

INSPECTION REPORT

THE COTSWOLD SCHOOL

Bourton on the Water

LEA area: Gloucestershire

Unique reference number: 115761

Headteacher: Mrs A Holland

Reporting inspector: Mr P Dahl
2218

Dates of inspection: 4 – 8 December 2000

Inspection number: 188554

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Foundation
Age range of pupils:	11 to 18
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Station Road Bourton-on-the-Water Cheltenham Gloucestershire
Postcode:	GL54 2BD
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body at the above address
Name of chair of governors:	Mavis Lady Dunrossil
Date of previous inspection:	26 February 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
P Dahl 2218	Registered inspector		What sort of school is it? The school's results and achievements How well are pupils and students taught? What should the school do to improve further?
J Fletcher 8941	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school work in partnership with parents? How well does the school care for its pupils?
H Silverstone 1258	Team inspector		How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils? How well is the school led and managed? The Sixth Form
K Hedger 45291	Team inspector	Mathematics	
A Malcolm 17327	Team inspector	English Pupils with English as an additional language	
F Phelps 19992	Team inspector	Science Equal opportunities	
H Bagshaw 14749	Team inspector	Information and communications technology	
S Cushing 11891	Team inspector	Art	
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Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
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REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	7
Information about the school	
How good the school is	
What the school does well	
What could be improved	
How the school has improved since its last inspection	
Standards	
Pupils' attitudes and values	
Teaching and learning	
Other aspects of the school	
How well the school is led and managed	
Parents' and carers' views of the school	
PART B: COMMENTARY	
HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?	12
The school's results and achievements	
Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development	
HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?	17
HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS OR STUDENTS?	21
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?	25
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS	27
HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?	28
THE SIXTH FORM	32
WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?	34
PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS	35
PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES	40

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Based in the tourist village of Bourton on the Water, the Cotswold School serves a sparsely populated rural area. The population comprises a broad variety of social and economic groups. Some families make their living in the traditional rural economy, some work away and others have retired to the local area. Eleven per cent of pupils in Years 7 - 11 (11 – 16 year-olds) come from families eligible for free school meals, which is broadly average in national terms. Fifteen pupils have statements of special educational needs. A very small number of children for whom English is an additional language attend the school. Over 80% of pupils come to school by bus from surrounding villages. A mixed comprehensive school, the school currently has 739 pupils on roll between the ages of 11 and 18 who represent a wide ability range with considerable variation between year groups. Eighty one per cent of pupils now in Year 7 entered the school with attainment in English, mathematics and science at or above the national expectation. Numbers have risen significantly over the last four years. Seventy per cent of 16 year-olds choose to continue their education into the Sixth Form, currently of 105 students.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a very good and extremely effective school with many outstanding features. The headteacher and senior management team provide clear vision and strong leadership. These have a major impact on improving standards of attainment for pupils of all abilities. Improvement since the last inspection is very impressive. The school is firmly rooted in, and responsive to, its community. Standards of attainment for all pupils at 14 in English, mathematics and science are well above the national average. GCSE results are very high in comparison with similar schools. A-level standards are high in national terms and the best in Gloucestershire comprehensive schools. Teaching and learning have improved and were good, very good or excellent in over 80% of lessons seen. Relationships between pupils and with adults are excellent. Pupils' values, attitudes and behaviour in lessons and around the school are outstanding. The school is providing very good value for money when its relatively low levels of funding are compared with the high standards of attainment at Key Stage 3, GCSE and A-level.

What the school does well

- Outstanding relationships and behaviour throughout the school contribute positively to learning and are characterised by mutual respect between pupils and adults.
- Teachers have very high expectations for pupils of all abilities. They focus constantly on achieving high standards of academic performance. These are achieved through very good teaching.
- The school establishes a strong ethos of challenge and success and maintains an extremely positive environment for learning.
- Rich and varied opportunities for personal development are provided in lessons and in extra-curricular activities. Pupils and students respond very positively to all that the school offers.
- A clear and growing strength of the school, the Sixth Form provides a very good range of academic courses and students achieve high standards.
- Great care is taken to inform parents about their child's progress and respond to their concerns.
- Very good links are maintained between the school and its community.
- Clear vision and very strong leadership provided by the headteacher and senior management team are demonstrated in very high standards of academic performance and personal development.

What could be improved

- The governors and staff have no major issues for action. They have identified and are already addressing several minor issues. These are summarised below and are presented

in full in the body of the report.

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

Building on the very good and shared commitment to improvement and capacity to succeed, governors and staff are addressing the following minor issues:

- They are building on improved Key Stage 3 English results in raising standards of attainment in English at GCSE.
- They have the capacity to share good practice in on-going assessment to:
 - i give all pupils, particularly boys in Key Stage 4, clearer guidance on how to improve their learning and achieve their potential;
 - ii to inform both teaching and monitoring of subjects.
- They are in a good position to use outcomes of this monitoring of teaching and learning:
 - i to share good practice in further improving the match of the subject curriculum for pupils of all abilities in lessons and homework;
 - ii to broaden departmental strategic planning beyond one year developments, combining test and exam targets with interim criteria drawing on monitoring of teaching and learning to inform progress in implementing change.
- They have plans in place to ensure curriculum provision in design and technology and information and communication technology in Key Stage 4, and broader vocational options for less academic pupils in Key Stage 4 and in the Sixth Form.

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The Cotswold School has significantly improved the quality of education and raised standards of attainment since the last inspection in February 1996. The quality of teaching and learning has improved markedly, particularly in Key Stage 4. The impact of this improvement is demonstrated by higher standards of attainment and personal development. Much of this is due to improved and detailed strategic planning at senior management level. This includes improvements in staff development and appraisal informed by a sharp focus on achieving challenging targets for attainment. The Sixth Form, nearly 40% bigger than in 1996, now offers a very good range of both one and two year academic courses for pupils. The quantity and quality of information technology equipment for all ages have improved demonstrably and this is leading to good and improving standards of attainment. The school has made satisfactory progress in involving the whole school in a collective act of worship twice a week along with other year-group assemblies. The practice of a 'Thought for the Day' is sporadic.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 14, 16 and 18 year olds based on average point scores in Key Stage 3 tests, GCSE and A-level/AS-level examinations.

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

Key	
well above average	A*/A
above average	B
average	C
below average	D
well below average	E/E*

Academic standards have improved significantly and are now high in both national terms and in comparison with similar schools. In 2000, 14 year-old pupils (in Key Stage 3) achieved very high standards in English, mathematics and science, a significant improvement on 1999 results. GCSE results in 2000, on the basis of pupils' average points scores, are now very high compared with similar schools. Up to 1999, the school's GCSE results were close to the national average, but in 2000, the average points score rose to 44.2, over 5 points above the national average. A-level results for the last three years were well above the national average. Pupils' attainment at the Cotswold School has improved in line with or faster than the national trend. Results obtained in mathematics are particularly high, but GCSE results in English have been below average. The school sets itself challenging targets and is successful in meeting them. In lessons, pupils' achievement is good in relation to their abilities. In general, boys and girls do equally well in Key Stage 3, but girls do better in GCSE. Gifted and talented pupils and those with special educational needs achieve very well. Pupils show strengths in understanding and using English, particularly in the frequent and confident use of appropriate subject vocabulary. The majority of pupils have good skills in the use of number. Skills in using information and communication technology are now good and opportunities for using information and communication technology across the curriculum are positive and growing.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Excellent. Pupils take full advantage of the rich opportunities the school offers.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Outstanding behaviour around the school and in lessons is a direct result of the quality of relationships and mutual respect shown by pupils, students and adult staff.
Personal development and relationships	Excellent pupil-pupil and pupil-teacher relationships. Pupils engage wholeheartedly in class and other activities. This is in response to the respect paid to pupils by teachers.
Attendance	Good attendance overall with rates above the national average over four years. The school promotes good attendance and punctuality which supports progress and results.

Pupils' attitudes and response to both lessons and other opportunities offered by the school are excellent. This is evident in pupils' outstanding enthusiasm for school, excellent behaviour and relationships, their outstanding interest and involvement in activities and the respect they show for others' feelings, values and beliefs. Pupils show very good understanding of the impact of their actions on others and demonstrate high levels of initiative and personal responsibility.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Teaching and learning were good, very good or excellent in 81% of lessons seen and were at least satisfactory in 100%. The quality of teaching is particularly strong in teachers' very good subject knowledge, relationships based on respect, high expectations and challenge combined with support,

praise and humour. All of these features impact very positively on learning. Teaching is often well informed by teachers' on-going assessment of pupils' prior learning, their particular learning needs and their grasp of subject concepts, but this is not universal. There are growing strengths in how the skills of literacy are taught and used to support learning, especially in the increasing use of key words and technical vocabulary in different subjects. Whilst number skills are well grounded in mathematics and science, they do not as yet extend widely and effectively into learning in other subjects. Information and communication technology skills are good, and increasingly well taught. In most instances, teachers effectively match learning activities to the varying abilities and learning needs of pupils, although strategies to achieve this are limited in some lessons and homework. In most subjects homework is well used to complement and extend learning.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The quality of the curriculum is good. The 11-16 basic curriculum is mainly in place. Timetabling and staff deployment are skilfully focused on priorities. Limited accommodation results in some 14-16 year olds not studying design and technology. At Sixth Form level, the range of academic courses on offer is very good. At present, vocational options in the Sixth Form and at Key Stage 4 are limited, but there are plans to expand the vocational curriculum further. The variety of extra-curricular activities provided is very good and a strength of provision.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Provision is very good at Key Stages 3 and 4. Pupils are supported to achieve high academic standards. Some pupils with special educational needs progress very successfully into the Sixth Form, including A-level courses. Vocational options for such older pupils are limited.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	There are three pupils for whom English is not the first language. They manage most situations in school well and teachers deal sensitively with any difficulties that may arise.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Outstanding provision for pupils' social and moral development is part of the school's life. Since the last inspection, provision for spiritual development has improved further and is very good. Provision for pupils' cultural development is good in particular subjects and activities. The well-planned and effective personal and social education programme involves many outside speakers.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Teachers monitor, record and promote pupils' academic performance well and their monitoring and promotion of personal development are excellent. Teachers' assessment of each pupil's progress in subjects is sound overall, but variable between departments. Attendance is very effectively monitored pupil by pupil. Child Protection arrangements are very secure.

All pupils are able to access and follow the statutory National Curriculum, except design and technology in Key Stage 4, which a building programme will address. Guidance for 14 year-old pupils on Key Stage 4 options is good. Academic courses in the Sixth Form cover a very wide range. Pupils enthusiastically take up the mainly lunchtime extra-curricular activities. The programme for personal, social and health education, including careers education and guidance, is good. These involve external speakers from varied fields and challenges pupils' and students' ideas and values. External careers advice is available for particular groups of pupils, and the school's careers library provides all pupils with information and guidance. The school prepares pupils

effectively for further study and careers after they leave.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher and senior management team provide a clear vision, focused uncompromisingly on targets to raise standards. Strategic development planning, particularly at senior level, is effective in achieving challenging targets, although planning, particularly at departmental level, is less precise in identifying progress towards them.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors are extremely well informed, very committed to the school's work and are clearly involved in the process of planning. They fulfil their statutory duties extremely effectively.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Senior managers and governors review standards with subject leaders, including analysis and interpretation of test and examination data. Teaching and learning are mainly monitored by senior managers. The school sets challenging targets for tests and examinations on this basis.
The strategic use of resources	The school makes very effective use of resources, particularly teachers.

Teaching commitments are comparatively high. This staff deployment is very cost-effective. Despite some teachers teaching subjects outside their main specialisms, all teaching seen was at least satisfactory. Senior managers and governors share a clear vision of what they want the school to achieve both in terms of ethos and attainment. The school's performance is constantly monitored and compared with that of other schools in the area. This has helped the Cotswold School to gain the confidence of increasing numbers of parents from outside the school's catchment area in the value of the education it offers. The school has a regular, cost-effective monitoring programme, involving governors, to review its performance. Subject leaders should now broaden their monitoring of teaching and learning and use the findings more methodically in checking progress in planned changes. The governing body is rigorous but supportive in its commitment to the school, questioning its work and the outcomes that are presented to them. The school effectively follows the principles of Best Value.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How the school helps children to become mature and responsible • The progress children make, that they are expected to work hard and that they like school • The good teaching • The way the school is led and managed • Feeling comfortable about approaching the school with problems or concerns 	Parents views, whilst positive overall, raised some questions about:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being kept informed about their child's progress • How closely school and parents work together • The amount of work to be done at home

Parents' views were methodically taken into account at all stages of the inspection. In response to questionnaire and written returns, the inspection found that the school works in an extremely effective partnership with parents, is responsive to their concerns and provides excellent information about pupils' progress based on regular and close monitoring of pupils and pupils' academic performance and personal development. The school's network of links with parents and members of the community securely roots its work in the locality. Inspectors fully endorse the positive views expressed and found that the concerns raised by some parents about homework, information about

progress and working with parents were not substantiated by the evidence gathered.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1. The academic standards achieved by pupils and students in the Cotswold School have improved significantly and are now high in both national terms and in comparison with similar schools. Whilst previous fluctuations in standards achieved have evened out in raised attainment overall, the school now takes in pupils from an increasingly wide ability range.
2. In 2000, 14 year-old pupils (in Key Stage 3) achieved very high standards in all core subjects (English, mathematics and science), a significant improvement on 1999 results, which were above the national average. GCSE results in 2000 on the basis of pupils' average points score are now very high compared with similar schools. Over the previous three years, the school's GCSE results were close to the national average, but in 2000 the average point score rose by more than five points above the national average. A-level results for the last three years were also well above the national average. In all key areas of test and examination results over the last three years, pupils' and students' attainment at the Cotswold School has improved at least in line with or faster than the national trend. Senior managers undertake careful and detailed analysis of public test and examination results. They discuss these findings with subject leaders and use these procedures to set challenging targets in these terms. On the basis of targets agreed for the next two years and in light of the school's proven capacity to achieve the targets it sets, improvement in attainment is set to continue.
3. Since the previous inspection, standards of attainment have improved overall and are now more consistently high. Variations between year-groups noted in the previous inspection report have evened out in a rising trend in overall attainment for all age groups. This pattern of standards of attainment has been achieved in the school despite continuing and widening variations in the spread of ability of pupils entering the school. Results in the national Key Stage 2 tests (taken at 11) indicate that 81% of pupils in the current Year 7 attained above the national average in English, mathematics and science. However, based on the results of tests of verbal reasoning carried out in Year 6 (age 10) in the primary schools, the standards of attainment on entry of other year-groups varies from mainly average overall to having a considerable proportion of lower attaining pupils.
4. Standards in all three core subjects by age 14 have been consistently well above the national average and improved further in 2000. Pupils aged 14 at the Cotswold School have attained points scores in National Curriculum tests in English, mathematics and science over the last three years which exceeded the national average. Boys and girls similarly achieve well above national averages for their gender, their performance in all core subjects (1996-99) exceeding the national average by the equivalent of 2.6 points. The trend over time in pupils' performance in all core subjects over the same four-year period is improving faster than the national pattern.
5. Standards of attainment by age 14 can also be compared with results achieved in similar schools, based on the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals. Attainment at the Cotswold School is very high for this comparable group of schools. On both national comparisons and when compared with similar schools, standards of attainment in Key Stage 3 are very good.
6. In English, the 1999 Key Stage 3 results were well above both national and similar schools. The percentage of pupils reaching the national expectation of Level 5 or above (79%) was well above the national figure and this rose to 87% in 2000. The proportion of pupils reaching

the higher Level 6 (41%) was also well above the national figure and this rate has been sustained in 2000. Over the three-year period (1996-99), boys did slightly better in English than girls.

7. In mathematics, the results obtained in 1999 Key Stage 3 were also well above both national and similar schools. The percentage of pupils reaching the national expectation of Level 5 or above (78%) was well above the national average and this also, as in English, rose to 87% in 2000. The proportion of pupils reaching the higher Level 6 (54%) was also well above the national figure and this rate in 2000 shows an increase of three per cent to 57%. Over the three-year period (1996-99), boys have achieved higher results than girls, but in 2000 the girls attained higher results and the overall gap narrowed considerably.
8. In science, pupils also attained results in the 1999 Key Stage 3 tests, which were above both national and similar schools. The percentage of pupils reaching the national expectation of Level 5 or above (76%) was well above the national average and this again rose in 2000 to 82%. The proportion of pupils reaching the higher Level 6 (43%) was also well above the national figure and this rate in 2000 shows an increase of 8% to 52%. Over the three-year period (1996-99), girls' and boys' performance was higher than the national average but in this subject, girls achieved better results than the boys.
9. In other National Curriculum subjects, standards of attainment by the end of Key Stage 3 are based on teachers' assessment against levels of attainment expected nationally by age 14. On this basis, attainment in art, design and technology, geography, history and information and communication technology is above national figures, and in modern foreign languages, music and physical education attainment is more in line with the national average.
10. GCSE examination standards have improved significantly. Up to 1999, the percentages of pupils gaining 5+ A*-C grades and 5+ A*-G grades have been close to the national averages. There have been fluctuations as year-groups with varying abilities take the examination in Year 11. GCSE results improved in 2000 at a faster rate than nationally. The average points score increased by over five points more than the national increase. In general, available evidence indicates that these pupils sustained or slightly improved on the standards achieved by them at the end of Key Stage 3. This is due in great measure to the improved quality of teaching and learning in Key Stage 4 compared to that reported in the previous inspection in 1996 as well as to the way the current leadership have moved the school's ethos to one where pupils aim high and believe in success.
11. For 2000 GCSE, the school's figure for five A*-C GCSE grades was 56%. This was close to the school's own target and in line with that recommended by the local education authority. The percentage of pupils entered achieving five A*-G GCSE grades was 99%, achieving the school's target in full. Where possible, lower attaining pupils are entered and succeed in gaining at least one GCSE at grades A*-G. There are some alternative forms of accreditation for those pupils who are unsuited to full GCSE courses, but these are currently limited and should be broadened.
12. GCSE results in English have varied over recent years, but remain overall below the national average. There is evidence that this situation is improving. Key Stage 3 results are very good. Standards of work seen in Key Stage 4 lessons and books are good and indicate the current target of 61% A*-C grades in GCSE is realistic if both boys as well as girls sustain those levels right through to Year 11 coursework and examinations. On the evidence of GCSE attainment up to 1999, girls have sustained their performance in English from Key Stage 3 to GCSE, whereas boys have achieved relatively less well than in other subjects. With significant staff changes and new leadership, the department has begun to make a significant impact on standards of attainment in this subject. In mathematics, GCSE results

have remained at a very high level with GCSE A*-C grades being well above the national average. Standards achieved by both girls and boys were above national average. Girls outperformed boys in GCSE mathematics in 1999 to a larger extent than nationally, but boys' and girls' results in 2000 are much closer. In double award science, nearly two thirds of the pupils (63%) attained A*-C grades in GCSE, well above the national average. In school terms, a significantly higher proportion of girls attain higher grades (A*-C) in GCSE double award science than the boys do. In all three core subjects, boys in Key Stage 4 do well in national terms but compared to the girls in the school build less consistently on their standards of attainment in Key Stage 3, which the school should address, providing clearer feedback and guidance for them through on-going assessment.

