, pupils also use computers effectively to meet the GCSE course work requirements in information studies and business studies. A Year 11 class, for example, prepared an effective and accurate report on business enterprise. They also give good presentations through the use of ICT. Attainment is average in aspects of curriculum work in design and technology and modern foreign languages. Pupils demonstrate effective use of word processing. However, many departments have inadequate access to computers and so cannot offer sustained programmes of work using ICT. Consequently, pupils' progress is slower than it should be.
147. There has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection. There have been significant improvements in standards for some pupils with previously lower levels of attainment and also some improvement for high ability pupils who gain access to the computer rooms. More work has been done with computers in classrooms, but there has been little sustained progress and equipment which once worked well, for example in science, is no longer being used. Pupils now respond well to the use of computers and the pupils' enthusiasm for work is clear, not only from the crowded computer rooms at lunch times but also from the smiles on the faces of those who succeed. There is an obvious enthusiasm for computers amongst some staff.
148. Teaching by specialist staff in Information technology and business studies in all years is good. Staff who have a good knowledge of information technology and the Examination Board's requirements are able to motivate their pupils to effectively enhance their work, for example with photographs from the digital camera and to use the computer when making presentations. When the teaching was very good pupils had been well prepared and were, therefore, able to get started quickly, to work more independently and use the technology to solve their own problems. For example, pupils were able to improve their designing skills effectively by changing the quantities of ingredients in convenience foods and to immediately see the effects of these changes on the cost of the product. In another lesson pupils were producing very good booklets for different types of customers to use at the Maritime Museum. The booklets for teenagers were very appropriately decorated with hearts and those for infants had large print and nursery type pictures.
149. The pupils' response to their teachers was in most cases good and often very good. In many lessons the pupils showed obvious delight at what the computers could do and their pride was apparent, in Year 11, when they described how they used the digital camera and how they produced attractive booklets. Only one example of a small group behaving badly was seen during the inspection in Year 11.
150. Overall, the provision for ICT is unsatisfactory for the following reasons. There is no sensing and control technology in the curriculum. In some subjects, for example RE and history, there is unsatisfactory provision. There are too few serviceable computers. The specialist rooms are fully booked and overcrowded. There are too few trained support staff. The teachers are gaining confidence, but the full impact of their training has yet to be felt. Priorities for development of ICT are not well understood nor matched to available funding.
151. However, the improving examination results, the good work being done by the ICT team and the fact that Year 8 won a digital camera on a national television quiz programme indicate the potential within the school to increase further the positive effect which ICT is already having on the progress of a large number of pupils.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

152. At the end of Key Stage 3 in 1999, teachers' assessments of pupils' attainment in modern languages were above the national average, showing an improvement overall over 1998. There was a significant decline in the performance of boys in 2000, but a rise in the performance of girls brought pupils' overall level of attainment in line with the national average. Over the last three years, girls have achieved higher standards than boys, a trend which is reflected nationally. The proportion of pupils achieving at the higher levels is above the national average in 2000 for both boys and girls, but girls are still performing better. Higher-attaining pupils and a good proportion of middle-attaining pupils in Years 8 and 9 are already achieving above average standards in the four skills of speaking, listening, reading and writing.
153. At the end of Key Stage 4, the significant improvement in performance of boys in French at GCSE over the last 3 years has brought overall standards above national averages in the proportion of grades A*-C. The performance of girls has been consistently above national standards, but with a slight dip in 2000. These standards have been achieved with a very low percentage of A* grades. This represents an improvement in the performance of middle attaining pupils since the last inspection. Standards in German were below national averages in 1998 owing to a well-below-average performance by boys. In 1999 a significantly higher performance by both girls and boys brought results above the national average. Standards declined in 2000 with an overall performance well below the national average, though some of these results have been contested and are subject to re-marking. Girls are still out-performing boys. In the same period, achievements in A*-G grades have been 100 per cent in both languages.
154. The Key Stage 4 Certificate of Achievement course in French is giving opportunity to the lowest attainers and to pupils with special needs to achieve the highest standards possible in line with their capabilities, with a wide variety of simple tasks with positive outcomes in all skills. Higher-attaining pupils, especially those identified as the most able, are producing work, across all four skills, which reflects high standards of grammatical accuracy and fluency and confidence in their knowledge. Other GCSE work suggests that pupils will achieve at a level commensurate with their capabilities and a small proportion of middle-attaining pupils are already showing that they may prosper in the higher tier of the examination.
155. Pupils' behaviour is usually good and their attitude to the languages positive. They are generally eager to contribute to classroom dialogue, concentrate well during listening exercises and maintain a steady pace during reading and writing activities. They collaborate well in pair- and group-work and show a determination to achieve the best results in more challenging higher-level work. Many pupils show initiative in independent use of dictionaries and glossaries to check the accuracy of their finished products. In the Year 11 Certificate of Achievement French group, where over two-thirds of the pupils are registered as having special educational needs, motivation to succeed is high. Much of the coursework for each module is produced through ICT, and pupils take a great pride in the quality of their finished product and the maintenance of their folders. Relationships between pupils are good, they listen carefully to what others contribute to the lesson and, for the most part, acknowledge the discipline of raising their hand before speaking. However, a small minority of pupils, some with known behaviour problems, attempt to undermine the learning and progress of others, but are quickly recalled to task. The rapport between pupils and teachers is good; pupils react positively to the use of the foreign language in class, but do not use it between themselves outside set tasks.
156. The quality of teaching is good. All teaching is satisfactory or better, 73 per cent good, with 18 per cent very good and ranging equally over both key stages. Teachers conduct the lesson in the foreign language for the most part, but the proportion of French, German or Spanish to English is sensibly adjusted to the needs and level of understanding of the group. All the teachers have a secure knowledge of their subject, clear delivery and a high standard of fluency. Teaching has its strongest impact when teachers know the needs of their pupils well, set an appropriate pace at the start of the lesson and have high expectations of their performance and behaviour. The lessons are well planned and include a variety of activities, with realistic deadlines for their completion, covering the different skills and effectively using varied media, especially overhead projection. Appropriate homework is set for extension or consolidation. The marking of work is consistent

