

INSPECTION REPORT

GLYN TECHNOLOGY SCHOOL

EPSOM

LEA area: Surrey

Unique reference number:125304

Headteacher: R J S Turner

Reporting inspector: Dr A R Beaver
20224

Dates of inspection: 7-11 February 2000

Inspection number: 189011

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:	Boys
School address:	The Kingsway Ewell Epsom Surrey
Postcode:	KT17 1NB
Telephone number:	0181 716 4949
Fax number:	0181 716 4999
Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs A L T Cooper
Date of previous inspection:	12 February 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Anthony Beaver	Registered inspector		What sort of school is it?
			How high are standards?
			How well are pupils taught?
			How well is the school led and managed?
			What should the school do to improve further?
Brigid Quest-Ritson	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development
			How well does the school care for its pupils?
			How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
Anthony Fiddian-Green	Team inspector	Religious education	
		Special educational needs	
		Equal opportunities	
		English as an additional language	
Roger Freeman	Team inspector	Mathematics	
Peter Gilliat	Team inspector	History	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
Roger Garrett	Team inspector	English	
Peter Harle	Team inspector	Music	
Geoffrey Hunter	Team inspector	Classics	
Keith Hopkins	Team inspector	Design and technology	
		Information technology	
Edward Little	Team inspector	Science/IT (Support)	
Roger Moyle	Team inspector	Physical education	
Caroline Orr	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	
Michael Sewter	Team inspector	Science	
Janet Simms	Team inspector	Art	
		Vocational subjects	
Vernon Williams	Team inspector	Geography	
		Other A level courses	

The inspection contractor was:

Chapel House Inspection Unit Ltd

The Old Chapel House
Pound Hill
ALRESFORD
Hampshire
SO24 9BW

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Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London WC2B 6SE

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Glyn is a comprehensive, technology school for 1279 boys aged 11 to 18 years. It is bigger than most schools. The sixth form consists of 246 students. Some courses are jointly provided with a neighbouring grammar school. Four per cent of pupils are from ethnic minorities and 29 have English as an additional language, more than in most schools, but all are competent users of English. Pupils have a diverse range of special educational needs. Eight pupils have statements of special educational need, fewer than in most schools of this size, and 188 are on the school's register of special needs. The attainment of pupils on entry to the school is average, and spans the full range of ability. For the last three years the school has selected 15% of pupils because their ability is above average, making attainment on entry a little above average for Years 7, 8, 9. The proportion of pupils who claim entitlement to free school meals is well below the national average.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Glyn is a good school. Leadership is particularly effective in ensuring very good discipline and good academic standards, particularly at GCSE. Much teaching is very good. The school has many more strengths than weaknesses and provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- The school achieves well above national average standards in GCSE examinations and Key Stage 3 tests.
- Governors, headteacher and staff ensure that standards of teaching and behaviour are very good. They have managed reduced funding as well as possible.
- Pupils behave very well, and most have very positive attitudes to their work.
- The quality of teaching is very good, overall.
- Provision of a wide range of extra-curricular activities is excellent. The range of sporting provision and the commitment of staff and boys are of outstandingly high quality.
- The school meets its obligations as a technology school very well. Links with other schools, business and industry are extremely good.
- The training and development provided for all staff are good.

What could be improved

- Although most students achieve their targets at A level, some could achieve better results.
- Greater year-on-year consistency could be better in maintaining above-average results in English in Key Stage 3 national tests.
- Parents do not get enough information from the annual report about how their children are getting on at Key Stages 3 and 4 and they could be consulted more on curricular changes.
- Use of assessment data to identify pupils' learning needs and ensure response to these by all departments could be improved.
- Computers could be used more in teaching and learning in many subjects.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made good progress since its previous inspection in February 1996. Pupils' achievements in Key Stage 3 tests and at GCSE have improved at the national rate, and have been sustained at much higher levels than the national level of improvement. The quality of teaching has improved, and much is now very good. Standards in design and technology are now high. Standards in information technology and music have improved. Statutory requirements are met for information technology and religious education. Provision for a daily act of collective worship has improved, but arrangements do not fully meet requirements. Health and safety concerns of the previous inspection have been resolved. The curriculum is better managed and policies are generally implemented well, but there is insufficient continuity of provision for information technology at Key Stage 3. Provision

for pupils with special educational needs has improved. Better provision has been made for pupils' spiritual and cultural development. Sex education is better provided and tutors exercise their pastoral responsibilities well. The school has efficiently adapted to its recent change of status and is managing effectively with reduced funding. The school has good capacity to improve further.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools*
	1997	1998	1999	1999
Key Stage 3 tests	A	B	A	D
GCSE examinations	A	B	A	C
A-levels/AS-levels	D	D	D	