13. In almost all other subjects, the proportions of pupils gaining GCSE grades A*-C in 2000 were close to or significantly higher than national averages. In design and technology, French, German, history, information and communication technology and music, GCSE A*-C results were well the above national average. The proportion of pupils gaining higher grades in art and religious education were above the national average, in design and technology they were close. GCSE results in geography fluctuated from well above the national average in 1999 to well below this level in 2000. Comparing pupils' own average points in all subjects taken with individual subjects, it is clear that in 2000 all pupils achieved higher relative results in information and communication technology, mathematics and art and design than in other subjects. Both boys and girls achieve similarly high results in mathematics and information and communication technology when compared against their own personal average points. Comparing average points scores in 1998 Key Stage 3 tests with average points scores in GCSE examinations in 2000, pupils make satisfactory progress overall. Work seen in books and in lesson observations and discussion with pupils indicate that standards in all subjects for all abilities in Key Stage 4 are also good overall and pupils achieve well in terms of their abilities. In all subjects other than English, results at GCSE show continuing improvement over time and since the previous inspection. In terms of GCSE results, there is little significant variation in girls' and boys' standards of attainment in geography, history, modern foreign languages, music, physical education and religious education. In simple GCSE grade terms, boys achieve significantly higher standards in information and communication technology and design and technology, although numbers are not always equal and valid comparisons are relatively difficult.
14. Results achieved in the Cotswold School Sixth Form in GCE Advanced Level examinations are consistently very high. Results in 2000 show 100% of students achieving A to E grades in six subjects, art and design, art history, biology and physics, design and technology, geography and information and communication technology. Results show an improving trend in business studies and French. Physics also achieves above the national average for grades A to B. Mathematics grades A to E and general studies results are consistently above the national average. Over the last three years, results in chemistry, English literature, German and history are more variable, but they are close to or above the national average in those subjects. A-level standards overall are therefore not only high in national terms, on several key measures, they are the best in Gloucestershire comprehensive schools. On the evidence available, these standards of attainment show the Sixth Form is a clear and growing strength of the school.
15. In lessons, pupils' achievement overall is good for their ability. Work seen in books and in lesson observations and discussions with pupils indicate that standards for all abilities are also good overall and are consistent with the results achieved in the most recent tests and examinations. With some variations in particular years, boys and girls do equally well in Key Stage 3, but girls do better in GCSE. Gifted and talented pupils achieve very well in response to the challenging yet supportive atmosphere of the school and the demands and expectations of good teaching. This is illustrated by the fact that in the year 2000 Key Stage 3 tests four

pupils achieved the two highest levels in science. One Sixth Form student achieved national recognition for an outstanding performance in statistics.

16. There are three pupils in school for whom English is not the first language. They make good progress and attain well in most tasks. Teachers deal sensitively with any difficulties that may arise. Those with special educational needs also achieve very well. Lesson plans in most subjects take note of their learning needs, learning support assistants give good support where appropriately directed and a majority of teachers organise groupings and tasks so that this support is targeted to best effect.
17. Pupils show strengths in understanding and using English, particularly in the frequent and confident use of appropriate subject vocabulary. This is as a direct result of the whole school literacy policy, developed with all staff and now being effectively implemented across the curriculum. Good use is made of key words in art, design and technology, geography, history, music, science, physical education and in religious education. In art, pupils are encouraged to express opinions about their own and others' work, helping them move from the colloquial to aesthetic and technical art vocabulary. Using a subject glossary in the back of their history exercise book, one lower attaining Year 9 group talked ably about discrimination and racial harassment in the American Civil War. In geography, pupils understand and use specialist geographical language very well when answering questions and have well developed skills in extended writing.
18. The majority of pupils have good skills in the use of number. Most pupils get a very secure grounding in their mathematics lessons and are required to transfer their skills in the application of number into work in science, design and technology and geography lessons. There are, however, few planned opportunities to extend and reinforce the application of number in other subject lessons. The school has identified this issue as a priority for the current year in its development plan.
19. Skills in using information and communication technology have improved in general, and are now good. Opportunities for using information and communication technology across the curriculum are positive and growing. There has been good improvement in providing information and communication technology equipment, with the help of substantial donations. In developing pupils' skills and raising their standards of attainment in this subject since the previous inspection, improvement has been good.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

20. Pupils' attitudes to learning are excellent throughout the school. On arrival in the morning, pupils are well prepared, keen and eager to be involved in the day's activities and to get as much out of school as possible. Pupils like being at school and overwhelmingly show genuine interest in their work, enthusiasm to explain and discuss aspects of their studies and a real commitment to ensuring their own progress and understanding. In many lessons pupils, engrossed in their learning, initiate and participate maturely in discussion and debate, which extend their knowledge and learning. A good example occurred in a Year 11 GCSE history lesson on the origins of the Cold War, where there was very high pupil participation in discussion of the growing distrust between the superpowers. There is enthusiastic participation in the wide range of lunchtime clubs and activities, many of which develop work in lessons. One Year 7 girl took time to explain the dilemma of wanting to be involved in six lunchtime clubs and how she had resolved it. In conjunction with Year 11 pupils, two Sixth Form students voluntarily oversee the careers library and help other pupils seeking information and the Sixth Form council also runs a highly acclaimed "Bullybusters" service. Students in the Sixth Form also do community service with younger, less able pupils. The majority of pupils clearly enjoy their life at the school and demonstrate very positive attitudes

to the school community and to work. They show a real pride in their achievements and a determination to succeed.

21. Pupils' behaviour in lessons and around school is outstanding and contributes positively to the learning. They understand and respect the school's behaviour code and respond enthusiastically to encouragement, praise and the public celebration of their own and others' effort and achievement. No unsatisfactory behaviour was seen in lessons during the inspection. Around the school pupils observe the basic courtesies of politeness and acknowledging others in a very mature way. During the inspection, pupils greeted inspectors politely and exchanged pleasantries with good humour, indeed on many occasions pupils asked if directions were needed, how things were going or if everything was all right. At break and lunch times pupils are busy; they organise their time to include eating and extra curricular activities efficiently whilst always interacting with peers and adults in an amicable manner. Pupils and students treat the school environment, building and property respectfully and they follow health and safety rules sensibly. The school is a very orderly community in which pupils are clearly happy and focused on learning and personal development. There was no evidence of bullying or oppressive behaviour during the inspection, very few instances were reported in discussion with pupils and students, and their confidence in the staff dealing with such incidents was very secure.
22. Excellent relationships between pupils and with teachers are a strength of the school and have a significant impact on both pupils' personal development as well as on their standards of attainment in tests and examinations. In a Year 10 GCSE group discussing Christian marriage, excellent relationships enabled students to speak honestly and often sensitively about their thoughts or feelings without embarrassment or fear of ridicule. The ethos of challenge and success established by all members of staff encourages students to be very aware of each other and is the basis for these outstanding relationships. Interactions with adults in lessons and around the school often include the frequent and positive use of humour, as well as mutual respect. In a combined Year 8 and Year 9 assembly, the teacher taking the assembly apologised to a group arriving after the start for not checking everyone was there before he started. There are also many good examples of pupils supporting each other, working collaboratively, and sharing equipment and materials in lessons. Pupils involved in the recent performance of *Grease* were reported to have been immensely supportive of one another behind the scenes. In a personal social and health education lesson on self assessment with a Year 7 group, it was particularly noticeable how sensitively and confidently pupils exchanged views on each others' strengths and weaknesses. In formal discussions with inspectors it was also noted that pupils from all year groups readily explained that they particularly enjoyed school because it has such a friendly atmosphere.
23. The vast majority of pupils make very significant progress in terms of personal and social development during their time at the school. Pupils and students of all ages cope confidently with the pressures, and make the most of the opportunities, of school life. Many pupils take advantage of the good opportunities provided to take on responsibility within the school and to interact with the community outside. For example, pupils are proud to be involved in class routines, enthusiastically represent forms and houses in competition and on the School Council, and represent the school in sporting, musical and performing arts productions. During a tutor period and without instruction, Year 7 pupils cleaned blackboards, generally tidied the room and watered plants before the weekend. The careers library is enthusiastically and effectively organised and maintained by a group of Year 12 students. The school has many pupils and students following the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme, which brings them into contact with community organisations. Discussions with Year 11 pupils discovered they were deeply involved in the preparations for and organisation of a Christmas party for old people from the local community. These preparations included challenging any stereotyped views about old people in a Friday tutor period. Formally, pupil's

personal development is encouraged well through personal and social education lessons, a wide range of visitors to the school, outings to local attractions, residential visits both within the United Kingdom and overseas and by the positive caring ethos established and maintained by all involved in the life of the school. The leadership and all staff are strongly united and committed in establishing and nurturing the entire ethos of success combined with active participation in the community. Pupils know that in each lesson teachers are looking to see how they respond and make progress.

24. Rates of attendance at school are good and above the average for similar schools across the country. Whilst there is very little unauthorised absence, the school is vigilant in following up individual cases. Overall attendance is around 94%. Authorised absence figures are slightly higher in Years 10 and 11 when pupils take part in one week's work experience placements and benefit from authorised study leave. Pupils enjoy school and some parents report that their children are upset when they are unable to attend. Given the number that come to school by bus from surrounding villages, punctuality at the start of the day is very dependent on traffic conditions, but in practice buses usually arrive on time enabling a prompt start to the school day. Lessons during the day start on time despite the lack of official movement time and the fact that pupils often have to move significant distances around the site. Good attendance and punctuality contribute positively to pupils' learning, progress and the educational standards achieved.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

25. Teaching and learning were good or better in 80% of the 172 lessons seen, very good or excellent in 40% and no unsatisfactory subject lesson was seen. No lessons were observed where teaching and learning were less than satisfactory. This overall finding shows significant improvement since the previous inspection, where only 40% of lessons were deemed to be good or better and where teaching was judged to be less effective in Key Stage 4. Teaching and learning are now judged to be good in Key Stages 3 (11-14) and are very good in Key Stage 4 and in the Sixth Form. In the lessons seen during the week of inspection in English, mathematics, history, art, physical education and religious education, teaching and learning were very good.
26. The school's high and improving standards of attainment in all key stages are directly related to good and effective teaching and learning. These significant improvements in teaching owe a great deal to the vision, leadership and management of the school, which has clearly made commitment and success a day-to-day reality. Subject leaders have been encouraged to focus their efforts and attention on their main task of improving teaching and learning and this has had marked impact. Teachers successfully combine expertise and experience in their very good subject knowledge, both in terms of their depth of understanding of, and enthusiasm for, what they teach, as well as in respect of the principle requirements of the National Curriculum and the precise demands of GCSE and A/AS level examination courses. In most cases, teachers share clear and specific learning objectives for each lesson with the pupils, returning at the end of lessons to review learning and progress against those objectives. Marking is sound or better in all subjects, but is particularly effective in English. In several instances seen, pupils were given and responded to explicit targets and these were commented on constructively in discussions with pupils who found the clearer the comments, the more helpful they found them for further improvement. A good deal of constructive and helpful oral feedback and verbal guidance is given in lessons, which does not always appear in exercise books or folders. In physical education, for instance, pupils and students are encouraged to make clear oral links to earlier learning; and in music, pupils and students discuss and appraise the strengths and weaknesses of each other's work. On-going assessment and recording of pupils' and students' progress are good in English, mathematics, science, information and communication technology, art and physical education. In the best

examples, this gives detailed, supportive and diagnostic comments, helps to inform the setting of personal targets, indicates successes and development points and helps pupils and students to make progress. Where feedback to pupils is explicit and clearly measurable, pupils reported how useful they found these comments and targets in improving their work, as the Year 9 pupils who discussed how they were working on improving aspects of their writing following an assignment in English.

27. Teaching and learning are based on mutual respect, high expectations and challenging demands, which teachers reference methodically to what pupils and students need to do to achieve high standards of attainment in public tests and examinations. Pupils' and students' very good learning owes a great deal to excellent relationships between them and with their teachers, whose management of lessons and learning are very good. In a Year 11 French lesson, the use of prior learning, a created text and a range of planned activities, which the teacher managed well and the pupils positively and readily took part in, successfully consolidated the use of future tense forms. Alongside such well-managed variety of learning activities, praise is frequently used to boost self-esteem and to encourage and motivate pupils to reach challenging goals. In a Year 9 moderate attaining mathematics group doing a lesson on distance and time graphs, the teaching boosted not only pupils' basic skills but also their confidence, their basic skills and readiness to overcome problems and deepen their understanding, through good relationships, brisk pace and appropriate challenge. Excellent relationships thrive on the mutual respect teachers and pupils have for each other and make positive interaction between them a consistent and positive quality of the learning environment. Questioning is skilfully used in various ways across all years to probe pupils' understanding, challenge and extend their thinking and promote the skills they are developing. A mixed Sixth Form physical education group, including students working for the Sports Leader Award, were practising passing and shooting skills in basketball; they were challenged by their teacher's questioning to develop and extend their practical skills. A fair proportion of teachers make good, strategic use of well-matched activities and tasks to suit different abilities and learning needs, making effective use of individual education plans. This represents a robust resource of good practice to share between teachers and departments in meeting the needs of the increasingly wide ability range of the pupils entering the school. Such sharing of good practice does take place and has helped in improving the overall quality of teaching; but there is scope for its further and more systematic development. Lower attaining pupils make very good progress in most instances, mainly as a response to the combined clarity and effectiveness of the teaching and the motivating praise and support their teachers and teaching assistants provide.
28. Basic skills of literacy are effectively taught both within English lessons and in other subjects, where technical language, vocabulary and terminology are appropriately taught and used by pupils across the ability range and in different subjects including design and technology, art, music and history amongst others. Two Year 7 groups making and using print blocks were drawn into the lesson not least by the display of key words on the board.
29. Most pupils and students have secure skills in basic number operations (counting, adding, subtracting, dividing and multiplying). They are given a very secure grounding in their mathematics lessons and transfer these skills into work in science and geography lessons. However, few planned opportunities extend numeracy into other subject lessons and this has been built into the current school development plan as a priority for the current year.
30. All lessons seen were planned effectively, with particularly good planning in mathematics, science, history, information and communications technology, physical education and religious education. Teachers organise and manage learning with pupils very well and thus they often realise the full advantage of their planning in promoting very good learning. Where there are identified risks, as in physical education, discipline is appropriately clear and firm. In other

lessons, again as appropriate to the chosen learning objectives, pair and group-work are prepared, planned and managed to good effect. One science lesson with Year 11 on electricity and non-ohmic conductors, the teacher varied the questioning between pairs and the whole group, enabling the pupils to challenge each other's thinking and understanding.

31. These features of planning, organisation and management of learning result in teachers making very good use of the time available in lessons in several subjects. Frequent instances arose where teachers ensured pace and productivity through the lesson by planning and managing time-limited activities to promote pupils' and students' involvement in their learning. This also helps to compensate for the low allocations for teaching time in the school. The use of homework is generally satisfactory and in most subjects it is good. It is mainly regularly set and consistently marked. In religious education and in science, homework takes a variety of styles structured so as to interest pupils. In other subjects, however, homework is less consistently set and activities take less effective account of boys' or girls' interests and the varying skills and learning needs of the pupils. Educational resources, both in the traditional form of textbooks and paper-based materials, as well as audio-visual, technological and information and communication technology equipment, are well used to promote learning and progress in the subjects involved. In a Year 7 geography lesson, for example pupils were making good use of Microsoft Powerpoint, software often used in public talks and lectures, to make their own presentation about tourism. Across the school, Internet addresses, checked and evaluated by teachers first, are effectively used in history homework. Pupils with learning difficulties make good progress because non-specialist learning support assistants are well deployed to different subject lessons and effectively used to help. The learning support assistant working with a Year 10 group making a coffee table in design and technology took an active part in the lesson, helping all the pupils make progress.
32. Where teaching and learning were judged to be satisfactory rather than good or better, i.e. in only 19% of lessons, there was a mixture of relative weaknesses and strengths like those mentioned earlier. Satisfactory teaching and learning are characterised, for instance, by a focus more on what is to be *done* in the lesson, i.e. the tasks and activities, rather than the skills or concepts to be *learned* by the end of it. This leaves pupils to work out for themselves what and how well they are supposed to be learning, which some, particularly lower attaining, pupils struggle to do. In lessons and homework, the intended match of tasks, time, support, language and stimuli materials to pupils' learning is not always successful. Pupils in a Year 10 science group studying digestion, two of whom have statements of special educational needs, spent considerable time copying text from books and the board. This activity prevented the process of challenging or promoting their grasp of the chemical processes of digesting carbohydrates, proteins and fats. A less successful instance of homework arose in Year 8 information and communication technology, where the task on designing web pages involved four sheets of content, which the majority of the group had not managed to tackle. In several instances, less skilful questioning strategies also limited the learning and progress of pupils of varying abilities. For instance, closed questioning limited opportunities for pupils to develop their answers and time was not always planned and allowed for so they could think, ask for clarification and come back to the question with more chance to ask further questions. There are, however, very good examples of really probing and stimulating questioning in other lessons which can be shared.
33. Pupils have many opportunities in different subjects to develop reading, listening, speaking and writing skills. In lessons judged to be satisfactory rather than good, however, strategies for teaching and extending writing lacked a clear focus for pupils on precisely what is involved in producing different kinds of writing. In other cases, opportunities to promote pupils' oral expression of ideas, concepts and opinions, with justification of points of view, are constrained by the plan and management of the lesson. These aspects of literacy are less directly addressed in the school's current policy. Two examples indicate the variation in lessons

seen. In one good physical education lesson on isometric and isotonic muscle contraction, questioning skilfully probed Year 12 students' understanding, whereas questioning in a satisfactory Year 7 gymnastics lesson gave pupils few opportunities for extended answers or further questions.