and frequent and reflects National Curriculum attainment levels or GCSE grading in the formal assessment tests at the end of each module of work. Feedback in these tests and in the half-termly review is constructive. Where teaching is weaker, a change of activities or a continuation longer than necessary allows concentration to wander. Although teachers recall pupils to task quickly and re-establish the progression of the lesson, the impact is lost.

157. In good lessons, the quality of pupils' learning is enhanced by recall of previous knowledge at a simple level. Pupils then extend and consolidate that knowledge through increasingly challenging activities. A Year 9 set 1 French group, containing higher- and middle-attaining pupils, tackled a challenging text exercise, which emphasised the need to provide full sentences as answers, in order to gain credit at a higher level. While challenging the higher-attaining pupils, this stretched the capabilities and understanding of the middle attainers. In a Year 11 GCSE German set, containing a wide range of higher- and middle-attaining pupils, the teacher recalled a previously drawn grammatical table dealing with the accusative case to apply and extend that knowledge to the context of asking for services (dry-cleaning, mending, lost property). Pupils were able to use the construction accurately and apply it to the equivalent of the possessive adjective "my".
158. The curriculum meets the statutory National Curriculum requirements. All pupils study French in Year 7 in two parallel bands, one of which contains a small group catering for those of low attainment and special educational needs. One period of French per week is given over to literacy for all except those pupils in "sets 1". In Years 8 and 9, sets are formed, based on level of attainment and German is introduced as a second language for one lesson per week. This is insufficient to provide an adequate foundation for GCSE courses in Key Stage 4. At Key Stage 4 modern languages are offered in two option blocks, but, although there is the opportunity to study two languages to GCSE, numbers are small. A new certificate of achievement course in Spanish is now available as an alternative to French. Thirteen Year 10 pupils have been disapplied from modern languages to follow the school's "alternative" courses. There is effective liaison with feeder primary schools and further education establishments to enhance continuity: the department offers "taster" courses in French to groups of Year 6 pupils and further education lecturers come into school after GCSE examinations in Year 11 to offer "taster" courses for A level. The literacy course in English has had a beneficial effect on the performance of Year 7 pupils in French, as they are able to manipulate language more easily and have more natural powers of expression. There are extra lessons provided for pupils at Key Stage 4 and those identified as the highest attainers, contact with a local native speaker of German, educational visits both to France and Germany and to institutions and functions in the surrounding area.
159. The department is very well organised and managed by a relatively new head of department, who has provided firm leadership and clear direction and it works very closely as a team. The development plan follows that of the school in its priorities. A very detailed scheme of work links course materials to National Curriculum attainment targets and levels at both key stages. There is careful provision of differentiated materials for the highest and lowest attainers, and the department has its own individual education plans for pupils with special educational needs and those identified as gifted and talented. Pupils' attainments are well documented, but as yet the pupils themselves are not always fully aware of their progress. The self-assessment packages provided with many of the current courses would enable them to be more up to date with their progress, and would provide a greater sense of responsibility for and awareness of their own learning. All the teachers in the department are language specialists and are efficiently and equitably deployed. The provision of text-books is adequate, each teacher having sets of the relevant course books and dictionaries, none of which is issued individually to pupils. Classrooms are well equipped with overhead transmission and audio facilities, ensuring effective delivery of the curriculum, and are enhanced with displays of pupils' work and basic working vocabulary. The department has integrated ICT tasks into each year of Key Stage 3 to support delivery of the course and has established an e-mail link with a school in France. Fuller extension and integration of ICT is dependent on co-ordinated access to centralised facilities and networking of material. The department has made very good progress in a short time and has addressed many of the key issues since the last inspection.