Key

well above average A

above average B

average C

below average D

well below average E

* Reference to similar schools is to boys' schools and to mixed schools which contain a similar proportion of pupils who claim eligibility for free school meals. This is considered to be a valid indicator by which to compare schools with pupils of similar backgrounds.

Pupils' attainment in Key Stage 3 national tests overall has consistently been above and often well above the national average. Performance in mathematics and science is consistently well above average, and although English was above average in 1999, standards have not been consistently at this level.

At Key Stage 3 in 1999, pupils' achievement was in line with that of similar schools in mathematics and science. It was below average in English, despite considerable improvement, and below average overall.

GCSE results have been regularly well above average. Pupils achieved significantly above average results in most subjects in 1999, with the exception of information technology. The school achieves results in line with those of similar schools.

At A level and GNVQ, most students achieve the target-grades set on the basis of their GCSE attainment. Most continue to higher education successfully. However, the average point score per student is regularly below average. Some students do not attain their targets and achieve below their potential.

The school's targets for attainment at GCSE are suitably challenging, and adapted to standards of different year groups.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils have very positive attitudes in lessons. Boys of all ages are very committed to the school, and enjoy the challenge of competing for the school against other schools, particularly in games and sports.
Behaviour, in and out of	Pupils are very well behaved in lessons. They generally act responsibly when

classrooms	not directly supervised.
Personal development and relationships	Older students accept responsibility for younger ones and exercise it sensibly. Relationships are very good across the school.
Attendance	Attendance is well above average. Unauthorised absence is below average.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

Overall, teaching of 99% of the lessons seen was satisfactory or better. Teaching was good or better in 79% of lessons. In 35% of lessons it was very good or excellent. There is some very good or better teaching in all subjects. Two of 212 lessons observed were less than satisfactory.

The quality of teaching of English, mathematics and science at both key stages and in the sixth form is good overall, and much is very good.

Teaching is particularly strong in geography and modern foreign languages where a significant amount is excellent. Teachers' work is also of a particularly high quality in design and technology, physical education and religious education. In most lessons, teachers' good subject knowledge, effective planning and very good management of pupils enable them to learn effectively and make very good progress. In the few lessons in which teaching had significant weaknesses, pupils were not managed well enough, planning was weak or teachers talked for too long, limiting the opportunity for pupils to learn actively, using their initiative.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	A good range of worthwhile learning experiences is provided at both key stages. Joint provision with a neighbouring school extends sixth form range of courses. Subject links with primary schools are inadequate.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good overall. Improved provision since the previous inspection.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Pupils are suitably provided for through the mainstream curriculum. All have competent understanding of English.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Personal, social and health education is good at Key Stage 3, but lacks continuity at Key Stage 4 because there is no regular timetabled lesson. There is suitable provision through general studies in the sixth form. Overall, provision for pupils' personal development has improved, particularly in the social and cultural aspects. Spiritual provision is satisfactory, but all pupils do not have the opportunity for a daily act of worship, and provision does not fully meet statutory requirements.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Heads of year and tutors provide good support for pupils. Child protection arrangements are in place. Mentoring of under-achievers is effective at Key Stages 3 and 4. Sixth form students' use of private study time is not monitored