34. In subjects other than mathematics, teachers plan and prepare too few opportunities to reinforce pupils' number skills, especially for lower attaining pupils, by transferring key understandings and operations from their mathematics into their subjects. There were effective examples seen outside mathematics lessons in science, art, design and technology, and geography. One successful example was where lower attaining pupils in a Year 7 science lesson were using calculators appropriately to work out the value in kilojoules of yesterday's food intake. Whilst there is a clear, concerted and effective whole school approach to teaching literacy skills, a similarly collaborative approach to teaching and reinforcing key number skills and knowledge is already outlined in the school's current development plan to address this.
35. In developing pupils as independent and creative learners, teaching also varies between satisfactory and better lessons. In several very good lessons, opportunities for pupils and students to engage in real intellectual effort, creative thinking or independent learning activities are planned, taken and successfully used. Such occasions are missed where teaching is rather too prescriptive, lesson management is too directive or questioning is rather closed and limiting to probe and promote pupils' understanding. In modern languages, for example, pupils' independence in learning and using the language is often addressed only by providing dictionary activities, rather than extending into sustained group work in class or basic research activities for homework. This is not the case in Sixth Form modern languages work, where independence is strongly encouraged and promoted. There is on occasion in several subjects a restricted diet and range of tasks, constraining opportunities for pupils' involvement and creative thinking or independent working. Teaching is at times over-prescriptive, missing opportunities for pupils to show initiative, what they understand about a topic or the skills they have been acquiring. Despite strengths in several areas, a Year 11 geography lesson on national parks focused on short written responses and safe answers, limiting the progress that more able pupils could make in the time available. Where homework is less effective, teachers miss the opportunities and scope available for extending subject skills and understanding from lessons for different abilities. In the case of two mathematics lessons with Year 7 and Year 8 groups of differing abilities, learning activities in lessons or homework missed opportunities for more practical or investigative learning. In the Year 7 lesson, practical activity was limited in reinforcing a basic grasp of number and in the Year 8 lesson, teaching overlooked the potential of activities to encourage pupils to invent their own methods for grasping the relationship between two trapeziums, one inverted, and a parallelogram. Less effective marking and on-going assessment provide limited indications to pupils of what they have done wrong and what they need to do to improve in relation to National Curriculum or examination requirements. As a result, National Curriculum level and GCSE grade references, whilst quoted in lesson planning, are not always translated into short term planning for sufficiently challenging strategies. These relatively weaker features of teaching and learning arise in only the minority of lessons judged to be satisfactory rather than good (less than one fifth of all lessons seen) and are compared here with better examples to show the combined strengths available in the school's teaching staff.
36. Since the previous inspection, however, when most teaching was judged to be satisfactory rather than good or better, many of the issues raised about teaching have been very effectively addressed by the concerted efforts of teaching and management staff at all levels. As a result of combining more methodical monitoring of teaching with a whole school ethos of challenge and success focusing on high attainment for all, most lessons now successfully challenge pupils of differing abilities and teaching methods are more varied, engaging and

interesting. All teachers have high expectations of their pupils and pupils have a genuine sense of being able to succeed, and both teachers and pupils relate extremely well with one another together. A vital factor in both these aspects, assessment is stronger in more areas in the ways teachers use it to inform their planning and the targets they set for individuals or groups to improve their learning. Non-specialist teachers are well supported by their departmental colleagues and no instance arose of a lesson where lack of subject command prevented at least satisfactory learning and progress. Progress in improving teaching and learning is very good.

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

37. The quality of the curriculum overall is good and pupils are able to access and follow most elements of the statutory National Curriculum. Whilst teaching in lessons results in high and improving standards in tests and examinations, some aspects of the curriculum are either just adequately planned or limit some desirable opportunities for learning. Within the constraints of time, staffing and accommodation, the 11-16 basic curriculum is mainly in place, underpinned by effectively focused timetabling and staff deployment. Seventy per cent of pupils in Years 8 and 9 are able to study German as a second foreign language in addition to French, of whom a proportion continue with both languages into Year 10 (currently 13%) and Year 11 (currently 10%). This arrangement limits the time available for these pupils in Year 8 and 9 for physical education. Access to design and technology courses in Key Stage 4 is currently limited and the range of Key Stage 4 curriculum options for less academic and lower attaining pupils is also limited.
38. Limits on accommodation mean that not all pupils in Key Stage 4 are able to follow their statutory entitlement to a design and technology course, but an approved building programme is due to start soon and will help the school to address this situation. Limits on indoor space and swimming facilities constrain the range of physical education activities, but here again additional building of a local sports facility is planned and will help to address these constraints. Overall, time allocations for teaching at both Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 are below the recommended minimum and are in fact within the lowest relative allocations for secondary schools nationally. To off-set these constraints, the timetable is planned and arranged with a skilful focus on priorities, and extra optional provision is available for those who attend subject activity sessions at lunchtimes. These strategies go some way to compensate for this shortfall in curriculum time. Time is, however, limited for Year 8 design and technology, which particularly affects the time for the design element of this subject; and more able Year 9 groups lose one physical education lesson to take German; but these constraints have no significant impact on standards overall in either subject.
39. The curriculum is good overall in that it provides the foundations on which teachers build in enabling their pupils to achieve high standards of attainment. The way pupils are grouped for different subjects and lessons is good in that pupils of all abilities make at least good progress in lessons. Pupils can move readily between ability groupings on the basis of teachers' internal assessments. The clarity of planning in schemes of work for each subject, which underpin teachers' planning of lessons week by week, is effective in helping so many of the school's population to progress to high standards of attainment in public tests and examinations. More variable are the planned curricular opportunities offered to pupils to develop the full breadth of skills and understanding set out in general and subject requirements of the new National Curriculum. Whilst they are currently satisfactory, there is scope for improvement and this is fully recognised in the school development plan.
40. Some subjects (e.g. mathematics) use the outcomes of their analysis of assessment, test and exam results effectively to link back into how teaching is planned and managed. These links

are less successfully grasped and their implications applied in other subjects. Relatively limited at present, for example, are the ways in which most departments use on-going assessment to monitor their coverage of statutory requirements alongside their monitoring of the outcomes of public tests and examinations. More systematic sharing of both of these kinds of monitoring between subject leaders and senior managers should inform this developing aspect of planning. A good example at subject level was found in physical education, where teachers make good use of on-going assessment to determine the time they can allocate to the different required aspects of the subject curriculum. With more systematic analysis like this of its curriculum practice, the school should be better able to ensure that pupils of all abilities receive their full entitlement for learning across the curriculum.

41. In Key Stage 3, there is adequate provision for information and communication technology. In Years 7 and 8, pupils have discrete information and communication technology lessons, whereas in Year 9 information and communication technology and design and technology are taught in a combined course. In Key Stage 4, provision is less than satisfactory for those pupils who do not follow the GCSE information and communication technology course. They take a basic course (RSA CLAIT), where the syllabus limits their potential levels of achievement. Teachers in different subjects are, however, making more and more positive use of information and communication technology in their subject teaching. English planned opportunities, for instance, include an advertisement in Year 7, a front page in Year 8 and a theatre programme in Year 9. Despite constraints on equipment in art, pupils make good if limited use of digital cameras and electronically manipulated images as an integral part of the course. There are some subjects, however, such as geography, history, modern foreign languages and Key Stage 3 mathematics, where planned opportunities for pupils to use information and communication technology have yet to be built into schemes of work and into lesson delivery.
42. Curricular opportunities for less academic and lower attaining pupils, other than full GCSE courses, are quite limited. Currently, no vocational subjects are offered at Key Stage 4 and the school's development plan does not include this as a priority for the current year. It is planned to offer GCSE business studies next year, but the level may be too demanding for this group of pupils. Whilst 99% of those entered for GCSE achieve 5 or more A*-G passes, some pupils lack opportunities for gaining some key qualifications. Pupils with learning difficulties are, however, encouraged to enter and 100% of those entered do attain at least one GCSE grade A* to G. In design and technology, they can follow a basic skills course. That said, opportunities for lower attaining pupils are limited to the predominantly academic accreditation on offer. The school's development plan recognises the task of managing successfully the increasing numbers of pupils across a wide range of ability entering and attending the school. In light of this, the breadth of Key Stage 4 options should be extended to include more vocational options for lower attaining pupils.
43. At Sixth Form level, the curriculum is broad and offers a very wide range of academic options, a real success for timetabling with limited numbers of staff. The range of A/AS level subject options offered is very good. One GNVQ course is offered at Sixth Form level, along with City and Guilds Photography and the Sports Leader Award, as a basic provision of alternative vocational courses. In addition to the GNVQ course, A/AS level business studies is offered. It is intended to broaden the curriculum further by increasing the range of GNVQ options and for these courses to have achieved parity of esteem by 2004. At present, about 70% of the school's Year 11 pupils move into the Sixth Form and the school has targets to sustain and extend this. Given this increased ability range, options currently on offer will constrain the school's ability to match courses to students' ability, potential and career options.

44. The school has a clear and focused policy for literacy based on a whole curriculum audit. As a result, these skills are generally well addressed across the curriculum, particularly in respect of the planned whole school focus on using technical subject vocabulary. This is proving very effective. Whilst the application of number is very effectively taught in mathematics, the development plan identifies an appropriately timed priority to put a whole school policy in place to inform and guide how it should be addressed in other subjects. Once again, this has been recognised in the school development plan for this current year. Information and communication technology is positively used in a number of subjects, opportunities are increasingly being taken and pupils develop good information technology skills and achieve above average standards. This is a significant improvement on the situation reported in the previous inspection.
45. All teachers and classrooms maintain an ethos and relationships based on and constantly demonstrating very clear moral principles. The behaviour of staff towards pupils was unfailingly courteous, set a very good example and complemented teachers' high expectations for pupils' responsible and mature behaviour. In several subjects, there are good examples of teachers planning how and when to address moral issues in subject classwork. One example is when English teachers include texts in their planned classwork, which extend moral and emotional understanding and another instance arose in Sixth Form discussions on the rural poor. The school's overall contribution to pupils' moral development is outstanding.
46. On occasions, however, rich opportunities to promote pupils' moral development are missed because, in part at least, they are not planned into schemes of work. One example of how such issues had been addressed related to a Year 9 geography lesson, where the comparison of people's life expectancy in rich and poor countries had raised significant moral issues in a previous lesson. Such an approach, where time had been planned to allow pupils to recognise and discuss those moral questions, should be shared between departments.
47. Pupils' social development is also tackled with outstanding effectiveness. It was particularly well addressed through those opportunities seen in many lessons for pupils to work together in pairs and groups, as well as in clubs run by older pupils and in the planning and preparation for the Christmas party to be given for old people. Parents both at the meeting and in written notes commented extremely positively about how well their children develop personally and socially in their time in the school.
48. Spiritual development is also very effectively addressed, particularly through assemblies. In one case, pupils in both Year 8 and Year 9 were encouraged to reflect firstly on whether they might, perhaps unwittingly, be ignoring a lonely and elderly neighbour, similar to the one in a newspaper story found 47 days after her death by a man wanting to read the electricity meter. They thought silently about this throughout the hall. Secondly, these pupils were then encouraged to recognise their own problems and to tackle them by seeking help and guidance wherever they felt they could within school. The policy for "Thought for the Day", for those registration periods where there is no class, year-group or whole school assembly, is however only sporadically implemented. In one simple but effective instance seen, a Year 7 group listened quietly and reflectively, while their teacher read a poem on the theme "we can all succeed if we try", a message very clearly reinforcing the ethos of the whole school.
49. Planned opportunities for spiritual development in lessons, whilst very good when they do occur, are sporadic, with generally insufficient grasp by teachers of how such key aspects of human understanding can be planned into teaching schemes. In science, for instance, the opportunities are recognised more in principle than in having a clear overall plan for ensuring they are taken up as appropriate to the lesson. In religious education, however, regular and effective opportunities are built into the work pupils do in class with their teachers.

50. Cultural development is well provided for in terms of visits, opportunities for the study of third world countries in geography and through contact with other cultures provided in French and German, especially for those able to participate in trips and exchanges. The month long visit by a Japanese teacher was a resounding success and brought another culture into the life of the school in an immediate and real manner. Planned opportunities to promote pupils' understanding of what it means to grow up living in a multi-cultural country like Britain are limited to the schemes of work for geography and religious education and should be remedied.
51. There is a very wide range of excellent clubs and activities that significantly enhance the quality and range of the overall curriculum. Some of these extend and further develop the learning provided in classrooms and, as such, could be considered to increase the curriculum time, but only for those able to attend them. In several instances, these activities contribute to success in examinations, as for instance in coursework clubs. Many pupils respond to this programme with interest, some show real skills of personal organisation in trying to get to all the ones they want to participate in and take-up by pupils is very good. On the last day of the inspection week, 88 pupils attended the school's debating club, run by the English department. The Senior Debating Team recently won a significant debating competition. Whilst clearly extending pupils' social skills, this is also a clear example of how pupils are encouraged throughout the school to aim high and succeed in all kinds of endeavours. In another case, a group of Year 11 pupils were involved in providing an old people's party, supported and backed up in this by preparation in the personal and social education curriculum about 'ageist' stereotypes. Other activities provide a moral or spiritual dimension such as the opportunities for reflection on the capacities of human nature for good or evil in the popular visit to Ypres and the Western Front. Overall, the extra-curricular provision develops pupils' abilities to take responsibility for their own learning and to increase their own self-awareness. This is a strength of curriculum provision in the school.
52. The school's programme for personal, social and health education is very good. It offers a rich variety of external speakers, gives pupils comprehensive coverage of all statutory issues, including sex and drugs education, and challenges pupils' ideas and values and prepares them effectively for further study and careers after school. Lessons cover a good range of issues sequenced to relate as carefully and as appropriately as possible to pupils' personal development. A policewoman from the district Schools' Unit gave a highly effective Year 9 talk in one personal and social education lesson on the implications and consequences of drug or substance abuse, which the pupils found genuinely challenging and engaging. In Year 12 and 13, a visitor from the Trading Standards Council proved provocative about fake fashion goods students might have already been taken in by and stimulated many genuine enquiries after the lesson, rather than during it! A powerful feature of the school's commitment to its pastoral curriculum is that an entire summary of the programme is displayed in the dining room, so all pupils can map what they are doing, and the themes they will tackle in the future. Pupils genuinely appreciate this part of their school curriculum. The programme is mapped and managed to great effect by the assistant headteacher, whilst in the Sixth Form, the programme is overseen by one of the deputy headteachers. By combining two key roles, the assistant headteacher maintains an informed overview of both the academic curriculum (through his role as special educational needs co-ordinator meeting with subject departments) and the pastoral curriculum, for which he has overall responsibility. There are also clear links and liaison with the teacher who manages the programme of careers education and guidance. The school liaises positively with all its primary schools, particularly over their prior attainment, informed by local education authority assessment of verbal reasoning quotients, and over their transition to the secondary school. The school also has positive links and liaison with colleges, who can offer vocational Sixth Form courses beyond the resources of this school and maintains links with areas of West Oxfordshire from where it recruits a good number of pupils.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR IT PUPILS?

53. The school's provision for pupils' support, welfare and guidance is very good and makes a positive contribution to the educational standards achieved. Pupils are happy, they feel safe and secure and there is good evidence to show that the vast majority are enjoying and benefiting from the education provided at the Cotswold School. Teaching and support staff effectively reinforce the ethos of the school with the support and help they give to the children. The well being and development of the pupils is uppermost in the minds of all staff at all times. Procedures to deal with Child Protection issues are very good and secure and meet statutory requirements. The school is both sensitive as well as vigilant in exercising its responsibilities. Assessment and marking are effectively used in several cases to set individual pupils or groups of pupils targets, some of which are particularly clear, specific and constructive. Pastoral staff monitor pupils' effort and attitudes in every lesson, collating information on a daily basis and giving praise to those who do particularly well in year or other assemblies. Guidance and advice in Year 9 on the course options available in Key Stage 4 are full and constructive. In Year 11 Cotswold staff advise students objectively and openly about the course options available in the Sixth Form as well as in local colleges. In conjunction with form tutors and pastoral staff, senior staff mentor pupils preparing for GCSE examinations on a regular basis. Support, guidance and mentoring in the Sixth Form between the tutors and head of Sixth Form are extremely effective. One example involved the guidance on university applications which was tackled by the teacher from both general principles and individual issues.
54. Pastoral support is provided through form tutors, heads of year, the special educational needs co-ordinator and a range of external support agencies. It works very effectively and is clearly understood by pupils who are clear and secure about who to go to with a problem. Any pupils experiencing difficulties are quickly identified and well-supported and prompt contact is made by telephone with parents.
55. Provision for careers education in the school is very good. The programme of awareness raising, guidance on subject options in Year 9 and access to information about vocational routes in both paper and information technology forms are comprehensive and accessible to pupils of all abilities. External careers advice that the local service, Learning Partnership West, provides now prioritises particular groups of pupils, in line with regional and government policy. Such pupils and students in the school are adequately supported by the local careers service, Learning Partnership West, within those constraints. The school's careers library, very effectively maintained by Sixth Form helpers, complements that service by providing all pupils with effective access to extensive information and guidance. A pupil in Year 9, for example, interested in careers involving horses and particularly wishing to find information about "eventing", a specific competitive aspect of horse-riding, could be readily directed to leaflets or information technology information about such careers. Moves to extend the careers education programme into Year 8 in line with DfEE recommendations are already in place. The school's one week work experience programme for pupils in Year 10 involves pupils in taking responsibility and developing their independence. The work experience programme makes full and successful use of a wide and sustained network of local community contacts, which are overseen by the school in conjunction with regional agencies. Particular attention is paid to health and safety issues with secure insurance guarantees based on checks carried out by a regional organisation, Trident. The programme extends fully to students in the Sixth Form who also undertake one week's work experience at the end of the summer term. The school prepares them effectively for further study and careers after they leave. The destinations of those who leave the school are tracked over many years and the school maintains detailed records and contact with its previous students, which leadership and teaching staff refer to in promoting the school's whole ethos.

56. The school has clear and comprehensive procedures to ensure that pupils' health and safety are safeguarded in school and these are understood and followed by staff and pupils. Risks and hazards around the site are identified, reported and dealt with through informal and formal inspections and heads of department regularly monitor practice in departments for any health or safety risks. There are regular evacuation practices and appropriate records of independent fire prevention and electrical equipment inspections. First aid supplies are available around the site and first aiders hold up-to-date accreditation. The school has clear procedures relating to medicines on site and to the recording of accidents and incidents. In lessons observed during the inspection very good care was taken to ensure pupils' safety. Careful practice was observed in science and design and technology lessons. It was particularly noticeable how pupils in science automatically put on goggles without being asked before carrying out experiments. Staff and adults on site are vigilant in ensuring children follow safe procedures and practices.
57. The procedures for monitoring pupils' personal development and overall academic progress are excellent. Heads of year are kept very well informed on a daily basis of pupils' effort, achievement and behaviour through the academic review system in the lower school and a referral scheme in the upper school. The schemes provide positive and negative information on individual pupils, which is used effectively to reward, to develop personal improvement strategies and to provide an overview of personal development and academic progress. These systems ensure that all staff know pupils very well.
58. Assessment procedures vary between subjects. Within a general whole school assessment policy, departments adopt varying methods and approaches, including their own internal tests and on-going marking of course and homework. School policy requires pupils' work to be allocated an attainment level against National Curriculum levels or GCSE grades, but this varies in the observance, particularly with lower attaining pupils, where comments are more boosting for confidence than factual about progress in those terms. In the more effective subjects, pupils then receive clear, informative and recorded feedback in writing, which helps them to set individual targets. The procedures for assessing academic achievement in mathematics and science are particularly good and consistently applied. Detailed written feedback following assessment of projects and assignments in English often gives pupils precise and explicit guidance on how to improve their work and learning. In most other subjects, procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress are satisfactory and show room for improvement. In terms of what public tests and examinations require, teachers know and understand well what pupils have mastered and need to learn next from their own tests and internal examinations. In this respect, they make good use of the records obtained to inform their teaching. On the other hand, on-going marking of course and homework gives teachers less clear indications of the progress pupils of differing abilities are making and therefore they are less equipped to give pupils helpful feedback on how to improve and do better next time. In respect of on-going assessment of progress through programmes of study for pupils of differing abilities, the situation is less secure and consistent. The school has identified the use of assessment procedures as a development priority and should build on the good practice that exists. Effective practice in clear and consistent assessment of pupils' progress and in matching learning activities in lessons and homework to pupils' abilities should be shared systematically between all departments.
59. The school has very good procedures in place for monitoring and promoting attendance, discipline and good behaviour. Attendance is closely monitored by form tutors, heads of year and reception staff on a pupil by pupil basis and overall school attendance is regularly checked by the educational welfare officer. Daily lists of absent pupils appear on the staff notice board and any unauthorised absence is vigilantly followed up by telephone, letter and home visit. The school effectively promotes good attendance through the award of

certificates for full or near full attendance and through publicly displaying statistics on a form by form basis.