MUSIC

160. Standards in music have improved since the last inspection. Teacher Assessments at the end of Key Stage 3 were above the national average, but observation, scrutiny of work and discussions with pupils suggest that attainment is in line with national expectations.
161. Although music has small numbers in Key Stage 4, 3 candidates taking GCSE in 1998 passed with A* - C grades well above the national average. Likewise in 1999 a group of 6 candidates achieved A* - C grades and A* - G grades that were better than national averages. Similar numbers of boys and girls performed equally well. Results in the 2000 examination, however, dipped, with one candidate gaining a grade A and the other a grade E pass.
162. Since the last report, standards at the end of Key Stage 3 have improved, with more pupils motivated to do well in music. By the end of Year 9, pupils improve their knowledge of rhythm and beat by successfully experimenting on different combinations of classroom instruments. Pupils stand with correct posture, practice breathing exercises to develop vocal control prior to singing rounds in parts. One class of higher attaining Year 9 pupils demonstrated high standards of composition in their development of theme and variation form. By the end of Key Stage 4, most pupils following the GCSE course attain standards that are at the level expected of pupils of this age in all components of the course, particularly in performing. They also compose successfully, applying a range of understanding and knowledge of basic structures and harmony. They listen sympathetically and interpret accurately, when appraising music.
163. The quality of teaching and learning has improved since the last inspection. At Key Stage 3, the teaching, overall, is satisfactory, with good progress taking place in those lessons where there is variety of task, for example, in a well-planned lesson which required both melody writing and practical work on keyboard and computer from a class of Year 9 pupils. Where the teaching style is didactic and the pace slow, pupils lack motivation and interest, as in a Year 8 lesson devoted to written work on the development of jazz. In Key Stage 4, the teaching is good with a high level of challenge and clear targets set with searching questions to remind pupils of past work. Pupils in both key stages are beginning to use musical language effectively.
164. The teacher has good subject knowledge and this is being used to inspire and motivate pupils. Reinforcement takes place during lessons, but little time is left at the end for a summary and the setting of homework. Some negative behaviour occurs when pupils do not fully understand the tasks set. In Key Stage 4, pupils are encouraged to become independent learners and they are effectively prepared for examinations. Music teaching is aimed at inclusiveness with many higher and lower attaining pupils and those pupils with special educational needs playing a full part in the lessons.
165. Attitudes to music are generally positive throughout both key stages and cooperation and good behaviour are evident in most lessons. When work is not adequately explained and understood negative behaviour sometimes occurs. Pupils have good spoken and listening skills and support their peers when performing. They raise their hands when answering questions. Much practical work is done with pride and pleasure.
166. The music department has improved since the last inspection due to refocusing the curriculum on the requirements of national regulations and schemes of work. Assessment and marking, although weak, are being focused more on the needs of the curriculum to raise attainment still further. Homework is set, but it is not always related to work done in the classroom. Singing is being competently developed in some Year 8 classes and with a few Year 9 pupils. This now needs to be extended further throughout both key stages with suitably chosen music that reflects the needs and interests of today's pupils.
167. A number of pupils learn instruments privately and in school. They come together for concerts and shows. Extra-curricular musical activities include the folk group, wind band, samba band and choir. Some of these groups perform in school assemblies which helps to enhance the standing of music within the school. Musician of the year and the Christmas concert are well-supported by parents and pupils alike and are a standard part of the school calendar. The school has a number of accomplished instrumentalists and is very proud of a Year 11 pupil who was chosen to join the National Youth Brass Band.