	and controlled closely enough.
Partnership with parents	Parents are overwhelmingly confident that the school ensures that their sons work hard and do their best. Some parents think that the school does not work closely with them or consult them enough, and they do not receive enough information on how their sons are getting on.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Leadership is very effective in ensuring very good teaching, discipline and relationships are in place across the school. Senior management is committed to ensuring that boys are successful in the classroom and on the sportsfield.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors have strong commitment to the school, and understand well the challenges it faces. They are very supportive of the headteacher and the school.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Headteacher and some heads of department regularly and effectively monitor and evaluate standards of teaching and learning. The use of assessment data to measure performance requires further development, as the school recognises.
The strategic use of resources	Funding is used well, and spending is on priorities. The school applies the principles of best value effectively and, overall, achieves good standards and provides challenging learning opportunities for pupils. There have been many staff changes, but new staff are of good quality. There are sufficient teachers who are used well. Improved accommodation, but some rooms are small for the classes using them. Learning resources are adequate overall, but there are some deficiencies of books and computers. There are some weaknesses in the distribution of lessons in mathematics and information technology within the timetable.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The school expects their children to work hard and achieve their best. Behaviour is good. Their children are helped to become mature and responsible. Teaching is very good. Their sons like attending this school. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The school working more closely with them. More information to them about how their sons are getting on. Improvements in homework arrangements.

Inspectors agree with parents that the school expects pupils to work hard and do well. The exception is that some students in the sixth form do not achieve as well as they should. The school has good discipline and pupils are supported to develop as responsible citizens. Teaching is very good, overall. Pupils like attending the school and are properly proud to belong to it and to represent it. The inspection team agrees that more information on progress should be available, and the school should consult parents more on changes affecting their children, for example when a new course is to be introduced. Homework is generally challenging and extends learning, but it is sometimes not provided according to timetable with the result that there are occasions when pupils have too much or too little to do at once.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

**Reference to similar schools throughout the report is to boys' schools and to mixed schools which contain a similar proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals. This is considered to be a valid indicator by which to compare schools with pupils of similar backgrounds.*

1. When they entered the school at age 11 years, the achievement of pupils who are now in Years 10 and 11 was broadly average. Of the pupils now in Years 7, 8 and 9, 15% were selected on grounds of above average ability. Overall, the profile of ability for pupils at Key Stage 3 is slightly above average. However, each year group across Key Stages 3 and 4 contains pupils whose abilities span the full range. This is shown by Key Stage 2 national tests in English, mathematics and science and local authority tests of abilities and skills. Pupils are admitted to sixth form A level and GNVQ courses on the basis of their prior attainment at GCSE. Entry to most advanced courses is on the criterion of achieving grade C or better in the subject at GCSE.

2. In the end of Key Stage 3 national tests overall, pupils attained well above average results in 1999 and 1997, and above average results in 1998. Pupils' attainment in the English tests was behind that in mathematics and science in these three years. However, pupils achieved standards above the national average in English in the 1999 tests, making significant progress from the result achieved in 1998. In the three subjects combined, the trend in results in the national tests has been upwards, at the same rate as the national trend, but at a much higher level. In comparison with similar schools*, pupils achieved a result below average overall in the national tests in 1999. Results in mathematics and science were average with those of similar schools, but results in English were below average.

3. Overall, in lessons observed at Key Stage 3, pupils of all levels of ability achieve above the levels expected nationally. Pupils selected for entry to the school on grounds of higher ability achieve good standards. Most pupils are achieving above average standards in lessons in English and science, and well above average standards in mathematics. However, errors in technical accuracy in writing prevent some pupils from achieving more highly in English. Pupils achieve above the nationally expected standards in other subjects, apart from in information technology, music and religious education, where achievement is at the expected level. Pupils do not use computers enough in all subjects to ensure that their progress is as good as it could be in information technology.

4. At the end of Key Stage 4, the average point score achieved at GCSE has been well above the national average since the previous inspection. The proportion of pupils achieving five or more GCSE A* to C grades and five or more A* to G grades has been regularly well above average. The trend in the average points achieved per pupil has been upwards and in line with the national increase, but at a considerably higher level than the national one. Achievement of GCSE grades A* and A has been at the national average. GCSE results achieved overall in 1999 were average with those in similar schools. The targets set for pupils' GCSE achievement in coming years are suitably challenging for both the selective and non-selective intakes. In 1999, pupils attained lower standards in English and information technology than those they achieved in the other subjects for which they entered for GCSE. However, pupils achieved well above the national average standard in English in gaining GCSE grades A* to C, and well below average in information technology.

5. In lessons observed for Years 10 and 11, in which 15% of pupils were not selected on grounds of higher ability, as is the case at Key Stage 3, standards overall were above those expected nationally. Pupils were achieving high standards in lessons seen in art, and above average standards in mathematics, science, design and technology, geography, history, modern foreign languages, physical education, business studies, drama and Latin. Standards in lessons seen were average in English, information technology, music and religious education.