60. The behaviour policy outlines clear behaviour expectations and effective procedures for promoting the code, which are consistently applied by all adults in the school. All teachers and other adults working in the school make good and frequent use of praise and encouragement. Pupils are rewarded with letters home and public mention in assemblies when they receive positive testimonials from teaching and form staff for good effort and behaviour during lessons. These arise from efficient and effective monitoring lesson by lesson of pupils' work and attitudes. Cotswold is an orderly community in which all pupils value rewards and commendations greatly, show pride in their achievements and respect behaviour expectations. The school has good procedures in place to deal with bullying and is effective in eliminating all forms of oppressive behaviour.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

61. The school enjoys very good and effective links with parents, which contribute positively to pupils' learning and development. There is widespread agreement amongst the parent body that the school achieves good standards of behaviour, that pupils make good progress, that teaching is good, that expectations are high and that the school is helping pupils to become mature, responsible and ready for life after school. A few parents expressed concern over the quantity and appropriateness of homework, about how the school informs them about their child's progress and how closely the school works with parents. Parents' views were methodically taken into account at all stages of the inspection.
62. Inspectors found that homework is consistently set across the curriculum and through the age range, although there is some variability in the regularity and appropriateness of homework. In the majority of instances the work being set is a logical and complementary extension to classwork and does promote learning and understanding. Some examples of homework, such as completion of class work, may well prove less than appropriate for different abilities, resulting in some pupils having more to do than others and in other pupils spending more than the allotted time. Overall inspectors found that the quantity and quality of homework they saw in practice were generally satisfactory but found that there was scope for sharing good practice between subjects in matching homework to differing abilities and interests of the pupils.
63. Great care is taken to inform parents about their child's progress and respond to their concerns. All parents receive formal communication from the school on progress and development at least once a term. Grade sheets showing attainment level and effort grades are used one term, full annual reviews another and there is a formal parents evening in the third term. Parents of any pupils whose progress is causing concern are contacted early and appropriate strategies to ensure improvement are jointly agreed. Attendance at official parents evenings and at special evenings, for example about Year 9 options choices and pre Sixth Form evenings, is very high and parents generally feel well informed about pupils' progress. A few parents felt they could receive more information about how their child was getting on. In comparison with other secondary schools, the regularity and detail of formal communication on progress is good and the school does everything it can to provide additional data and answer queries whenever requested. Annual reports are of a generally good standard. In subjects, supported by better assessment schemes, reports provide clear statements of what children can do, helpful advice on what pupils need to do to improve and in some cases reports link back to assessments of class and homework.
64. Formal and informal contacts with parents are comprehensive, extensive and effective in ensuring parental involvement in the education and development of their children. The

school's network of links with parents and members of the community securely roots its work in the locality. At a meeting during the inspection many parents and other community representatives expressed their views about how open and welcoming the school is and how pleased they were with the ways in which the school keeps them informed and involved in their children's education. The school does work closely with parents.

65. Informal communication with parents through newsletters, general letters and at social and sporting events is comprehensive and presents good opportunities to build the partnership relationship. The parents of Year 7 pupils have recently been asked for their views about the school and their experiences as their children approach the end of their first term. Responses are overwhelmingly positive and show 97% of parents believing their children have settled in very well. Similar views were expressed in the pre-inspection parental questionnaire. Year 10 pupils have recently received grade cards highlighting effort grades for homework; all pupils in the year group were graded in the top three categories. The receipt slips from these grade cards contain many extremely complimentary comments from parents on the work of the school and the particular efforts being made with their children. Parents are actively encouraged to support school events and fixtures, and they respond well. Many parents made a point of telling inspectors how much they and their children had enjoyed the recent production of *Grease*. Overall the great majority of the informed and discerning parent group are extremely supportive of the school and enjoy a real partnership relationship. The attendance at and support for a range of fundraising and social activities organised by parents and governors make a significant contribution to the education provided at Cotswold.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

66. The headteacher and senior managers have an uncompromisingly clear vision of the direction of the school. Their determined efforts to communicate this vision to all staff and governors in the pursuit of higher standards have been very effective. They have been particularly successful in creating an ethos and culture of challenge and success, which parents and governors overwhelmingly support. Since the appointment of the headteacher in 1995, results in tests and examinations have risen to the point, where in 2000 the school has very high standards in national terms as well as in comparison with similar schools at both Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 and the best A-level results in Gloucestershire comprehensive schools. The school's motto, printed on the logo, is "Friendship, Knowledge". This principle and the aims, as set out in the vision statement at the front of the school development plan, are very clearly reflected in the work of the school.
67. The school has developed several effective strategies to evaluate its performance. Senior managers undertake much of the formal monitoring in the school, which is regular and cost-effective. They comprise a range of formal and informal activities, varying from scrutiny of pupils' books, to interviews with middle managers, which are minuted, and the analysis of assessment data. Whilst they take main responsibility for this, they have deliberately encouraged subject leaders and classroom teachers to focus on improving the quality of teachers' and pupils' work in the classroom. The result is that monitoring at departmental level is less well developed. These existing procedures for monitoring standards focus wholly on improving results in tests and examinations and have helped to bring about marked improvements in teaching and learning since the previous inspection. Whilst current procedures for monitoring curriculum provision are most explicit and thoroughly developed at senior level, they are largely informal or implicit at middle management level. There are real strengths in the assessment of some subjects on which to build in developing departmental monitoring further, but currently these procedures vary from subject to subject for monitoring teaching and learning and for using the information from assessments to monitor curriculum planning methodically so that it informs teaching. In history and geography, the monitoring of teaching within the department is unsatisfactory. It is good in design and technology,

mathematics, English and art, while in science it is very good. In other subjects, it is satisfactory.

68. Existing assessments are the main basis for tracking and monitoring pupils' progress throughout the school, measuring levels allocated in marking of work and internal tests against the National Curriculum test scores pupils achieved in Key Stage 2. However, inspectors' scrutiny of marking indicated that the approach to assessment of allocating levels or grades was inconsistently applied, particularly with lower attaining pupils for whom it might prove demotivating. Reference only to levels or grades also gives limited feedback to teachers in monitoring the progress pupils are making against National Curriculum and GCSE exam subject requirements. However, improved results show that this tightly focused approach has clear strengths.
69. As the results of internal assessments are made available, targets for National Curriculum test and public examination results are revised upwards with the intention that these standards are increasingly driven up. On the basis of these current monitoring procedures of their subjects, heads of department meet regularly with their link senior manager in order to be held accountable against test and examination targets based on the outcomes of their existing departmental assessment of pupils' work and whatever monitoring of teaching and learning is undertaken. This approach was judged to be satisfactory overall in terms of how subject leaders are held to be accountable.
70. To date, this combination of formal senior management monitoring strategies and varying approaches in departments has proved successful in raising standards of academic performance to current levels. However, in order to continue to meet challenging targets for raising attainment in tests and public examinations still further, subject leaders should build on what is satisfactory by sharing what is better between departments and develop more accountable and effective procedures for monitoring in all departments. These should address the quality of teaching in all subject lessons as well as issues arising about pupils' learning from on-going assessment and scrutiny of class and homework, particularly for boys and girls and pupils of differing abilities.
71. Leadership and management in departments are good overall. The core subjects and information and communication technology are very ably led and managed, design and technology, history, art, physical education, modern languages and religious education are good and geography is soundly led and managed. The drive to improve standards through establishing a culture of challenge and success has led to improved teaching and learning in almost all departments. This has been achieved by the sustained commitment of all staff, led by the headteacher and senior managers, to create a culture which combines academic achievement and strong personal and social development for all pupils, linked effectively through governors and parents to the wider local community. Teachers new to the school are quickly assimilated into the closely-knit community and more recently arrived staff enjoy working at the school.
72. The commitment to raising standards is evident throughout the school and something of which the headteacher, senior managers and the governors are justifiably proud. Much of this success is due to improved and detailed strategic planning at senior management level. The school's priority of raising standards is strongly reflected in its current development plan, where success of developments is seen primarily in terms of the impact on test and public examination results. The current school development plan sets out defined priorities for the whole school and for departments, but only outlines in very general terms how these are to be implemented and achieved over one year only. In contrast to this, financial planning undertaken with governors' rigorous involvement is projected in detail over a four or five year period. Since the previous inspection, progress on strategic development has been good,

especially in the directive approach adopted by the headteacher and senior management team to work uncompromisingly towards high standards and a culture of success. This has demonstrably brought about spectacular improvements in standards to date.

73. In ways that reflect the difference in monitoring between senior and middle management, the capacity for planning and monitoring improvement at departmental monitoring is less precise and effective in identifying the progress towards achieving the goals set. Consequently middle managers are not well placed to pick up problems or issues in realising developments as they arise, such as for instance the appropriateness of the RSA CLAIT course in Year 11. In planning at this level, the exclusive focus on test and examination targets gives subject leaders little immediate or interim idea that a development is or is not progressing satisfactorily. Clear interim criteria should be developed to inform staff responsible about progress in implementing school and curriculum change, drawing on the results of more methodical and accountable middle management monitoring.
74. The drive towards high standards has been effectively supported by the strategic use of performance targets, which have been set on an annual basis for the headteacher and members of the senior management team. The governors have set targets with the headteacher and they have been made aware of those set for members of the team. This good process extends to annual reviews by senior and middle managers of departmental performance in terms of test and examination results. Each middle manager meets at least fortnightly with a link senior critical friend to review results, development plan targets and other topics. This approach should make broadened use of closer monitoring of teaching and learning at subject level to pick up whether managed developments and changes are on track.
75. The governing body is very able and is actively committed to the principle of the school providing comprehensive 11-18 education in the central Cotswolds. As part of their monitoring of the school, the governors meet in their committees, review policies and talk with parents and pupils. Individual governors on the curriculum committee with specific interest in subjects are designated particular departments. This builds on the established approach of the governor with responsibility for special educational needs, who has been very involved in reviewing and implementing policy. Probing review discussions have been introduced between subject leaders and members of the Curriculum committee. To date, they have involved the heads of department of all core subjects in thorough and minuted appraisal of their contribution to the work of the school. This is informed by the regular, cost-effective monitoring programme undertaken by senior managers to review the school's performance against targets for attainment. Through this process, governors have become very aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. On this basis, the governors delegate issues of more detailed strategic planning and implementation of improvements to senior and middle managers. It is now therefore appropriate to broaden both monitoring and development planning at departmental level beyond one year developments. Staff involved should seek to combine both test and examination targets with interim criteria drawing on monitoring of teaching and learning to inform progress in implementing change. The headteacher and senior managers already see how their planned development of Performance Management across the school can contribute to this broadening process in planning ahead and implementing successful change.
76. Financial management and control in the school are very good. The school's limited budget is enhanced by specific grants and by the occasional grant from a benefactor, such as one which enabled the school to purchase a good number of computers. Within the constraints of its budget, the school uses its resources wisely and to good effect, as demonstrated by the improved quality of teaching and learning and the high standards the school is now achieving. The recommendations of the recent audit reports have been addressed. Finance is well deployed to the school's priorities to raise standards. As a group, governors have worked

tirelessly to get financial support for the school's bid for specialist language college status. They networked with colleagues and members of the local community and successfully secured the pledges of financial support required, most several of which have been pledged by individuals.

77. The school has growing computer resources. Pupils and students use IT extensively and are well supported to do so. Two members of staff are qualified trainers within the New Opportunities Fund programme and will train all staff within the school. Office staff use word processors and the bursar uses new technology to manage the finances. One deputy headteacher uses information technology to record and track pupils' progress, whilst others on the senior management team are developing the capacity to take full advantage of new technology to analyse assessment data for progress made by ability and gender across cohorts or other groups to inform curriculum management and planning.
78. The school's existing accommodation is used to good effect throughout the day in lessons, extra-curricular activities and school events and pupils show high levels of respect for all areas. Rooms provide stimulating and positive environment for teaching and learning, and varied, attractive, informative and stimulating displays are extensively mounted in both classrooms and corridors. The impact on pupils of ideas, visual images, news of school successes or imminent events is a key part of the school's ethos. The school library provides an excellent environment for accessing information through books and electronic sources and is open every lunchtime, managed effectively by the school librarian.
79. Some areas of the curriculum, such as in Key Stage 4 design and technology and in some aspects of the physical education curriculum, are affected by accommodation constraints to the extent that it affects what can be delivered to all pupils. However, the school has worked hard to secure funding for a series of building and refurbishment projects. Newly built areas, such as the Sixth Form block, are pleasant and fit for their purpose. The next phase of the building programme is due to start soon. Existing accommodation is however very well used, is well respected and cared for and both reflects as well as supports the school's ethos and the quality of education provided.
80. Teachers are well qualified and training is provided for them, based on the priorities of the school development plan. The school has made good progress in developing staff appraisal and provision for professional development, which was raised as an issue in the previous inspection. This improvement is informed by a sharp focus on achieving challenging targets for attainment in public tests and examinations. The recent training in literacy was comprehensive and involved all staff working together on a training day. This resulted in a practically focused policy now in operation and evidence from inspection observations recognises the successes already achieved in effective teaching and learning of key aspects of these basic skills. Whilst a number of teachers teach outside their main specialism, no unsatisfactory teaching was observed. This is almost entirely due to effective support and guidance from specialist colleagues. Senior managers have a comparatively high teaching timetable, which helps to maintain the breadth of options, particularly in the Sixth Form. The contact ratio for all staff, shared by all teachers, is very high in comparison with similar schools nationally.
81. The principles of Best Value are well employed in the school. Constant comparison with other local schools and a close targeting of resources to best meet the perceived expectations of parents and the community mean that the school has continued to grow in popularity. The Sixth Form is an excellent example of the comparisons made in that certain courses, which are well done elsewhere in the area, are not then offered in the school, such as the Agriculture courses. However, in spite of comparatively low numbers in the Sixth Form, mainly in respect of the small Year 13 group, the numbers of AS/A-levels offered is high.

This means that some courses in Year 13 run uneconomically, involving a degree of subsidy in terms of maintaining small teaching groups in some subjects against big groups in others, but senior managers and governors believe that this is an investment for the future of a Sixth Form centre within the local community. The school has consulted with staff and governors on the recent bid for specialist school status as a language college. Parents, pupils and the wider community have been informed and consulted about the bid, involved as sponsors in many individual cases.

82. The ethos of the school is excellent, leading to an environment in which teachers can teach and pupils can learn. This has made and continues to make a significant contribution to the raising of standards in all areas. The positive climate of achievement, as shown when Cotswold pupils won a debating competition against pupils from a public school, convinces all pupils and students of their ability to succeed and raises their expectations of themselves.

THE SIXTH FORM

83. Standards of attainment and personal development of students in the Sixth Form are very high. In 2000, students at the school gained the best A-level results in Gloucestershire comprehensive schools on a number of measures. GNVQ results were also very good.
84. The numbers in Year 12 have risen considerably this year because 70% of pupils who sat GCSE examinations at the school in the summer returned to the Sixth Form. The school is projecting a continuing rise in numbers sustained by the larger cohorts in the school reaching Years 12 and 13.
85. Excellent guidance is given to students before they join the Sixth Form. Guidance is clear and objective about courses offered elsewhere as well as at the school. This very comprehensive provision comprises interviews, taster courses and support through personal and social education and from the careers service. The increased numbers are due to the growing regard in which the Sixth Form is held. The social environment is very good. The Sixth Form council has real advisory strength. The pastoral curriculum is very good and matches the high standards of academic performance demonstrated by results in examinations.
86. The school has embraced the implications of Curriculum 2000 to broaden curricular opportunities. A successful balance is achieved with parents' and students' high expectations of academic excellence. Currently 20 A-level or AS level courses are offered which is well beyond that typically available for this size of Sixth Form. Some of the Year 13 A-level groups are small and have to be subsidised from elsewhere in the budget. However, the school believes that running these courses is essential in attracting increasing numbers of the more able students both to the school as well as into the Sixth Form. As a result of this commitment by governors and senior managers to maintaining and developing the Sixth Form, senior managers undertake a substantial teaching commitment in order to enable groups to operate and subjects to have the chance to grow. This strategy is meeting with success in 2000, when for the first time 70% of Year 11 opted to continue their studies at the school. In addition to the current GNVQ intermediate qualification in business, the school plans to broaden the curriculum further by increasing the availability of GNVQ courses as numbers permit. The school demonstrates the principles of best value well in the consideration it gives to which vocational courses it will offer. The Community Sports Leadership Award and a photography course are also offered in addition to the opportunity to retake mathematics and English GCSE. The Sixth Form prospectus provides good advice to students choosing courses and this level of advice and guidance continues to be provided throughout the Sixth Form. Very detailed work has been undertaken on the provision of key skills with each subject area contracting to provide a required element. There are key skills tutors whose role it is to assess and track achievement. An audit of this area will take place in January 2001.