168. Due to the lack of small practice rooms, already mentioned in the last report, no area exists for small group work other than in the communal corridor shared with the drama department.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

169. At the end of Key Stage 3, teachers' assessments in 2000 indicated that the proportion of 14-year-old girls working at or beyond age-related national expectations was in line with the national average. The proportion of 14 year-old-boys working at or beyond the age-related national expectations was just below the national average. This represents an improvement on the previous year when girls achieved significantly better than boys. In lessons, the majority of pupils are working at national age-related expectations and is on line to achieve appropriate levels at the end of the key stage. In hockey, for example, girls control and pass the ball securely and are developing their dodging skills. A few do not look up sufficiently well before passing, so the accuracy of their passing is not always as successful as it could be. In rugby union, boys' handling and passing skills are secure and they are developing well their knowledge and understanding of the importance of the ruck and the maul.
170. There are no teachers' assessments for 16-year-olds in terms of the proportions of pupils working at or beyond national age-related expectations at the end of Key Stage 4 in 2000 for the course that all pupils follow. In lessons, the majority of 16-year-olds is working at age-related national expectations and is on line to achieve appropriate levels at the end of the key stage. In water polo, for example, the pupils' back and front crawl strokes are appropriate to the game and they have developed well their control and passing skills. In rugby union, boys are expected to plan short coaching sessions for their peers and do so well. In hockey, pupils have a good range of individual skills and are developing well their tactical skills in small-sided games. Although pupils have made good progress in developing their all-round skills in volleyball, their lack of prior experience of the game means that the standards of their play are not yet as expected for their age. In basketball pupils' standards of shooting are not well developed.
171. Pupils have the opportunity to take the GCSE physical education course during Key Stage 4. Apart from 1998, in relation to A* - C grade passes, where the results were in line with the national average, the proportion of pupils achieving this has been above the national average since the last inspection. In 1999, where equal numbers of boys and girls took the examination, girls achieved better grades than the boys. In 2000, the overall proportion of pupils gaining A* - C grade passes improved further to reach 67 per cent. Comparisons between boys and girls are not statistically viable, because far fewer girls than boys took the course. A scrutiny of a sample of Year 11 pupils' theory folders together with observation of a theory lesson shows that pupils have a secure knowledge and understanding of human anatomy and sports physiology. They are, for example, successfully developing their knowledge and understanding of sports injuries and prevention.
172. Across all years, pupils have a secure understanding of the principles and procedures for warm-up prior to strenuous physical exercise. In many lessons, they lead their own warm-up with confidence and the quality of their exercises is often very good. Although no pupils identified as having special educational needs were observed with additional help, they are well supported, fully integrated and make good progress in all their practical lessons as well as GCSE theory lessons.
173. Overall, the quality of teaching is good and has a positive impact on standards of attainment and the progress pupils make in lessons. In a two-hour double Year 10 rugby union lesson, for example, boys were involved in planning, performing and evaluating the effectiveness of tactical passing routines. This was successfully deepening their knowledge and understanding of the game. No unsatisfactory quality teaching was observed and there are no significant differences between the key stages. In this respect, standards have been maintained since the last inspection.
174. The majority of pupils enjoy their lessons and remain on task throughout. Smiling faces and positive comments in a Year 9 girls' hockey lesson, for example, were indicative of positive attitudes towards the subject. The clarity of teachers' introductions, instructions and the breakdown and demonstration of skills, where appropriate, ensure that pupils are aware of what is

expected of them and what they need to do to make progress. This was evident in a Year 9 water polo lesson where pupils were consolidating their stroke techniques and passing skills. Throughout lessons, teachers circulate well and provide effective praise, encouragement and constructive criticism. In a Year 8 gymnastics lesson, for example, this ensured further that pupils understood what they had to do to improve their sequence building, as well as making them aware of their capabilities. Detailed planning and overall lesson structures, together with clear learning objectives are indicative of teachers' good knowledge of the games and activities being taught. Effective use of questions not only helps teachers establish what pupils already know and understand, but also encourages pupils to expand on their ideas as well as enhancing their speaking and listening skills. In all lessons, a wide variety of structured activities help to ensure that pupils stay on task and the expectation of teachers that all can achieve success enhances pupils' motivation.