6. At A level, the average point score achieved per student has been regularly below the national average. However, students' A level achievements overall are satisfactory based on their average GCSE points gained and A level outcomes. Most students achieve the target grades set for them based on their prior attainment, and continue to higher education successfully. However, some do not achieve their targets and should do better. The proportion of students achieving A or B grades has declined since 1997. Achievement at advanced GNVQ level in business has been slightly below average. In lessons observed across the curriculum, standards are particularly high in physical education and Latin, and above average in mathematics, science, design and technology, history, information technology, modern foreign languages, business studies and media. In other A level subjects, students achieve average standards overall.

7. Students achieve average standards in lessons in advanced GNVQ business studies. Students' practical skills and the standards observed in GNVQ art were considerably higher than those seen in some A level art lessons.

8. Pupils have competent standards of literacy across both key stages and in the sixth form. Their speaking and listening skills are well developed and they attain high standards. Their skills of reading and writing are competent in general, but some are inaccurate in written work. Standards of numeracy are good. Pupils of all ages manage calculations well. They confidently apply mathematical skills to a range of different subject problems and resolve them successfully. Mental arithmetic and interpretation of graphs are strengths and well applied.

9. Overall, pupils progress well and achieve standards above those expected nationally. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress towards the targets set for them in individual educational plans. They receive sensitive and well-focused support. Very able pupils enter for GCSE examinations in Year 10 and achieve highly.

10. Since the previous inspection, standards in design and technology, information technology and music, about which there was then concern, have improved. Information technology and music now achieve at the nationally expected level. However, insufficient use of computers in most subjects limits pupils' further progress in information technology. In design and technology at Key Stage 3, pupils now make good progress and achieve above the level expected nationally.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

11. Pupils' attitudes to work are very good. At all levels of the school pupils show real interest and enjoyment in their studies. In mathematics, for example, pupils were keen to experiment with graphic calculators and showed enthusiasm when working with computers. Pupils are proud of what they do and enjoy their work. Their sense of pride and enjoyment are evident in many lessons, especially in design and technology and physical education, and pupils communicated this pride and pleasure to inspectors. Pupils speak highly of the

extensive range of extra-curricular activities arranged by the school, both for sport and other events. They show their appreciation and commitment to the school by taking part in exceptionally high numbers. The school fields over 25 sports teams on Saturday mornings to compete against other schools, in addition to many house events.

12. Standards of behaviour in the school are consistently very high. Pupils behave very well in lessons. They listen carefully. They are polite and courteous to their teachers and other members of staff. Pupils' behaviour outside lessons is also very good. At lesson changeovers, they move sensibly around the school, walking carefully along crowded corridors and between buildings. No oppressive behaviour is evident. During the past year the level of fixed term exclusions has been about average for a school of this size. Permanent exclusions are low. There was only one in the past year. The number of exclusions has fallen since the last inspection.

13. Relationships are very good among pupils. In science lessons, for example, pupils work successfully together, showing sensitivity to the needs of others. Relationships are constructive and purposeful between pupils and members of staff. Pupils find their teachers approachable, and are confident that they will receive help when they need it. Pupils are ready to show initiative and take an increasing level of responsibility for their own learning as they progress through the school. This is evident in investigative work, for example in science, geography and art. However, some sixth form students do not always make effective use of private study time, adversely affecting results. Pupils, and especially sixth form students, readily accept the posts of responsibility offered through team games and house events, and as prefects. Older pupils help younger ones as form prefects and through the anti-bullying procedures.

14. The level of attendance at the school is 94.2%. This figure is well above the national average of 91%. Authorised absence is 5.5%. The figure for unauthorised absence is 0.3% compared with a national average of 1.1%. Lateness is not a significant problem though, on occasion, distances between classrooms mean that some pupils are late at the start of lessons.

15. Standards were already good at the time of the last inspection. They have improved, and are now very good overall. The lack of opportunities for pupils to use initiative was an issue then. This is no longer the case. Such opportunities are provided and pupils use them effectively to develop as independent learners.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

Inspectors make judgements about teaching in the range: excellent, very good, good, satisfactory, unsatisfactory, poor, very poor. "Satisfactory" means that strengths outweigh weaknesses.