87. The school has an effective pastoral care system whereby Year 12 students are introduced to Sixth Form life during a probationary period of 6 weeks, have interviews with senior staff and are monitored throughout their course. In Year 12 there is a good programme for pupils who may leave after one year in the Sixth Form and on-going guidance for all during the spring and summer of Year 12. At the end of Year 12 there is a week of work experience. In Year 13, students are supported to choose courses in higher education or to find employment. The school has compact arrangements with Cheltenham and Gloucester College of Higher Education. With the support of the local careers service, the school provides 'drop-in' access to careers information and guidance.
88. There is excellent provision for students to develop their personal and social skills. They are involved in the school council on which all tutor groups have representatives. This has resulted in presentations to governors and parents about school uniform. The Sixth Form council organises social and charitable events and will run mock elections next May. They also run a highly acclaimed "Bullybusters" service and train up Year 11 students ready for them to undertake work when they come into the Sixth Form. Students in the Sixth Form also do community service with younger, less able pupils, which is co-ordinated by the special educational needs co-ordinator. Those involved in the sports leadership award help at a sports afternoon for primary school pupils and they act as auxiliary staff on the school sports day. All Sixth Form students undertake duties around the school although there is no official prefect system.
89. As a result of this carefully conceived provision, students attain very well indeed and throughout the time pupils spend at the school, there is an emphasis on developing them as independent learners and capable and confident young people. This reaches fruition in the sixth form where students are able, confident and articulate and present themselves as civic-minded young men and women, able and willing to play a full part in society.
90. The Sixth Form is very effectively led and managed by one of the two deputy headteachers, who, as Head of Sixth Form, co-ordinates the pastoral and academic programmes and takes a direct role in providing guidance and counselling for students' progress after school. The commitment of the governors and management reflects the original intention behind the merger in 1988 of two secondary schools on the Cotswold site, that there should be a thriving sixth form centre in the local area. Governors and senior managers recognise the pressure this places on budgets, but their carefully planned financial forecasting is matched by a solution to staffing issues that spreads the burden widely and avoids impacting significantly on other aspects of the school's provision. At the moment, no group sizes in either Key Stage 3 or 4 are excessive and the Key Stage 4 curriculum maintains its breadth with average groupings that are larger than the average. Whilst there are some Sixth Form group sizes, which are barely economically viable on their own, many of which are in the Year 13 (28 students), out of a Year 12 of 77, there are 13 groups of 12 or more students, of which 4 groups have 20 or more students. Some of these larger groups are maintained as a means of optimising the cost-effectiveness of the relatively small overall Sixth Form. The school now faces a much less awkward position with recently increased numbers, but the progress and success of the sixth form are crucial to its continued growth and consolidation.
91. Given the changing character and size of the Sixth Form and the strong local community commitment to its future, a major task for governors and management has been to convince parents of the value and credibility of a Sixth Form education at the Cotswold School. With recent results now positively comparable with all Gloucestershire comprehensive school Sixth Forms, this success helps to corroborate the commitment to retaining the Sixth Form. The staff and management still work hard to improve and develop the curriculum options and opportunities for students. This the school has successfully managed to do with its

comparatively very wide range of A/AS courses. The most significant area of development for the Sixth Form provision at this point is in broadening, within budget constraints, the range of vocational courses. The school development plan has recognised this area for development in setting a target for 2004, when the school aims to provide academic and vocational courses on a basis of parity of esteem.

92. The school is aware of and actively planning for the following priority for further improvement:-

- to broaden the range of vocational curriculum options.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

93. Building on the very good and shared commitment to improvement and capacity to succeed, governors and staff are addressing the following minor issues:

- They are building on improved Key Stage 3 English results in raising standards of attainment in English at GCSE (*see paragraphs 12, 15*).
- They have the capacity to share good practice in on-going assessment to:
 - i give all pupils, particularly boys in Key Stage 4, clearer guidance on how to improve their learning and achieve their potential (*see paragraphs 8, 58, 68*);
 - ii to inform both teaching and monitoring of subjects (*see paragraphs 36, 40, 67, 69, 70; 102, 108, 109, 116, 117, 122, 123, 139, 140, 151, 152, 161, 162, 181, 184, 194, 195, 207, 209*).
- They are in a good position to use outcomes of this monitoring of teaching and learning:
 - i to share good practice in further improving the match of the subject curriculum for boys and girls of all abilities in lessons and homework (*see paragraphs 32, 35, 36, 39, 42*);
 - ii to broaden strategic planning beyond one year developments, combining test and exam targets with interim criteria drawing on monitoring of teaching and learning to inform progress in implementing change (*see paragraphs 72, 73, 74*).
- They have plans in place to ensure curriculum provision in design and technology and information and communication technology in Key Stage 4, and broader vocational options for less academic pupils in Key Stage 4 and in the Sixth Form (*see paragraphs 42, 43, 86, 174*).

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	172
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	142

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
5	36	39	18	0	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-Y13	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	739	105
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	42	

Special educational needs	Y7-Y13	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	15	1
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	77	1

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	3

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	24
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	26

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	6.1
National comparative data	5.9

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.1
National comparative data	0.4

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	2000	61	63	124

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	49	51	52
	Girls	59	55	52
	Total	108	106	104
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	87 (79)	86 (78)	84
	National	63 (63)	65 (62)	59 (55)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	53 (41)	59 (54)	53 (42)
	National	28 (28)	42 (38)	30 (23)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	49	52	54
	Girls	60	59	61
	Total	109	111	115
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	88 (75)	90 (85)	93 (89)
	National	64 (64)	66 (64)	62 (60)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	52 (32)	65 (57)	59 (57)
	National	31 (31)	39 (37)	29 (28)

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year	2000	58	40	98

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	28	57	58
	Girls	27	40	40
	Total	55	97	98
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	56 (47)	99 (95)	100 (97)
	National	47.4 (46.6)	90.6 (90.9)	95.6 (95.8)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	45
	National	38.4 (38.0)

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

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

Attainment at the end of the sixth form

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A level or AS-level examinations	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	22	20	42

Average A/AS points score per candidate	For candidates entered for 2 or more A levels or equivalent			For candidates entered for fewer than 2 A levels or equivalent		
	Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
School	18.1	25.3	21.6	2	2.9	3.2
National	17.7	18.6	18.2	2.6	2.9	2.7

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

Vocational qualifications		Number	% success rate
Number in their final year of studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	11	100
	National	n/a	n/a

International Baccalaureate		Number	% success rate
Number entered for the International Baccalaureate Diploma and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all they studied	School	0	0
	National	n/a	0

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	3
White	689
Any other minority ethnic group	0

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	1	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-Y13**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	41.7
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	17.7

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y7-Y13

Total number of education support staff	11
Total aggregate hours worked per week	241

Deployment of teachers: Y7-Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	80.5
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Average teaching group size: Y7-Y13

Key Stage 3	24.6
Key Stage 4	22.7

Financial information

Financial year	1999/2000
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	£
Total income	1680253
Total expenditure	1687475
Expenditure per pupil	2446
Balance brought forward from previous year	80988
Balance carried forward to next year	73766

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	739
Number of questionnaires returned	437

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	44	49	5	1	0
My child is making good progress in school.	47	49	11	0	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	32	56	5	0	6
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	25	47	20	6	2
The teaching is good.	31	60	3	0	5
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	32	46	19	3	2
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	53	36	7	3	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	60	36	2	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	28	49	17	3	2
The school is well led and managed.	46	40	4	3	6
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	44	46	5	1	4
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	35	49	6	2	9

Summary of parents' and carers' responses

Parents' views were methodically taken into account at all stages of the inspection. In response to questionnaire and written returns, the inspection found that the school works in an extremely effective partnership with parents, is responsive to their concerns and provides excellent information about pupils' progress based on regular and close monitoring of pupils and pupils' academic performance and personal development. The school's network of links with parents and members of the community securely roots its work in the locality. Inspectors fully endorse the positive views expressed and found that the concerns raised by some parents about homework, information about progress and working with parents were not substantiated by the evidence gathered.

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

ENGLISH

94. In the four years since the last inspection, the percentage of pupils gaining Level 5 and above in the Year 9 National Curriculum tests has remained consistently above the national average and above the average for similar schools. GCSE English results, which were below the national average at the last inspection, rose to just above the national average in 1998 but fell below it again in 1999 and 2000. The most recent English literature results are above the national average based on the average pupil points score. This was the first year in which almost all pupils were entered for both GCSE English and English literature (previously only the top sets were entered for English literature). In 2000 the proportion of pupils gaining the top grades (A*-B) was in line with the national average for both English and English literature. Results in A-level English literature have been broadly in line with national averages.
95. The newly appointed head of department responded to the relatively weak 2000 GCSE results with an effective short-term action plan to raise standards. Following an almost complete changeover of teaching staff, the subject leader re-organised departmental management, documentation, meetings and provided clear leadership and a very good example of classroom management, discipline and good teaching. This is having an impact on standards at Key Stage 4. Teaching is now good or better in 90% of English lessons and is particularly strong in Key Stage 4 and in the Sixth Form. In all lessons, in all years, seen during the inspection, pupils were judged to be working at a standard that was at least appropriate for their age and ability, and to be making good progress. This was true also of the samples seen of the written work undertaken by pupils to be entered for GCSE this year.
96. At the end of Key Stage 3 standards are above national expectations for pupils at this stage. In speaking and listening activities, pupils are articulate and confident, are prepared to extend and develop their responses and to ask questions to clarify understanding. Most pupils read fluently and with appropriate expression. Strong responses to challenging literature texts characterise work at this key stage. For example, Year 9 upper set pupils were able to compare characters in Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mocking Bird* and a lower band group were able to discuss Blake's *The Sick Rose*, going beyond the surface meaning of the poem to develop some understanding of its symbolism. Poetry writing is also strong throughout the key stage. Prose writing is usually well organised, showing control over a range of sentence structures and varied vocabulary, particularly in upper band groups. Effective writing was also seen in Year 9 lower band groups, for example well-structured newspaper reports, written in an appropriate style. However, some lower band writing is less assured where strong personal responses are marred by technical inaccuracies and a less extensive vocabulary.
97. At the end of Key Stage 4, attainment exceeded national expectations in most of the lessons seen and provides a further indication that standards of attainment are improving in the subject. Many pupils are confident in discussion and mature in their expression, for example, in discussions in a top Year 11 set about character and dramatic irony in the play *An Inspector Calls*. Lower band groups also do well in speaking and listening. A Year 11 class, for example, was able to sustain an extended role-play in work related to Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men*. Written assignments on the texts studied are generally well-organised and well-presented, show good knowledge of the text and, especially in the work of more able pupils, demonstrate the ability to discuss language using appropriate critical vocabulary. Carefully paragraphed examples of persuasive writing were also evident (lower band group). Students in A-level groups can sustain discussion of challenging topics and their written work

shows a growing confidence in analysis and in the presentation of complex ideas. They deploy a range of effective study skills, including redrafting to improve clarity of expression.

98. In other subjects too pupils demonstrate good speaking and listening skills. Most pupils read reasonably fluently and confidently and are developing skills in reading for information. Pupils write for a variety of purposes and audiences and standards of writing across the curriculum are generally good, particularly in history, religious education and geography, where writing is particularly well supported. While key words are identified in all subjects to help pupils with the spelling of technical terms, and some teachers use these effectively to support concept development and spelling, the marking of spelling is not consistent across the curriculum.
99. By the end of both key stages able, middle and low attaining pupils make good progress in English. While progress in lessons is generally good, it is sometimes uneven in Years 7 and 8, when work is occasionally set which does not take into account what pupils already know and understand from their previous learning in the primary schools. Good and often very good progress is made by pupils in Year 9, including pupils with special educational needs for whom teachers plan with good reference to individual education plans. In the lessons seen, both boys and girls made good progress at all key stages, although there were a few cases in Key Stage 4 where boys' speaking and listening were less confident and their writing less technically accurate than girls' work, which links with a pattern over some years of relatively lower standards for boys in GCSE examinations. Very good progress was made in a Year 12 GCSE English re-sit class in which students responded well to challenging work. Pupils concentrate well, display very high levels of interest and enthusiasm and display attitudes to their work, which are consistently very good or excellent.
100. In all but two lessons seen, teaching and learning were good or better and in over 50% teaching and learning were very good or excellent. They were never less than satisfactory. Teaching is characterised by: high expectations; very good subject knowledge well pitched to meet pupils' needs; the delivery of well-planned, well-paced lessons using a variety of teaching strategies. Skilful questioning encourages pupils to extend and develop their answers. Learning objectives are clearly communicated. There is an infectious enthusiasm for the subject. Very effective display celebrates pupils' successes and provides an on-going record of study. Sometimes in Key Stage 3, however, writing tasks are set without making explicit what pupils will need to do in order to achieve a high standard. There is little evidence of redrafting skills being taught at this key stage and pupils are uncertain about what they should do with the spellings their teachers have corrected.
101. The curriculum broadly meets the demands of the National Curriculum for English and offers equal access to all pupils. Planning in English ensures that pupils are challenged throughout Key Stage 3 in terms of the emphasis on coverage and range of texts, rather than in methodically ensuring that pupils of all abilities have appropriate opportunities to develop the necessary skills and understanding. Assessment policies are clear and generally well implemented by teachers. Marking is conscientious, although some teachers are more successful than others at setting clear targets, which will help pupils to improve their work. The department makes a strong contribution to the pupils' spiritual, moral and social education and also to the school's extra-curricular provision, including an extremely well-supported and successful Debating Society, which is helping to raise standards of speaking and listening.
102. The head of department provides very good leadership, effectively supported by senior managers. She has welded together a strong English team and has taken clear, immediate and effective action to raise standards especially in relation to work seen at Key Stage 4 and ensured that improvements have been made on the position reported in the last inspection. She has begun to develop procedures for monitoring policy and practice although development planning does not specify interim criteria inform the department's progress

towards its priorities. To date, development planning has been focused more on one-year test and examination targets, than on longer-term goals for both provision and results. The department is aware of the following priority to improve provision still further:-

103. to broaden strategic planning beyond one year developments, combining test and examination targets with interim criteria drawing on monitoring of teaching and learning to inform progress in implementing change.

MATHEMATICS

104. At each key stage, standards of achievement in mathematics are impressively high. The department has continued to improve on the very good performances at the time of the last inspection. In 1999, 78% of pupils reached Level 5 or higher in the Key Stage 3 national tests, with girls performing significantly better than boys. In 2000, 87% of pupils reached Level 5 or higher. This was 22% higher than the national average, and the gap between girls and boys closed to only 8%. The school's overall Key Stage 3 performance in mathematics at each of Level 5+, Level 6+ and average points score is graded A* against similar schools - the highest available grade.
105. Performance at GCSE in both mathematics and statistics is similarly impressive. The proportion of pupils achieving grades A*-C has risen steadily over recent years. In 1999 and 2000, 55% and 59% respectively of pupils achieved this standard, well ahead of national averages. Both performances are graded A against similar schools. Contrary to the national trend, girls out-performed boys by 23% 1999 compared to a national difference of 1%. However, both were above the national average. This gap reduced to 4% in 2000. All indicators confirm that both boys and girls did significantly better in mathematics than other pupils nationally. Results in statistics are exceptional, with only four pupils out of a total of 161 failing to achieve grades A*-C over a seven year period.
106. Results at A-level in mathematics, statistics and further mathematics are no less impressive. In most years 100% of pupils achieve grades A to E at A-level. Over the past three years, 65% of all pupils have achieved grades A, B or C. In 2000, one student achieved national recognition for an outstanding performance in statistics.
107. These high standards at each stage are reflected in the quality of work seen in lessons and pupils' work during the inspection. Most pupils have a good command of basic mathematical skills, and are able to apply them appropriately in a variety of contexts. Pupils of average and higher ability and sixth formers reach excellent standards. Most pupils have a good understanding of basic algebra and work on shape and space. Statistics and data handling activities remain a particular strength amongst pupils of all ages. There are no differences in the way in which boys and girls are treated or taught within the department. The quality of GCSE coursework for both mathematics and statistics is very high. However, some lower attaining pupils do experience severe problems with basic numeracy and require more extended and practical activities to support their learning. These aspects of their learning should be more clearly indicated in individual education plans. This work needs to be supported by the development of a whole school approach to numeracy as recognised in the whole school development plan. Currently pupils get significant opportunities to practice data handling and calculation skills in science, geography, design and technology and art, but such opportunities in other subjects are neither consistently exploited nor planned.
108. The quality of teaching and learning is very high. All lessons seen were satisfactory or better, with almost 70% of lessons graded good or better and over 40% very good or excellent. This represents real progress since the time of the last inspection.

109. The quality of relationships is exemplary and contributes to the very high quality of teaching and learning. Pupils across the full age, gender and ability range are treated with calmness, generosity and good humour. In every case, pupils respond with very positive attitudes and commitment, which underpin their progress and achievement in the subject. Standards of day-to-day marking vary, but in most cases pupils have access to frequent, supportive and diagnostic comments which provide them with a clear sense of their achievements and what they need to do to improve. Records kept on the progress of pupils are very detailed and useful. They are not yet being used as fully as they could be, however, particularly to monitor gender differences and the progress in numeracy of lower attaining pupils. The lack of such systematic analysis is limiting the effectiveness of the department's planning and implementation of further improvement. The use of information and communication technology to support the mathematics curriculum is severely hampered by the lack of access to computers. This was a concern at the time of the last inspection and is unlikely to be overcome until the department has access to a dedicated computer suite. Such additional resource should be seen in light of the department's task of raising the achievement of boys in Key Stage 4 to be in line with that of girls.
110. This very good department is managed well by an experienced, highly respected and talented teacher. Through personal example, he has fostered a strong sense of cohesion and ensured a secure departmental focus on maintaining high standards of achievement. The department is aware of the following priorities to improve provision still further:-
- to develop a more imaginative approach to developing the mathematical understanding of lower attaining pupils;
 - to extend systematically information and communication technology opportunities for all pupils, and in particular boys in Key Stage 4;
 - to broaden strategic planning beyond one year developments, combining test and examination targets with interim criteria drawing on monitoring of teaching and learning to inform progress in implementing change.

SCIENCE

111. Standards in science have improved since the previous inspection and represent rising trends since 1998 in both Key Stages 3 and 4. At the end of Year 9, four fifths of the pupils (82%) reached Level 5 or above in the national test in 2000. This is well above national expectations for pupils of this age and in similar schools. At the end of Year 11, in 2000, nearly two thirds (63%) of the pupils entered attained A*-C grades in GCSE double-award science. These results are well above the national average and indicate another improvement since 1999 where half the pupils reached the same level. Boys' attainment was marginally higher than that for girls at the end of Key Stage 3, but a significantly higher proportion of girls attained A*-C in GCSE double award. At the end of the Sixth Form, the small number of students achieve middle range grades in the sciences including biology which has improved since the previous inspection. In lessons and in work seen in all key stages, pupils with special educational needs make good progress. In 1999 and 2000, all pupils entered for GCSE attained A*-G in double-award science, although there is currently no alternative accreditation for pupils unsuited to the full double award GCSE course. Talented pupils also make good progress. In 2000, two Year 9 pupils achieved at Level 8 and two achieved Exceptional Performance, the highest levels available in the National Curriculum tests. Attainment in double award science in 1999 was slightly below the pupils' overall average in all subjects taken, but in 2000 it was higher. In work seen in lessons and in pupils' books and folders, standards of attainment were above average in both Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 and well above average in the Sixth Form, which corroborates the standards attained in previous public examination results.