175. Clearly established day-to-day procedures are indicative of teachers' good pupil management skills. The great majority of pupils show clear respect for the high expectations teachers have of their behaviour and the ability to work to their best. Teachers quickly challenge those few who drift off task. Pupils work well together as pairs, small groups or teams and show clear respect for the capabilities of one another. This is significant in helping to create a positive learning atmosphere in lessons in which all can, therefore, make progress. Pupils take responsibility for their own learning, for example, in leading their own warm-up or in planning coaching activities for their peers. In the GCSE physical education course, effective use is made of homework and good quality marking ensures that pupils are made aware of their achievements or of what they need to do to improve the quality of their work.
176. There are, however, some inconsistencies, which, if addressed, would improve the quality of teaching and learning even further. Peer evaluation and peer coaching opportunities are not always used effectively enough to develop pupils' knowledge and understanding. In a Year 9 girls' hockey lesson, for example, these opportunities would have been of benefit when developing their use of dodging techniques. Sometimes, at the end of lessons, there are not always sufficient opportunities for pupils to be involved in evaluating what they have achieved. The teachers suggest what they have done rather than asking for their perceptions as to what they have achieved. Although the few non-participants are given appropriate tasks, they are not always as fully involved as they should be, for example, as part of whole group introductions or skills breakdown and demonstrations. Often, there is a slow start to lessons and a lack of a sense of urgency, which means that valuable time is lost.
177. The curriculum is broad, balanced and meets the requirements of the new National Curriculum. A strength of provision is swimming, as a result of there being an on-site pool. However, as at the time of the last inspection, games at Key Stage 3 are only available to single sex groups. This is contrary to national practice. Therefore, when they come to choose options at Key Stage 4 in the course that all follow, not all have had the same prior experience in, for example, hockey. At Key Stage 4, the curriculum is enhanced by the opportunity for pupils to follow the GCSE course. A good range of extra-curricular activities further extends the learning experience of pupils. These include recreational activity as well as inter-school competitive fixtures. As a result of the dedication and enthusiasm of members of the department, individual pupils have gained representative honours at district level in cross-country and athletics.
178. Leadership and management of the department is effective and there has been satisfactory progress since the last inspection. Standards of attainment, for example, have improved in GCSE. However, there is, as yet, no formal monitoring and sharing of good teaching practice within the department and it is unclear to pupils as to which two in-depth activities are to be followed in the core course at Key Stage 4. Assessment procedures for the core course do not yet fully embrace the new level descriptors introduced in September. Consequently, pupils are not being made fully aware of what they need to do to achieve the new levels in their lessons.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

179. Since the last inspection, the school has entered nearly all its pupils for the GCSE (short course) in religious education at the end of Year 11. In 1997 results were very low in comparison with

other schools, but, each year, they have improved. In 2000 the proportion of pupils achieving A*-C grades matched the national average and is broadly similar to results achieved in other subjects. The adoption of the GCSE (short course) has transformed the achievements of these pupils and offers a firm foundation for further improvement.

180. By the age of 14, pupils are at the standard expected. They know the beliefs and practices of the religions they study. They have a good understanding of what Christians believe about God. They use specialist terms correctly, such as moksha, and they know the Trimurti, in Hinduism. They are good at reflecting on religious ideas and using them to explore their own experience of life. The standards achieved at Key Stage 3 are, generally, somewhat above expectations in oral work, but somewhat below in written work.
181. Pupils' attainment by the age of 16 is better than expected. They know the content and show the skills required by the short course. They recognise and respect the reasons people give for believing in God, or not, and they understand the difficulties of interpretation raised when people talk about miracles. From their study of marriage and family life, pupils know how people's behaviour has changed and how practices differ in other cultures, but they are less sure how these relate to religious attitudes or teachings. In the extra-curricular group which meets after school to follow the full GCSE course in religious studies, standards are high. These pupils are on the way to achieving results above the national average.
182. Teaching and learning are very good. Teachers' excellent knowledge and understanding of religion enable pupils to become competent and confident learners. Excellent management and motivation by teachers promote exemplary attitudes and behaviour by pupils. The planning of lessons is very good and the methods used challenge and inspire all pupils including those with special educational needs. Clear presentation leads to very good discussion, but sometimes the written work that follows is at a lower level and loses some of the insights expressed orally. This is a disadvantage to those pupils whose prior attainment shows that they can respond in writing, as well as orally, to the higher level of demand. At the end of units of work, pupils' progress is measured, but assessment has not become a systematic process, linked to statements of attainment and targets.
183. Leadership of the department is very good. There is a clear sense of direction and a strong commitment to the best possible teaching. The requirements of the Agreed Syllabus are now fully met and pupils not only learn about Christianity and the other religions specified but they also learn about themselves from their study of religion. The contribution to all aspects of pupils' personal development, spiritual, moral, social and cultural, is distinctive and powerful and an area of excellence within the school.
184. At the time of the last inspection, religious education lacked leadership and pupils' progress was unsatisfactory. Since then, there has been a transformation. Pupils now receive their statutory entitlement. Despite a quirk of the timetable which prevents continuity of teaching at Key Stage 4, nearly all pupils leave the school with a GCSE (short course) qualification. Provision of the full course, as an option, would be a recognition of this success and of the value in which religious education is held by pupils and parents.