16. Overall, the quality of teaching is very good at both key stages and in the sixth form. This results in learning, which is of equally very good quality. Almost eight lessons in every ten are of good or better quality. Over one in three lessons are very good or better, of which 5% are excellent. Teaching of excellent quality was particularly evident in geography and modern foreign languages. Only two lessons of 212 observed were of unsatisfactory or poor standard.

17. Teaching is effective in ensuring the learning of pupils of wide ranging abilities. In general, pupils of high ability are well taught across the curriculum, particularly so in mathematics, science, art, design and technology, geography, modern foreign languages and physical education. The teaching of high attaining pupils is satisfactory, but less well developed in some English, information technology and music lessons. The standard of

teaching in the withdrawal lessons for pupils with special educational needs is very good. Teachers understand the needs of these pupils very well and how to meet these with specialist teaching, so that progress becomes more rapid. Literacy and numeracy are well taught to pupils of wide ranging abilities. The standards of learning of pupils for whom English is an additional language are in line with those achieved by other pupils because teaching is very good. All successfully learn across the full range of the curriculum.

18. Teachers use their subject knowledge effectively to promote pupils' learning well. Their knowledge enables them to adapt work to meet a diverse range of learning needs. For example, in a Year 12 mathematics lesson using differential equations, the teacher's confident knowledge of the subject enabled students to extend their own learning from results of homework very well. In a Year 7 lesson in art on Impressionism, the teacher's knowledge of this movement captivated pupils' interest and encouraged their learning. Teachers plan lessons carefully, usually with a very good sequence of related activities. They make pupils aware of what the purposes of lessons are. Pupils understand what they are to learn, and usually do so successfully, following the teacher's well-thought-out and well-paced pattern of work. Time in almost all lessons is used to the full. In the vast majority of lessons, pupils are well managed. Teachers secure very good discipline through their enthusiasm, their interest in pupils and very good relationships with them. As a result, pupils are almost always willing and committed to learning. For example, in a very good Year 8 lesson on gymnastics in physical education, the teacher managed the class very well, ensuring the activity was done safely so that pupils with varying skills progressed very well in gaining subject skills. However, in a few lessons, effective management of pupils is lacking and pupils do not make the progress that they should.

19. Teachers use a good range of methods. They lead lessons well, and their skill in questioning is particularly effective in helping pupils to link prior work to current learning. However, in some lessons, teachers talk for too long and pupils are insufficiently actively engaged in learning. Pupils are helped to use their own initiative in many lessons, and to extend learning for themselves. Teaching often challenges and inspires pupils to learn. In a Year 8 religious education lesson for example, the teacher began with the class gathered round to observe the washing of a pupil's feet. This had a dramatic impact on pupils' understanding of a biblical story that they subsequently read and discussed with great interest, making moral links to how people treat others. Teachers use support staff and resources well to extend pupils' learning - although few lessons are supported, overall. Computers are not used enough in most subjects, although they are used well, for example, in mathematics, science and design and technology. Assessment of pupils' work is usually well managed. Some pupils receive extremely good oral feedback from teachers. This enables them to progress rapidly by deepening their understanding of their work. Teachers generally use homework effectively to develop pupils' independent learning well. Homework tasks are often challenging and well-chosen, but pupils have some difficulty in managing this learning because lesson timetable and homework-timetable are not matched well enough, and pupils sometimes receive too little work, and sometimes too much.

20. Since the previous inspection, the quality of teaching has improved greatly. In 1996, one lesson in five was judged to have significant weaknesses. In this inspection, only two lessons were found to be less than satisfactory. The quality overall was very good, with some lessons of the highest quality.

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

21. The school provides a broad and balanced curriculum for its pupils. All statutory requirements are met. Religious education is suitably provided at both key stages and in the sixth form. At Key Stage 3, pupils are given enhanced opportunities beyond the National Curriculum through the provision of drama. However, one lesson in information technology each fortnight at Key Stage 3, for the two year groups which receive it, and insufficient use of computers in most subjects make continuity of learning for pupils in information technology at this key stage unsatisfactory. At Key Stage 4, in addition to the required National Curriculum subjects, pupils have a wide choice from which to select two further subjects. In the sixth form, the school provides a good range of subjects with 25 courses at A level and three GNVQ programmes. The provision of three modern foreign languages throughout the school is a particular strength of the curriculum.

22. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good, with effective strategies in place for those in need of support in literacy and numeracy. Many receive focused, specialist help when they are withdrawn for study in the special needs rooms. All pupils who have special educational needs have full access to all parts of the curriculum.

23. Provision for all extra-curricular activities is excellent. The range of team sports and the commitment of staff and boys are outstanding. Pupils have very good opportunities to take part in activities and productions involving music and drama. A wide range of clubs and educational visits is available to pupils. Extensive extra support for learning is offered at lunchtime and after school through homework-clubs and revision classes.

24. Good and effective provision is made for personal and social education at Key Stage 3 and in the sixth form, but it is insufficient to meet pupils' needs at Key Stage 4. Satisfactory provision is made for sex education and for attention to drugs misuse. Overall the school makes good provision for the work related curriculum. Year 9 pupils take part in an Engineering Week and Year 10 pupils in an Industry Week. Careers interviews and work experience are provided for all pupils in Year 11. However, specific provision for careers education at Key Stage 4 is insufficient, because lesson time, as part of provision for personal and social education, is inadequate to cover essential aspects. The school plans to make additional timetabled provision from September 2000 for both personal and social education and for careers education at Key Stage 4.

25. Links with the community are strong. The school's information and communications technology "Community Links Project" involves three primary schools, a special school and three secondary schools. Close links with business and industry continue to be very effective in promoting learning. The school is strongly committed to initial teacher training and is a key member of the South West London Teacher Consortium. Effective liaison with universities and other higher education institutions ensures a smooth transition from school to college. However, links with primary schools concerning subject continuity in English, mathematics and science are underdeveloped.

26. Since the last inspection, the school has improved provision to resolve the key issues concerning the curriculum. Statutory requirements are met in information technology and for religious education in the sixth form. The provision for sex education is now satisfactory. Design and technology has been allotted sufficient time at Key Stage 3 to provide the National Curriculum.

27. Overall, the school makes good provision for pupils' personal development.

28. There is satisfactory provision for pupils' spiritual development. Some subjects make a good contribution to this. Religious education provides opportunities for pupils to

study several religions, with their different attitudes to worship and religious commitment. In a broader sense, pupils consider attitudes to life, death and suffering. There are opportunities for them to develop a sense of spiritual awareness in physical and human geography, for example through a study of the tectonic processes in the formation of volcanoes. More opportunities are provided in music, through the composition element of the curriculum and in learning to value music in its own right. The school does not have a daily act of worship for all pupils. There are two assemblies weekly for each year group. Many of these make useful contributions to pupils' personal development, but not all include an act of worship.

29. The provision for pupils' moral development is good. Standards and expectations are high. Members of staff set good examples for pupils to follow. All subjects of the curriculum include opportunities for pupils' moral development in general planning and schemes of work. These are extensively taken up in lessons. For example, in English, pupils consider the moral character of *Macbeth* and *King Lear* in their Shakespearean studies. In science lessons, they study the consequences of pollution and the greenhouse effect.

30. Provision for pupils' social development is very good. There are many examples of pupils working very well together in pairs or small groups. Pupils are encouraged to present the results of their investigations or discussions to the whole class, and they do so with confidence, expressing themselves well. Physical education makes a particularly good contribution to pupils' social development through the many opportunities for social interaction and the chance to take responsibility as sports captains or team leaders. Such opportunities occur in lessons, in team games and in extra-curricular activities. There are good opportunities too in the personal and social education programme at Key Stage 3 and general studies in the sixth form. Further opportunities to work together and develop a range of social skills are available to pupils who take part in the many trips, visits and productions. Very good relationships throughout the school and commitment shown by members of staff are important constituents of this provision.

31. The provision for pupils' cultural development is good overall. Most subjects, but particularly art, drama and music, play a very positive role here. The art department makes good use of visits to museums and galleries to extend pupils' cultural knowledge. Classical civilisation is part of the curriculum. Provision for pupils' multi-cultural development is less extensive, but satisfactory overall. A good - but rare - example of such provision is the Year 8 music project, where pupils all have the opportunity to play gamelan instruments from south-east Asia.