112. In lessons and in work seen in all key stages, pupils with special educational needs make good progress. Teachers make adequate use of the indicators included in individual education plans for targeting support for pupils. The lower ability pupils can form simple conclusions, for example, in a Year 9 group, studying physical processes, could see how placing a handle as far from a hinge as possible gave a greater turning force. More able Year 8 pupils studying materials and their properties are able to use the reactivity series to predict displacement and conclude which new products are formed. Most pupils develop their scientific skills through practical activities where they can make predictions and test out their ideas. Staff should plan and allocate time to share good practice and the range of effective teaching strategies to meet varying pupils' needs. These aspects of their learning should be more clearly indicated in individual education plans. Pupils' GCSE coursework indicates development of higher level skills such as interpreting and evaluating results. More opportunities for developing these higher level skills should be planned into practical activities from Year 7. Standards in literacy are good. Most pupils use technical language well. This represents an improvement since the previous inspection and is being enhanced through the department's contribution to the school's literacy strategy. Standards in numeracy are satisfactory, more able pupils in Key Stage 3 can draw line graphs, lines of best fit and calculate gradients.
113. Overall attitudes and behaviour are very good. In all lessons seen, attitudes were good and in over four fifths of lessons (88%) attitudes were even better. Where teaching is very good, the very good relationships enable pupils to develop and demonstrate their ideas. For example, pupils work in front of the class at the board, present their answers to others and give responses that are valued by their teachers and their peers. Where teaching is good or better, pupils are actively engaged in their work and complete tasks with obvious interest and enthusiasm.
114. The overall quality of teaching and learning has improved since the previous inspection. In Key Stages 3 and 4 and in the Sixth Form, they are very good overall. No teaching or learning observed was less than satisfactory. In a quarter of lessons, they were excellent. The scientific explanations given by most of the teachers effectively enable pupils to develop their understanding of scientific ideas and concepts. All teachers use the adapted commercial schemes of work well and communicate the intended learning outcomes to pupils at the beginning of new units and each lesson. Where teaching and learning are good or better, teachers communicate their enthusiasm for their subject through good rapport with the pupils and have high expectations of all abilities. They value pupils' contributions and use humour effectively to maintain their interest. In the best lessons, teachers take pupils' prior learning into account particularly effectively in selecting lesson activities and learning strategies to develop and consolidate pupils' understanding and skills. They also include time-limited activities to ensure the pace of the lesson and pupils' involvement and concentration are maintained. In the best lessons, pupils' learning is summarised at the end of the lesson. In some lessons seen, less effective teaching was over-prescriptive where opportunities for pupils to show initiative, and to show what they can do were missed. Some question and answer sessions involved only a small number of pupils and were superficial. Marking is regular but variable in quality since it only occasionally identifies the next steps for pupils to take to improve. Most pupils are aware of their progress and their target grades. Clear parameters for behaviour are set by all teachers and understood by the pupils who respond positively.
115. The science curriculum meets statutory requirements and there is equal access for all pupils including those with special educational needs. The curriculum provides opportunities for pupils' social development through paired and group work. The very popular and effective science club enhances these. Some planned opportunities promote pupils' moral development through the exploration of social and moral dilemmas in science, and their spiritual awareness

of the implications of science and the cultural heritage of present and past scientists are addressed as they arise without an overall plan to ensure these aspects are methodically addressed. No examples were seen in lessons observed.

116. The departmental systems for monitoring pupils' attainment and progress are good. They have improved since the previous inspection. Teachers track the progress of individual pupils and groups over time. They take prior attainment in the primary schools and at Key Stage 2 into account and work from these indicators to set individual targets for pupils to achieve. Pupils are expected to assess their own performance of the expected learning outcomes for each unit. The outcomes of monitoring should now support the identification and planning of further improvements.
117. The leadership and management of science are very good. There have been substantive changes in staff since the previous inspection. The department is clear about its aim to support the senior management to provide academic excellence. It has identified areas of weakness and as a team has put into place strategies that have significantly improved standards in all key stages. Improvement since the last inspection is very good. Teaching is now clearly stronger and a system of monitoring its effectiveness has been introduced in which the head of department observes some lessons. Changes introduced have been planned systematically, for example, new teaching courses, improved assessment, monitoring and tracking pupils' performance and the increased use of new technology with attention to their impact on learning and progress. Departmental planning is broader than the one-year summary committed to paper and the links with monitoring are stronger in science than in other subjects. The department should both build on this further and share the strengths of its approach with other colleagues. Pupils' enjoyment of science is evident from classroom observations, attendance at the science club, the analysis of a questionnaire of Year 10 pupils and the increasing interest in Sixth Form science courses. The accommodation has been improved and is to be further enhanced by the provision of another laboratory. This will enable all Sixth Form lessons to be taught in appropriate science accommodation.
118. The department is aware of the following priorities for improvement:
- to develop further marking and assessment to guide pupils' next steps in their learning;
 - to plan and allocate time to share good practice and the range of effective teaching strategies;
 - to broaden strategic planning combining test and examination targets with interim criteria drawing on monitoring of teaching and learning to inform progress in implementing change.

ART

119. Standards in art across the school are very high. At Key Stage 3, the majority of pupils meet the national expectations in art and a significant majority achieve well beyond this standard. At Key Stage 4, standards have remained consistently above national expectations, with almost three quarters of candidates entered for examinations achieving A-C passes. Entry numbers for GCSE courses have been around 35-40% of the year-group in recent years. Comparing points scores in art with all pupils' average points score, pupils generally do slightly better in art than in other subjects. In observed lessons in Key Stages 3 and 4, standards were high. At A-level, standards are even higher. Candidates achieve high grades in art and design, A-level art, historical and critical studies, and photography. Standards of work displayed around the school are excellent. Pupils develop increasing confidence in the use of different media and the visual elements as they progress through the school.
120. Pupils understand the vocabulary of the visual language - line, tone, colour, pattern, texture, shape, form and space - and apply this language with increasing effectiveness in their work.

At all key stages, pupils use the work of other artists effectively to support the development of their own work. Pupils show curiosity, interest, and a willingness to investigate with enthusiasm and a sense of discovery. Pupils show a readiness to question their own ideas and adapt and modify their work. Analytical and research skills are good.

121. One of the art rooms is rather cramped and desks need refurbishment. With the exception of information and communication technology, pupils throughout the age range have ample opportunity to work with the range of materials and the breadth of activities specified in the national programmes of study and examination syllabuses. There is balanced coverage of activities and materials. Pupils are given enough lesson time and depth of experience in lessons to master techniques, media and concepts, and then the opportunity to re-apply and consolidate established knowledge and techniques. There is a balance of opportunities to investigate and solve problems within the contexts of art, craft and design, and also to explore and experiment with expression and communication.
122. The quality of teaching and learning in lessons seen at all key stages were always good and often very good. Teachers have a very secure knowledge of the subject and are able to challenge pupils effectively in order to develop their skills. Good demonstrations and expectations ensure that pupils are clear about what they have to do and, as a result, they progress well. Relationships between teachers and pupils, and between pupils themselves, are always good and positive, based on high expectations and the energetic and enthusiastic approach of teachers. A sense of humour, good class control and effective use of questions and answers ensure good progress.
123. The department's leadership is good and has achieved high standards. The department has successfully maintained the strengths identified in the previous inspection report and has made good progress, particularly in the introduction of history of art. The department's schemes of work provide a range of varied, interesting and challenging art activities at all key stages. There are currently few formal procedures to monitor the quality of teaching or of pupils' work and to build on the outcomes of such monitoring in planning to develop the subject further. The introduction of the art history course demonstrates the strengths of management on which the department can now build. The current departmental development plan recognised, for instance, the priority of reviewing the Key Stage 3 curriculum but planning seen is unclear about the interim criteria used to judge how progress towards a new curriculum is to be tracked. The school has a good range of visual resources and books to support teaching about the work of artists, craftspeople and designers. From age 11 to 16 and beyond, pupils have ready access to books and other materials encouraging personal research into a diverse range of art, craft and design. While one new computer has been acquired, there is a need to provide further opportunities for using new technology and access to the Internet to build upon the good work already undertaken. The pupils would also benefit from more visits from artists in residence, particularly from a greater diversity of cultures.
124. The department is aware of the following priority for further improvement:-
 - to extend the range of information technology equipment to enhance further the work done to promote subject skills;
 - to broaden strategic planning beyond one year developments, combining test and examination targets with interim criteria drawing on monitoring of teaching and learning to inform progress in implementing change.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

125. The overall ability of pupils coming into the school in Year 7 is considered to be above average in national curriculum terms but is very variable in terms of their capability in design and technology. Some pupils come to the school quite well versed in the concepts of 'design then make then evaluate' but others have little idea and some have poor skills in drawing.
126. In 2000 standards based on teachers' assessment by the end of Key Stage 3 were well above national averages. Ninety per cent of pupils were assessed at Level 5+ compared to 86% in 1999. This estimation seems somewhat optimistic when compared with the attainment of the current pupils in Year 10, which were judged to be in line with or slightly above, national averages.
127. Standards of attainment in the 2000 GCSE examination at the end of Key Stage 4 were very variable. Sixty three per cent of pupils entered for Textiles gained grades A*-C which is above the national average. Fifty per cent gained similar grades in Food and Nutrition and 55% achieved A*-C in Resistant Materials, both close to the national average. However, only 33% of those entered for Graphics achieved A* to C which is below the national average. The majority of pupils taking the subject at GCSE in 2000 were boys. Textiles and food and nutrition maintain high standards whilst the trend in resistant materials and graphics is improving, but these comparisons are based on below average rates of entry, since half the year-group is not entered for GCSE in any design and technology subject. Compared with their attainment in other subjects, pupils taking this subject achieve slightly lower grades. Standards of attainment for pupils in the current Year 11, based on their work seen in lessons and folders, is slightly above national averages overall and this indicates a potential improvement in attainment this year.
128. Standards of attainment in the Sixth Form are high with most students entered achieving grades A-E, which is consistently above the national average. From a scrutiny of the work of students in the present Sixth Form, standards reflect the 100% achieving A-E grades in the 2000 A-level examinations. Students studying textiles at A and AS level are producing work in line with achieving high grades whilst students studying design and technology at A and AS level are at a standard in line with grade C or above.
129. Pupils in both Key Stage 3 and 4 achieve well in the make elements of the design and technology curriculum. All classes use tools and equipment well, especially hand and machine sewing in textiles and woodwork hand tools. In Key Stage 3, pupils demonstrated good skills in food preparation, as for instance in making a vegetarian quiche. In Key Stage 4, graphics skills were good in representing shapes orthographically and hand skills were particularly apparent in a class of low attaining pupils taking a basic skills course who were making a wooden coffee table.
130. Not all pupils receive their entitlement to design and technology in Key Stage 4 due to limited accommodation and there are weaknesses in the planned opportunities for pupils to develop skills and understanding in the design element of the design and technology curriculum. Design ideas are limited and functional, producing a simple but well made project. In the textile room, a good range of exemplar material on the walls gives pupils the advantage of explanations of why an article was considered to be well designed and why others had design or construction faults. In Key Stage 3, lesson planning and teaching limit opportunities for lower attaining pupils to explore their understanding of different design issues, as the designs they work to are pre-determined. More able pupils develop only a basic understanding of the design pitfalls to be avoided for similar reasons. More able pupils in Year 8 have very limited time for design and technology and opportunities for teaching computer aided design are limited.

131. Pupils are benefiting from the departments' contribution to the schools' literacy project with technical words on the walls in the classrooms. This enhanced knowledge of subject vocabulary is helping to increase the standard of work in pupils' folders, but sometimes responses to worksheet questions are limited to short phrases rather than more extended, reasoned answers. There are many instances of pupils having opportunities to practice the application of number skills in measuring, estimating, weighing, reading scales and using large and small numbers in electronics. There is a good selection of reference books and magazines in all the classrooms and in the library and they are used well.
132. Teaching and learning in Key Stage 3 lessons seen were good or better and in Key Stage 4 and in the Sixth Form most lessons were good. Lessons and resources are well prepared. Teachers have good subject knowledge, and their considerable powers of persuasion and enthusiasm get the best out of pupils. In Key Stage 3, where learning was good it was generally in the practical skills in drawing, food preparation, textiles and hand skills in resistant materials and electronics. Projects were chosen with care to interest girls in resistant materials and boys in textiles, for example with projects on clocks and masks. Lesson time is used well and efforts are made to divide appropriately a double lesson into practical and theory. The working environment is good and in the best lessons teachers set appropriate goals and have high expectations, especially in Key Stage 4 and the Sixth Form. In a textile lesson in the Sixth Form the teacher was able to explore ideas with the students and develop innovative designs using silk painting. In Key Stage 4 the strengths were again in the make elements of the subject although good skills were also seen in researching fashion trends. Pupils are very responsible and come to school well prepared for work. They do the homework well and bring the correct ingredients for practical lessons in food technology.
133. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported by the active participation of support assistants in lessons seen in Key Stage 4 and individual help given to a student in the Sixth Form. Teachers made good, regular use of individual education plans for pupils with special educational needs. Pupils with special educational needs showed standards of practical skills above the written and drawing skills in their folders.
134. Teaching and learning were less good in the transition from initial ideas, through developing the design into choosing the final version to make. Insufficient attention was paid in teachers' planning to how tasks match different pupils' abilities and prior learning, especially in the area of design. As a result high attaining pupils were insufficiently challenged, although the pupils with special educational needs were given extra help.
135. In the A-level classes the emphasis is on designing and developing projects and making them to a high standard. Students respond to this, especially in textiles, but the complexity of the design and make element in design and technology classes is inhibited by a lack of engineering skills which are not taught sufficiently in Key Stages 3 and 4. The students' attitudes in Sixth Form classes were very positive with good interaction between the pupils and teachers.
136. Pupils' attitudes to learning during Key Stage 3 are good largely due to their positive response to questions, their attention levels and concentration throughout the lessons. Pupils' attitudes to learning in Key Stage 4 were also good due to the development of an individual approach to learning which meant that a teacher could allow pupils a lot of freedom in their work in the classroom. Pupils' behaviour was mature, courteous and trustworthy.
137. Other than the insufficient attention to the design element of the subject, the curriculum is generally broad and balanced although there is a lack of work on control technology and metalworking skills. Statutory provision for design and technology is not met in Key Stage 4

due to insufficient accommodation, which a building programme is due to address. The scheme of work is designed to ensure that the work given to pupils builds well on what they have previously done, and challenges them increasingly as they get older. Changes have been made to the GCSE and A-level course to make them more relevant to pupils' needs. Exercise books and folders containing projects and coursework for GCSE are marked well so that pupils know their standard and the effort they have put in. Marking conforms well to the school's marking policy. Recently, a self-assessment form for pupils has been successfully introduced. There is an excellent system for audit of health and safety and for risk assessment. There is a successful lunchtime club for Year 11 pupils to complete their coursework and the resources for resistant materials (wood) are very good due to the acquisitive abilities of the teachers.

138. There is now good use of information technology for word processing, graphs and Internet research in all areas of the subject, which is a real improvement from the previous inspection. There are, however, still few opportunities for pupils to gain understanding and skills in control technology.
139. The department has improved considerably since the last inspection. A new head of department has initiated many changes including improved documentation and introducing a system to monitor teaching and pupils' progress, which should make more use of on-going assessment of how pupils develop all aspects of the subject, especially the design element. Many links have been forged with outside agencies.
140. The department is well led and has the real capacity to improve further. The departmental development plan is closely linked to the schools' development plan, but only plans over one year, with the focus on the new classroom which is to be built soon rather than on how to address and track progress towards ensuring the full 'design and make' requirements of the subject are offered and that pupils make progress in line with their abilities. The finances of the department are well controlled. Resources are well managed and there is good technical help available for the resistant materials area. but there is no ancillary help for food and textiles, which does not however appear to detract from standards of attainment, particularly in textiles.
141. The department is aware of the following priorities for improvement:
- to improve planning to provide appropriate learning opportunities and progression in the use of control technology and in the design element of the subject;
 - to implement entitlement provision for design and technology in Key Stage 4 as soon as accommodation permits;
 - to use the recent assessment scheme to monitor pupils' progress in all aspects of the subject curriculum and to use the outcomes of monitoring in identifying and broadening the department's planning and management of change.

GEOGRAPHY

142. Standards of attainment in geography are in line with and at times above the expected national standard. In Key Stage 3, teachers' assessments in 2000 judged standards to be above the national average. Judged by work seen in lessons and pupils' books, standard of work in Key Stage 3 is high. Pupils take a pride in their work and it is presented very well. They can draw accurate maps and diagrams. Pupils have good map skills and can accurately identify features of an Ordnance Survey map in Year 7. For example, a class was observed using a 3-dimensional model to show how contour lines indicate the shape of the land. Pupils know and can use both four and six figure grid references. Their knowledge of places is good. For example, pupils can discuss the physical features and economic and social

conditions in both Brazil and Japan. By the end of the key stage, the clear majority of pupils understand key concepts, such as the interdependence of countries throughout the world.

143. Standards of attainment in GCSE level over recent years are in line with or at times above the national average. In 1999, 61% of those entered for GCSE achieved the higher A*-C grades and that year's results were above the national average. Results in 2000 were however below the national average and were in line with those achieved in 1997 and 1998. The proportion of the year group entered for GCSE has varied between a third and a half and in 1999 geography points scores rose to be in line with or slightly above pupils' overall average points score. More able pupils produce outstanding coursework. For example, one pupil had carried out an investigation into the effects of rainfall on discharge and depth of the river Windrush, which showed a very high degree of research skill and analysis of statistical data. Pupils have a particularly strong knowledge and understanding of physical geography. They understand and use specialist geographical language very well when answering questions. For example, pupils talk about denuded landscapes and impermeable rocks. They have well-developed skills in extended writing, as for example, in the work seen by pupils' explaining the reasons for flooding in the Ganges delta in Bangladesh.
144. At A-level, pupil numbers have been very low in recent years, so national comparisons are unhelpful. In each of 1999 and 2000, only four students took A-level geography. Two students are presently studying geography in Year 13. One hundred per cent of students entered for the examination over the last eleven years gained grades A-E. There are presently sixth form students whose work indicates their potential to gain these higher grades. The geography department also offers geology A-level. Of the sixteen students who have taken the subject in the last three years only three have achieved an A or B grade and all have gained grades A-E, indicating that teachers should use assessment more systematically to track the progress of more able students and challenge them to reach those higher grades.
145. The geography department has improved well since the last inspection. The strengths identified last time have been sustained and some progress has been made on issues highlighted in the previous report. The quality of teaching and the resulting standards of pupils' attainment have improved. Examples of pupils' underachievement have been addressed adequately, although able pupils in Key Stage 3 have insufficient opportunities to develop the skills and understanding required for higher levels. The department has recently made some progress in integrating the use of new technologies in geography lessons, but this remains an issue for further development.
146. Teaching and learning were at least satisfactory in all lessons seen and were good or very good in 40% of lessons overall and in 66% of Key Stage 4 lessons. The foundations lie in the very positive relationships that teachers form with their pupils. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge that they use to convey difficult concepts in an understandable way to all pupils. Lessons seen were all purposeful and productive. Teachers have high expectations of the pupils and they do not shy away from introducing pupils to specialist geographical language at an early stage. For example, classrooms have displays of geographical words and pupils make use of these. In one class, Year 9 pupils discussed indicators of national wealth and poverty and they were familiar with terms such as life expectancy and "GDP" (Gross Domestic Product).
147. In the better lessons pupils are actively engaged and have scope to develop their own ideas. For example, a Year 10 class was observed debating the environmental problems associated with the expansion of a quarry in The Peak District National Park. They did this task with enthusiasm and a high level of geographical skill and oral ability. Teachers use a range of resources very well. For example, one teacher used an overhead projector effectively in a Year 7 class to explain contour lines. When a Year 10 class was watching a television

programme, the teacher illustrated key learning points about the features of granite landscape by engaging the pupils in a well-managed sequence of viewing, discussion and questioning. There is good use of up-to-date data, particularly to develop pupils' understanding of their own local area in reference to other regions and countries. For example, Year 12 students used a recent newspaper article to discuss government policy towards rural deprivation. Homework is used effectively to support classroom learning. A range of successful practice was seen in the homework teachers set for pupils, including use of information and communication technology to model landscapes in three dimension by Year 7 pupils to develop their map skills. In all classes pupils are well motivated and keen to learn. Behaviour in lessons is very good.

148. Several aspects of teaching and learning in geography are similar to those reported in the previous inspection. Where teaching was less successful in the majority of Key Stage 3 lessons, the teacher spent too long talking to the pupils as reported previously. Where time is not planned and allowed for pupils to reflect on the issues and think for themselves, their opportunities to develop deeper understanding are constrained and they derive less benefit from completing the exercises set for them. In some classes an over-reliance on worksheets, some of which are undemanding, limits pupils' opportunities to develop their understanding of issues or concepts. Where there is more effective practice, this should be shared to address these issues and enhance the consistency of pupils' learning to tackle geographical issues in more independent and creative ways, drawing on the principles set out with resources, data and examples from the good range of sources available.
149. Pupils are given regular feedback on their work, and the marking policy of effort and attainment grades is efficiently put into practice. In Key Stage 3 teachers record pupils' test results on the inside front cover of their books, and they also include their attainment targets for the end of key stage. This is helpful to the pupils because it enables them to judge their progress in the subject. What is less successful is the guidance given to pupils about what steps they should take to improve in the subject. There is little evidence of the sort of written comments that give the pupils guidance on how to improve in this subject.
150. Pupils make good progress in geography in both key stages and in the Sixth Form and pupils with special educational needs make good progress, as teachers pay particular attention to supporting them, and they are well aware of their learning targets set out in their individual educational plans. There is no discernible difference between the progress of girls and boys. More able pupils do particularly well in Key Stage 4.
151. Geography is a popular subject in the school. There is good coverage of the National Curriculum and examination syllabuses. A particular strength of the department is the emphasis on fieldwork with opportunities for all year groups for learning outside the classroom. There are good resources for learning including a sufficient number of atlases and textbooks. The school library provides supplementary resources including topic books and newspaper clippings.
152. The department has benefited over many years from the expertise and enthusiasm of the head of department, who fully supports the school aims of maintaining high standards of academic achievement for pupils of all abilities. Monitoring at departmental level of teaching and learning remains more informal than methodical and the outcomes of assessment are variably used to enhance the consistency of pupils' opportunities to explore and deepen their understanding of subject issues. Departmental development planning projects priorities and plans over one-year only and lacks indications of progress towards reaching planned targets in tests and public examinations. Monitoring should combine the outcomes of on-going assessment with the analysis of test and examination data in informing the department's work and development.

153. The department is aware of the following priorities for improvement:
- to share effective practice and enhance the consistency of planned teaching and learning opportunities to develop pupils' independence and understanding in the subject;
 - to improve the quality of guidance provided in assessment and written feedback for pupils to see more clearly how and where to improve their learning and attainment;
 - to use the outcomes of monitoring, including the analysis and use of performance data, to identify and sharpen the focus of the department's planning and management of change.

HISTORY

154. At the end of Key Stage 3 attainment is significantly above the national average. In 2000 78% of students reached Level 5 or above compared with 63% nationally. Fifty one per cent reached Level 6 compared with 31% nationally. These standards are reflected in work seen during the inspection in lessons and in pupils' work. In lower ability groups, pupils are enabled to access challenging written and visual sources through very good literacy support. Pupils across the ability range are capable of producing extended writing in a range of genres involving good use of source analysis to explain key features of the past. More able students can use the knowledge gained from other topics studied to analyse and interpret sources and make clear connections between different periods of history.
155. Results at GCSE are significantly above the national average and this position has been maintained consistently for the past four years, but numbers entered are low (about 20% of the year-group over recent years). In 2000, 77% of 22 students entered achieved passes of A*-C compared to a national average of 62%. Forty one per cent of those students in 2000 (9 students) achieved either an A* or A grade compared to 23% nationally, with only 5% of students achieving below a grade E compared to a national figure of 13%. This represents a significant and sustained improvement since the time of the last inspection. Attainment in lessons is in line with this level of examination performance in the subject. In Year 11 students make good use of a wide range of stimulating source materials. They are able, for example, to explain that superpower rivalry is stereotyped in some school textbooks and clearly understand and can explain the complexity of the relationships between the superpowers at the time of the Second World War.
156. Since the previous inspection, the numbers of students entered for A-level have fluctuated considerably with very small groups in some years. In recent years, these numbers have been steadily growing. In 2000, 71% of students achieved a grade A-C compared to the national figure of 60% with 29% achieving grade A. Standards of work seen in lessons and students' books are high and corroborate the levels of results achieved. Students produce well-developed analytical writing at considerable length and are skilled in interpreting and evaluating complex sources within an historical context. They are articulate and can clearly express their findings and points of view regarding the historical material they are using.
157. Throughout all key stages the quality of teaching and learning seen was always good and in most lessons very good. This indicates significant improvement since the previous inspection, especially at Key Stage 4. A key feature of the very good quality of teaching and learning is the clear planning, high teacher expectations and very good explanations of work to pupils. Teachers make very good use of a wide range of resources, including the Internet. Their subject knowledge is very good and often excellent. Behaviour and relationships in all lessons are exemplary. All these features promote very good learning and high standards of attainment.
158. Provision for lower attaining pupils, particularly in Key Stage 3, has substantially improved since the last inspection. Very good use is made of a wide range of literacy strategies to

support pupils' learning and enable them to make good progress. Lower attaining pupils have successfully learned how to access complex historical sources and to use key historical words in context. Teachers also make effective use of relevant targets in individual education plans. In one lower ability Year 9 lesson, for instance, students studying the experience of black soldiers in the American civil war were confident in using terms such as discrimination and racial harassment within the context of the historical period to make their own independent judgements. In more able teaching groups, the degree of support is tailored to match their differing needs in line with individual education plans. The most able in all key stages can write at length in a range of genres. The improved provision, linked to improvements in standards of teaching, indicates that students are making better progress than at the time of the previous inspection. This is particularly the case with lower ability students in Key Stages 3 and 4 and with all students in Key Stage 4. There is no discernible difference between the progress of girls and boys.

159. All teachers make excellent use of a wide range of appropriate source materials to support learning. Internet web site addresses are a common feature on school-produced resources. Very effective use is made of microfilm newspaper material and original 19th century American newspapers at AS level. This generates enthusiasm and enables students to develop a deeper understanding of the views of contemporary Americans in the civil war period.
160. Current assessment practice is well developed in the Sixth Form and at Key Stage 4. Oral feedback and day-to-day informal monitoring of students' work satisfactorily supports students' learning in all key stages. In Key Stage 3, methods of assessment rely mainly on half-termly tests for tracking pupils' progress. The current assessment policy as a whole has yet to resolve the balance between marking and written comments that are informative for pupils and its inconsistent application due to the workload involved.
161. The subject is taught by a very strong team of dedicated teachers who have an excellent command of their subject and are firmly committed to promoting the ethos of the school. Significant improvements have been made since the time of the last inspection.
162. Leadership for history is undertaken jointly with the head of humanities. The history team has made substantial improvements from the time of the last inspection report and is a committed and enthusiastic team. Monitoring is, however, inadequately addressed as a result of a lack of clarity on whose responsibility it is within the faculty structure. Developing clearer and more manageable assessment procedures is vital to resolve this obstacle. Development planning in history is similarly short-term and insufficient attention is given to tracking progress in reaching declared targets.
163. They are aware of the following priorities for improvement:
 - to develop more manageable procedures for on-going assessment in Key Stage 3;
 - improve the consistency of guidance provided in assessment and written feedback so pupils can see more clearly how and where to improve their learning and attainment;
 - to clarify responsibilities and procedures for monitoring teaching and learning.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

164. Standard of attainment by the end of Key Stage 3 are high. Eighty per cent of pupils achieve National Curriculum Level 5 or higher, compared with 56% achieving the same standard nationally. The standard achieved in lessons is comparably high and has improved since the previous inspection. The range of opportunities available and the variety of activities undertaken by pupils are now much wider, including the use of e-mail and the Internet.

165. During Key Stage 3, pupils develop their capability in the subject and by Year 9 most pupils are autonomous users of computers, able to transfer skills learned in one application to another. For example in Year 8, pupils are able to take the skills learned in desk top publishing and use them to develop their skills in web authoring. In Year 9 information and communication technology is taught as part of the design and technology curriculum and here pupils are able to choose and use appropriate computer software to enhance their design work. They have opportunities to use a range of computer applications and are particularly competent at transferring skills between applications. Whilst standards in computer control are more limited due to a lack of resources, pupils make good overall progress through this key stage.
166. Standards of attainment in GCSE are high. Currently around half the pupils in Key Stage 4 take an examination at this level in information and communication technology. Though there are annual variations, over the last three years around 75% of pupils have gained the higher grades of A* to C. This is well above the national average of around 54% during the same period. Pupils' attainment is on average three quarters of a grade higher in information and communication technology than in the other examinations they took. Boys did particularly well in this respect and the school may wish to analyse more closely this success. Since the previous inspection the standard of work has improved, having been described as 'sound' at that time and is now good, on the basis of work seen in lessons and pupils' portfolios. Pupils do particularly well in their coursework, producing high quality, individual portfolios of their work. They are competent in many information and communication technology applications, but show particularly good skills in the creation of databases.
167. Those pupils not taking a GCSE examination are able to take a short RSA CLAIT course in basic computer applications. While this may be appropriate for some pupils, it does not allow others to demonstrate higher levels of information and communication technology skills and the course does not adequately cover the National Curriculum programmes of study for information and communication technology. Therefore, while the progress of pupils taking GCSE courses is good, it is less than satisfactory for more able pupils taking the CLAIT course.
168. Pupils with special educational needs in Key Stages 3 and 4 do well in information and communication technology lessons, largely through the individual support given by teaching and support staff. The department recognises that some of the standard tasks in the information and communication technology courses insufficiently match the abilities and learning needs of pupils with particular learning difficulties. Gifted and talented pupils also do well, with many opportunities for them to extend their work into exciting areas.
169. A small, but increasing, number of students take an A-level in information and communication technology, with the majority of pupils getting passes at higher grades. The work of current students, including coursework is of a consistently high standard. Sixth form students who are not taking information and communication technology A-level also make good use of the computer resources and the overall progress of Sixth Form students is good. The recent provision of an information and communication technology resource suite within the Sixth Form area allows all students ready access to up-to-date equipment which includes e-mail and Internet services.
170. A key issue of the previous inspection was the lack of a sufficient quantity and quality of information and communication technology equipment. Since then, school funds, a large private donation and grant from the National Grid for Learning, have been used to increase the number and range of computers considerably. However, the school does not currently have an explicit strategy for the continued replacement and enhancement of these resources.

171. At the time of the previous inspection, little use was made of information and communication technology to support teaching in other subjects. The use of information and communication technology is now rapidly increasing across the curriculum with good examples seen, for instance, in the use of data logging in science and extensive use and reference to the Internet in history. Teachers are currently undertaking training in the use of information and communication technology through a New Opportunities Fund grant.
172. The quality of teaching and learning for all pupils in lessons seen was good overall with one third very good. Teaching and learning have improved since the previous inspection. Group sizes are large, but teachers have well-planned and well-structured lessons. In Key Stage 3, teachers make good use of the exemplar teaching materials produced by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority. Relationships between staff and pupils are excellent, which promotes a positive attitude to learning and encourages pupils to develop their understanding of the subject and their autonomous use of information and communication technology. In all lessons seen the pace of work was good. Pupils stay on task and are not easily distracted. Teaching is well supported by the use of a data projector which allows all pupils to see and participate with on-screen demonstrations. Whilst some tasks reinforce the development of pupils' numeracy and literacy skills, opportunities are missed as for example through requiring the more regular use of technical vocabulary. Good marking of pupils' work, indicating to pupils their successes and development points, is enhanced by regular and effective oral feedback which involves pupils effectively in the formative evaluation of their work.
173. The teaching is well matched to the different ages and genders of pupils and acknowledges well the different experiences of pupils in primary school and their access to computers at home. The ready access by pupils to the computer rooms and library in lunchtimes goes a long way to addressing the needs of pupils without home computer access. In Key Stage 3 some teachers are not specialists in information and communication technology, but their contribution to teaching is good. The school has an information and communication technology technician who maintains the equipment, but also offers valuable direct support to pupils, in and out of lessons.
174. The previous inspection report noted that the main emphasis of the management of information and communication technology within the school was upon the delivery of timetabled courses. Whilst this continues to be the situation overall, there is increasing use of information and communication technology by other departments in school. With increasing cross-curricular use of information and communication technology, the role of co-ordinating its use throughout the school changes the functions of the information and communication technology department. Other than monitoring of examination results with senior management, responsibilities and procedures for monitoring information and communication technology outside the work done within the department itself are unresolved. There is also no regular forum for debate and co-ordination of the use of information and communication technology across the curriculum. Management within the department, however, is good, with developing strategies to monitor and evaluate the department's own performance.
175. The department is aware of the following priorities for improvement:
- to clarify responsibilities and procedures for monitoring the use of information and communication technology across the curriculum;
 - to use the outcomes of monitoring to identify priorities for both departmental provision and provision in other subjects with particular attention to:-
 - raising girls' standards of attainment;
 - a strategy for the continued replacement and enhancement of these resources;
 - developing opportunities for understanding and using control technology;
 - broadening monitoring to include information and communication technology provision elsewhere in the subject curriculum

- reviewing the Key Stage 4 non-GCSE course to match the capabilities and potential of the full ability range.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

176. Standards of attainment are above the national average in all key stages and continue to rise. In the last school year, on the basis of Key Stage 3 teachers' assessments, 80% of pupils attained Level 4 or above, compared with a national figure of 67%. The number of pupils gaining Level 5 and above was also higher than the national average.
177. Ninety pupils, around 95% of the year-group were entered for a full-course GCSE examination in 2000, which is well above the national average. All of these achieved a pass grade, and 61% achieved grade C or better, well above the national average. A small number of pupils continue to A-level each year. In the last three years, almost all students entered for A-level have achieved a pass grade, with almost half of them gaining grades A to B. Overall pupils' attainment is in line with results achieved in other subjects. Whilst girls attained slightly better than in other examinations they took, boys achieved above the national average in both French and German. Over the last three years, standards for similar numbers of pupils entered for public examinations have been in line with or well above national averages.
178. Teaching and learning were satisfactory or better in all lessons seen, and good or very good in most lessons. This is an improvement since the last inspection, particularly in Key Stage 4, where one-third of lessons was unsatisfactory at that time. In the best lessons, teachers have a good knowledge of their pupils' ability and of how they learn most effectively. They plan a variety of activities to develop pupils' skills in all attainment targets. They explain the objectives of the lesson, and measure progress against those objectives. In one very effective example, the objectives were on the board in English, but explained to the Year 7 pupils in French. Pupils learn reading skills, including using clues to deduce meaning: this was observed with both Year 12 A-level students and Year 8 pupils of below average ability. They listen attentively to the teacher and to taped material, and are determined to respond if they can. They persevere with difficult tasks such as listening to recorded conversations. They remain on task in pair work, making efforts to communicate with each other in the foreign language, which contributes positively to the development of their social and interpersonal skills. Pupils' attainment is similarly high in each of the four attainment targets or language skills. Pupils evidently like and respect their teachers, and the excellent relationships in lessons are a significant factor in ensuring that pupils make good progress.
179. Teachers teach grammar directly, and then ensure that pupils apply it in practical activities. They maintain pace and use lesson time well. For example, one Year 11 lesson began with quick revision of the future tense, requiring pupils to use a range of verbs in sentences describing their own plans for the evening. This was followed by a reading exercise requiring some comprehension skills, but mainly focused on grammar and sentence structure.
180. Teachers' subject knowledge is good. They provide good models of accuracy and pronunciation. Where teaching is very good, the foreign language is used as much as possible, which helps pupils to use it confidently for different purposes. There are occasions when translation is unnecessarily used to ensure comprehension, not of complex grammatical points, but of simple words and phrases that could be conveyed by mime, gesture or a visual prompt. This was also observed in the last inspection.
181. The department sensitively organises class-groups by ability to ensure that pupils of all abilities make good progress. The policy of setting at the start of Year 9 helps to ensure that progress is maintained from Key Stage 3 into Key Stage 4. Although pupils with special

educational needs are mainly taught in smaller groups, activities are insufficiently planned to match the varying abilities of the pupils. Where learning support is available, it is well used to meet the needs of individuals and groups of pupils. Outside the classroom, the department offers an annual trip to France for Year 8 pupils, and encourages older pupils to take part in French and German exchanges. This makes a positive contribution to pupils' cultural development.

182. The head of department provides clear leadership for the team. There are regular meetings at which teaching strategies and the performance of pupils are discussed. Examination results are analysed in detail. Monitoring of the quality of teaching is, however, mainly informal. The very clear department handbook summarises issues, policies, routines and guidance. Schemes of work are well supported by published materials. Whilst they are clearly linked to the requirements of the GCSE examination syllabus, there are less clear links with National Curriculum requirements. One consequence is that objectives shared with pupils appear more focused on language content, such as the different forms of the verb 'to travel', than on the pupils' ability to learn through experience how to communicate their own meanings, as in successfully asking and answering where others are going on holiday in a Year 9 German lesson. Reviewing these links with statutory requirements in planning should also provide a clearer basis for more methodical monitoring of teaching and learning.
183. As a means of tracking progress in developing this competence, assessment is satisfactory at best in Key Stage 3 in that it addresses the language context more effectively than pupils' developing skills in communicating. Assessment improves with the links to GCSE and A-level examination requirements in Key Stage 4 and in the Sixth Form. The requirements relating to use of information and communication technology are insufficiently addressed. The department is reviewing its provision for the early years of Key Stage 3 and is planning to remedy this in line with Curriculum 2000 requirements.
184. The department is accommodated in a suite of rooms that are suited to their purpose, though in need of some refurbishment. The rooms are equipped with the basic requirements for language teaching, and satellite television is available within the department. Resources are managed with economy in mind. This ensures that best use is made of the resources available, but it does mean that some of the materials offered to pupils are less attractively presented than they might be. The department might consider making greater use of information and communication technology in the production of more attractive teaching materials.
185. The department is aware of the following priorities for improvement:
- to review schemes of work, particularly at Key Stage 3, to include the full range of National Curriculum requirements, including opportunities to use information and communication technology;
 - to improve on-going assessment of pupils' developing competence in the subject and to use the outcomes to develop monitoring of provision and pupils' progress;
 - to develop more methodical procedures for monitoring teaching and learning in line with revisions of schemes of work.

MUSIC

186. Attainment at Key Stage 3 is in line with or slightly above standards achieved nationally. Those pupils who do not achieve the national expectation achieve standards that are not far below it. A small number of pupils took GCSE in 2000 and most achieved higher grades in music than in their other subjects. Small numbers of examination candidates at both GCSE and A-levels mean that a valid judgement about trends since the last inspection cannot reliably be made.
187. The music department is undergoing a process of change. The head of department has been in post for less than two years and during that time the number of pupils taking examination courses has increased substantially, as has the uptake of instrumental tuition. Currently about 20% of Year 10 pupils are taking GCSE music. This is very high in relation to current national figures. Standards of work seen in all classes in Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 were in line with expected standards.
188. The quality of teaching and learning, especially at Key Stage 4 has improved since the last inspection. Teaching at Key Stage 3 is at least satisfactory, and sometimes good or very good. Lessons have good pace, are purposefully planned and delivered with a clear focus on individual support. These features, combined with positive relationships between teachers and pupils, encourage motivation and promote their respect for each other's work. For instance, in a Year 7 lesson based on composing short pieces in ternary form using the pentatonic scale, pupils learned from each other's work by listening in silence with a high level of concentration. When asked to do so, pupils are articulate in appraising one another's work and are able to use musical language appropriately.
189. In lessons, teachers provide individual encouragement when pupils are working in pairs and small groups. They intervene to challenge the more able and to support the less able. Where class sizes are larger, however, this approach is less effective because the teacher cannot give each pair sufficient attention. As a result some pupils lack focus on the task, and achieve less well. In some cases pupils do not have sufficiently well-developed keyboard skills to put their ideas into practice, and this issue, raised in the last inspection report, needs further attention. Whilst some singing takes place, there is insufficient emphasis on this in the curriculum. The use of information and communication technology at Key Stage 3 meets statutory requirements but is currently rather limited.
190. At Key Stage 3 pupils are taught in broad ability banded classes. The same broad concepts are taught to all, and the teacher adapts the content in terms of depth and support accordingly. In an upper band Year 9 group, pupils were appropriately challenged to consider in some detail how composers used resources to create musical moods when writing for films. They were then able to apply this knowledge to their own work. In a lower band group in the same year, the language and detail used were simpler and the lesson was much more tightly structured to enable pupils to achieve effective results. Boys and girls are equally well motivated.
191. Teaching and learning at Key Stage 4 and A-level are good and sometimes very good. A significant strength lies in the planning of lessons and activities based on diagnosis, through assessment, of the needs of the group and of individuals within it. For example, in a Key Stage 4 lesson observed, the teacher was focusing on an identified weakness in composing, and through a very structured approach, addressed techniques which pupils would then be able to apply to their own work. In an A-level folder there was evidence that work had been carefully marked and that in the next piece of work, the teacher had planned a strategy, which had addressed the weaknesses identified.

192. Whilst departmental resourcing is currently unsatisfactory, there are plans to rectify this through a new building programme. Some examination groups are taught in a non-specialist room with portable equipment. The range of instruments which pupils use to support their music making is too narrow. During the inspection all instrumental work at Key Stage 3 involved the sole use of keyboards. Pupils who take instrumental tuition would have benefited from being able to apply their performing skills to the new contexts being taught in the lessons. In one lower band Year 8 lesson, the demands of using keyboards, synchronising their parts with each other and with the pre-set accompaniment proved too high. The department has a very limited range of acoustic instruments and few instruments which are representative of other cultures.
193. The timetable provision for post-16 courses is poor. Students in Years 12 and 13 are taught in one group and two different syllabuses are taught concurrently. By rigorous planning and by providing a wide range of materials that support independent learning, the head of department is effectively managing this situation.
194. The department is piloting a published scheme of work in Key Stage 3, but has begun to plan and introduce an ongoing evaluation process with a view to developing an agreed scheme tailored to the context of the department. There is an in-house scheme of work for Key Stage 4. A developing scheme of diagnostic assessment is a very promising feature of the department's work. In its current form, it is used well in class to encourage pupils to share and appreciate each other's work and teachers' feedback is clear and appreciated by pupils. Whilst this needs to be consistent with school policy in giving attainment grades in line with expected levels, this requirement can prove demotivating for lower attainers, although it provides information to support judgements at the end of the key stage. Monitoring of teaching and learning is largely informal and requires a more resolved assessment scheme to improve its effectiveness.
195. The department is supported by a number of visiting teachers, who provide a wide range of opportunities for pupils to learn to play instruments and sing. In order to ensure that these opportunities are maximised and that parents receive value for money, the school needs to take steps to ensure that the quality of the tuition provided is effectively monitored. Music plays a very positive and growing part in the cultural life of the school and regular school concerts and productions draw together large numbers of pupils.
196. The department is very efficiently managed, and the head of department has a clear vision for the development of the subject. The department is aware of the following priorities for improvement:
- to extend planned learning opportunities with a wider range of instruments and through increased use of information and communication technology at Key Stage 3;
 - to develop the evolving scheme of work and assessment, especially to support and track pupils' abilities to express their musical ideas in practice at Key Stage 3;
 - to develop clearer monitoring procedures, particularly for visiting instrumental teachers, linked to on-going assessment.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

197. GCSE has been introduced successfully and standards of attainment over the last two years of entry are significantly better than the national average grade A*-C pass rate of 48% (57% in 1999 and 77% in 2000). Entry numbers have been around 25% of each year-group and in 1999 pupils entered attained about half a grade below their average for other examinations taken.

198. Standards in lessons have continued to rise and in Key Stage 3 attainment is in line with or slightly above the national expectation, except in gymnastics. Girls make a great effort to improve the quality of movements, are able to select and repeat extended actions with control and some continuity and they carry and site equipment safely. However, weaknesses exist in the limited range of travelling actions and gymnastics movements they used. Pupils understand rugby and netball positions and are able to organise themselves tactically. Pupils' review of action and feedback are generally accurate. Boys are able to work together as a team understanding possession and recycling in rugby. Girls understand the rules relating to landing and pivot foot and can identify areas for improvement. All boys are able to take their pulse with accuracy, record it onto recording sheets and they can use appropriate language to describe the effect exercise has on the body and why it reacts differently to a variety of different types of activity. In all these features of the subject, attainment is in line with expected standards.
199. At Key Stage 4 attainment in lessons seen was judged to be better than national expectation. Pupils are able to evaluate strengths and areas of weakness and provide feedback to peers in a constructive manner. Pupils made acceptable progress in handling skills and tactical awareness in what were very difficult weather conditions. Skill levels were appropriate, boys were able to create width in practice game situations and the more able performers were able to show a good command of the skills of defending play under pressure. Attacking teams were able to retain possession and create effective attacking moves building on skills acquired in Key Stage 3. GCSE groups achieved appropriate standards in note taking, their work showing grammatical accuracy, good punctuation and spelling.
200. High standards are the norm in Sixth Form lessons. As part of the Sixth Form physical education programme, some students are taking the Community Sports Leader Award (CSLA). Students show a good understanding of isometric and isotonic muscle contraction. The majority of students are able to recognise where and which muscle groups are being used during a game situation. Their planning and evaluating skills indicate a good level of tactical understanding. All students seen were able to make a variety of passes with good accuracy, timing, correct weighting and consistency. Close control is acceptable, marking and anticipation of movement enables the better players to jockey correctly and put an opponent under pressure. Community Sports Leader Award students show a good understanding of passing concepts and rules when creating practices for their peers. They also are able to take control of skills based shooting warm up and can officiate with accuracy. Their progress in respect of the requirements of the award scheme is good.
201. The introduction of an A/S level course during the current academic year (2000 – 2001) will further enhance the status of the department. These developments complement the existing very successful GCSE course, the Community Sports Leaders Award and Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme. In all years, the department provides a broad range of worthwhile opportunities, which meet the aptitudes, and particular needs of all pupils including those with special educational needs. Extra curricular provision is rich and varied and ensures equality of access for all pupils. The department makes clear links between sport and local clubs and the community to encourage pupils to take responsibility and show initiative. Residential adventure weeks, sports tours and skiing trips play a major part in enhancing the way the department contributes to pupils' spiritual, cultural, moral and social development. Extra curricular activities are well attended. Many individuals gain national and representative honours and both boys and girls teams have continued to be successful in league and cup competitions.
202. All teaching and learning seen at Key Stages 3, 4 and in the Sixth Form were satisfactory and in the majority of lessons were good or very good. Teachers' questioning skilfully probes understanding and develops independence. Clear links are made with earlier learning,

objectives are set in all lessons and instructions are clear and informative. Expectations are high and these promote high standards. A wide range of teaching styles is used to enhance learning and good use is made of demonstration. In the best lessons, verbal targets are set for future work and good use is made of formative assessment. Marking in GCSE is detailed and helpful. Efficient organisation, good behaviour management and pace all enhance learning.

203. In both key stages and in the Sixth Form there is clear evidence that all pupils make good progress as a result of most teaching (75%) being good or very good. Teaching successfully pitches demands at the appropriate level for most pupils to develop their skills, knowledge and understanding. Pupils become fully involved in their work, directing their efforts appropriately to clearly shared, required outcomes. They generally understand what they are trying to achieve and are able to explain what they have done, using specific technical language as in a Year 8 volleyball lesson recalling earlier learning and the criteria for higher level performance. Listening skills are well developed. Whilst learning is never less than satisfactory and frequently good or very good, insufficiently matched demands within sets restrict the learning of a small minority of more able children, as occurred with a Year 7 lesson warm-up session. Pupils with special educational needs are well catered for either with more information or time to complete tasks; and these strategies enhance their progress.
204. Pupils all show good sporting attitudes and put a great deal of energy and effort into their activity. Pupils are willing to work within the rules and etiquette of the game, both co-operating and competing with equal enthusiasm. They listen to instructions and take responsibility for their own action at all times willing to abide by the conventions of safe and fair play. Relationships are very good. Their participation levels, attitude, behaviour and enthusiasm are a credit to themselves and to their teachers. Good behaviour is the norm both in changing rooms, moving to the playing area and during games and practices. All these positive features are all the more impressive in light of the atrocious weather conditions during the week of the inspection and limited indoor space for alternative lessons. Modified work sheets are also provided for pupils with reading difficulties. However on occasions, teacher's planning fails to identify work at different levels as when limited practice activities were used to challenge more able girls in a Year 8 netball session.
205. At both Key Stages 3 and 4, the National Curriculum statutory requirements are being met and all Sixth Form students have the opportunity to participate in physical activity through a structured programme, which includes the Community Sports Leader Award (CSLA) and A/S level accreditation. The quality and range of learning opportunities are acceptable, but restricted by the limited availability of indoor space and by the loss of the swimming pool. The curriculum is also hampered by the requirement to teach German as a second foreign language in place of one of the Year 9 physical education lessons. This causes difficulty for upper band students who wish to follow GCSE physical education.
206. The department monitors attendance at the start of every lesson. Progress and achievement are assessed at the end of each unit and reported annually. These assessments now take attainment as well as effort into account and use is made of assessments to monitor and improve curricular planning. For example, consideration is being given to the time allocation for specific subjects in order to ensure that pupils receive a balanced entitlement, that they can build on those experiences and progress to higher standards of attainment in the subject.
207. This is a department that has continued to make very good progress since the previous inspection. Leadership and management are very effective. A culture of high expectation in both teaching and pupil attitude pervades the whole department. The quality of teaching has improved. It was satisfactory in all lessons seen, with 75% being good or very good.

208. Leadership and management of the department are very effective and drive the vision to ensure that standards continue to improve and good relationships and equality of opportunity exist for all. Financial management is effective. Risk assessments are completed and regularly updated. Safety policies are in place and are adhered to. Resources are well managed and the department is beginning to use information and communication technology in daily management and administration. GCSE groups and those starting the new AS level course are also starting to use new technology to support learning. Development planning over the short-term is in place but lacks clear indications of how progress in implementing priorities is tracked, other than through limited evidence in GCSE examinations. Schemes and the comprehensive assessment system have yet to be updated in line with the new National Curriculum requirements for physical education, although this is not included in the current development plan.
209. The department has addressed all the issues from the last inspection and has made significant improvements to the quality of curriculum, teaching, accreditation and sixth form opportunities. Strengths of the department are the team ethos, caring relationships, quality of teaching, extra curricular and house sports programme. All teachers are fully committed and have a high regard for the qualities the students bring to the school.
210. The department is aware of the following priorities for improvement:
- to extend planned learning opportunities to match the varying needs and abilities of pupils within the subject, particularly the more able;
 - to develop monitoring of provision and pupils' progress through the review of schemes of work and the assessment system, to bring them in line with the new National Curriculum requirements;
 - to broaden strategic planning beyond one year developments, combining test and examination targets with interim criteria drawing on monitoring of teaching and learning to inform progress in implementing change.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

211. From observation of lessons and pupils' work, standards in religious education at the end of Key Stage 3 are above average and are similar to the judgements made in the last inspection. Nearly all students achieve in line with the expectations of the new Gloucester Agreed Syllabus, with many exceeding them. The less able do particularly well against these expectations.
212. The majority of pupils demonstrate good subject knowledge, with a particularly impressive command and understanding of the specialist language and vocabulary associated with the religious traditions they study. Unusually, there is no difference between the standards attained in the two attainment targets of 'Learning About Religion' and 'Learning From Religion'. All pupils demonstrate an ability in the latter that exceeds the expected level, with pupils showing that they can apply what they have learned to their own lives as well as developing an ability to empathise with others. For example, some Year 9 students began to give significant insights into the anticipation a Hindu feels at Diwali, while in Year 8 others began to appreciate the conflicting feelings and emotions that a figure in authority would have experienced, when encountering an act of passive resistance as encouraged by Gandhi.
213. There has been a marked improvement in results in the two years the school has entered candidates for GCSE religious studies. In both years they were significantly above the national average for A*-C grades for all pupils and for girls. The small number of boys involved must be borne in mind in making any comparison. By the end of Year 11, pupils show in their written work and oral response to questions, a growing ability to identify the impact that religious beliefs has on behaviour, supporting their argument with appropriate

examples. Relatively small numbers have entered for GCSE religious education in 1998 and 2000 and standards of attainment are above the average nationally at grades A*-C.

214. For those not taking the full GCSE course, standards exemplified in written work, including that of the less able, are far higher than the expectations of the Certificate of Achievement course they are following. Students demonstrate a sound grasp of Buddhist beliefs, explaining for example the importance and significance of prayer and meditation. The most able can also suggest reasons for certain practices, such as life in a 'sangha', supporting their ideas with valid evidence. No comment can be made of attainment in the Sixth Form as no candidates were entered for examinations over this period. However, good progress is being made by all those currently in their first term of the newly introduced A/AS course.
215. Teaching and learning have improved since the last inspection and are now a clear strength of the subject, with very high standards of work and behaviour being expected. All teaching and learning seen was at least good and often very good or excellent. There was no significant difference in the quality of teaching between the subject specialist and non-specialist colleagues. In the best lessons, planning is detailed and matches the needs of all the pupils present. The aim of the lesson is shared with pupils and referred to throughout so ensuring that all gain maximum benefit from the lesson, as in the case of a Year 9 group giving presentations on a range of Hindu festivals. The exemplary use of questions deepens pupils' understanding, challenges their thinking or encourages personal reflection. As a result, pupils of all ages and abilities make good progress, as in the case of an A/AS class looking at textual sources of the resurrection narratives, or a low ability Year 7 exploring the feelings, hopes and fears behind some of the more popular miracle stories.
216. As all teachers' explanations and instructions are clear and often humorous, they both increase pupils' motivation and enjoyment as well as ensure that all pupils are clear about the task they have to complete or the information they require. The helpful and instructive oral comments given to students in lessons add to and enhance the quality of written comments given in pupils' books. The homework set is often imaginative and develops logically from the lesson, as in the case of the Year 7 group writing an imaginary diary on the miracle they had investigated.
217. The positive response of pupils towards the subject identified in the last report is now reflected in increasing numbers of students choosing to study the subject at examination level. Relationships are excellent, and enable students to speak honestly and often sensitively about their thoughts or feelings without embarrassment or fear of ridicule, as in the case of the Year 10 GCSE group discussing Christian marriage.
218. As a result of the very good resources created by the teachers, and the personal help and guidance in lessons, good progress is made by pupils with special educational needs. Opportunities for the development of the pupils' literacy skills are present in all lessons, and are actually planned as a part of the aim of many. There are fewer opportunities for the development of the pupils' numeracy skills.
219. The school has responded positively to the issues raised in the last inspection by increasing the time for religious education in Key Stage 4 and by introducing religious studies in the Sixth Form. Although the way the non-GCSE course is taught offers the students an appropriate level of challenge, there is a clear need to consider whether it offers an appropriate level of accreditation for the work done or the standards achieved. The introduction of a new A/AS Level religious studies option in the Sixth Form has proved successful and recruits very good numbers. Some provision is now also offered for those students not opting for the full A/AS level course, but sufficient time is not currently given to ensure that the course can deliver the required number of study units included in the agreed syllabus.

220. The departmental scheme of work reflects the requirements of the agreed syllabus and covers the range of religious traditions that is expected, although there is insufficient emphasis on the differences between faiths for the most able to meet the higher expectations. Insufficient use is currently made of assessment information to monitor pupils' progress and to identify weaknesses in their learning or underachievement. To achieve this, assessment and monitoring should make full use, as indicated above, of the expectations for religious education that have recently been published in the new agreed syllabus.
221. Some good use is made by the department of information and communication technology, as in the case of the Diwali e-mail exercise in Year 9 and in the presentation of work. Accommodation is good and resources adequate but the best are those produced by the teachers to meet the needs of individual pupils or groups. The teachers' active promotion of the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is exemplary and continues to be a major strength of the subject, as wall displays and lessons testify. Day-to-day organisation of the department is satisfactory and the support for non-specialists is good. There is insufficient monitoring of the effectiveness of the department and its provision through, for example, more methodical use of assessment strategies. Development planning is consequently insufficiently focused on how to tackle specific weaknesses identified by such monitoring, plots priorities over one year only and lacks progress criteria to indicate if developments are on track.
222. Religious education is a popular and successful subject that is outstandingly taught and well led. The department is aware of the following priorities for improvement:
- to extend planned learning opportunities to match the varying needs and abilities of pupils within the subject, particularly the more able in Key Stage 4;
 - revise assessment in line with recently published expectations;
 - to develop monitoring of provision and pupils' progress;
 - to use assessment information to identify potential weaknesses and underachievement.