32. The last inspection report was critical of the provision made for pupils' spiritual and cultural development. There have been significant improvements. Spiritual provision is now satisfactory overall. Religious education makes a good contribution. Provision for pupils' cultural development is good, and very good in some aspects of the arts. The provision made for multi-cultural development remains less well developed, but is nonetheless satisfactory. The requirements for a daily act of worship for all pupils are still not met.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

33. The quality of care provided for pupils is generally good. There are appropriate procedures to ensure their welfare, health and safety. Individual departments have good safety rules and observe them. There is a new health and safety working group to co-ordinate action across the school. Heads of year, supported by their teams of tutors, know pupils well. There are very good procedures to promote and encourage good behaviour

and enforce discipline when necessary. The high standards of behaviour seen in lessons and around the school show how well they work. Attendance is recorded and monitored efficiently. Child protection procedures are satisfactory.

34. The school has recently installed new systems to collate and record information on assessment. Under this system the initial assessments made when pupils come to the school will be updated at set intervals during the school year. These systems have not been in place long enough to measure results. Some departments assess pupils' work very efficiently. These include, for example, design and technology, modern foreign languages and music. Standards of practice in assessment in other subjects vary in quality, but are satisfactory. There are inconsistencies in the support given to pupils to help them do better. Academic monitoring in Year 11 reveals when pupils could be doing better. Some pupils then benefit from being mentored to help them improve their standard of work. However, pupils who take GCSE subjects in Year 10 - a year early - are not well supported academically in Year 11, except in design and technology where the course extends their rapid progress and achievement very well. Similar problems occur when pupils resit subjects. Pupils are generally helped to realise their potential for learning, but insufficient use is made of assessment information to support pupils and help them achieve better results across all departments. This deficiency is recognised in the school development plan.

35. Identification of pupils who have special needs is good. Records from primary schools, together with the school's own testing programme, enable the co-ordinator to assess pupils' needs and provide appropriate learning.

36. The previous inspection praised the standards of care provided for pupils. These standards have been maintained. The health and safety issues mentioned in the last inspection report have been resolved.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

37. Parents are very pleased with what the school provides for their sons. Almost all parents who responded to the questionnaire consider that the school expects hard work from pupils and gets good results. Inspectors agree that the school expects pupils to work hard and has good results, but consider that some sixth form students do not get as good results in examinations as they should. Parents think that their sons like the school and behave well while they are there. They consider that the school helps their sons to become mature and responsible. All parents say that they feel able to approach the school with questions or problems, but some do not think the school works closely enough with them. Parents recognise that the school organises a good range of extra-curricular activities.

38. Some parents have concerns about homework and some do not think they receive enough information about progress. Inspectors agree that annual reports for pupils at Key Stages 3 and 4 do not tell parents what their sons have learned and give little advice on how to improve. Inspectors consider that set homework helps learning. However, as the homework timetable does not match the lesson timetable, there are occasions when pupils have either too little or too much to do.

39. The links that the school has established with parents are generally good. Some departments have particularly close links with parents in relation to pupils' work, for example as in the Year 7 home project in mathematics. Surveys and questionnaires invite parents to give their views on the school, for example at the end of pupils' first term. However, there is no formal consultation on curricular changes. The range of information

the school provides for parents is satisfactory. Although some information about the school and its curriculum is available on the school's web site, this is not extensive and is, in some cases, out-of-date. Reports on progress for parents of pupils at Key Stages 3 and 4 include attainment levels, but do not always tell parents what their sons know and can do, or suggest how they can improve. By contrast, the reports for sixth form students are good and include very specific recommendations to help students improve. Parents give the school good support. They routinely sign pupils' homework diaries. High numbers come to consultative evenings. Parents give considerable help and support to sporting events. They also support the fund-raising initiatives of the Parents/School Association and the School Trust.

40. Overall, standards are good and similar to those reported in the last inspection.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

41. The school is well led by governors, headteacher and senior staff. Headteacher and senior management ensure that standards of work, teaching and discipline are well above average. They make standards of teaching and learning their highest priority and take responsibility for the standards achieved across the school. Senior management work actively and effectively as a team in thrashing out initiatives of policy to be put to staff and governors. They work closely with heads of department in setting targets and evaluating the quality of work within the departments. There is buoyant determination across the school to work to the highest standards. The school's ethos is very positive. Headteacher, senior management and staff, with the support of governors, have the capacity to take the school forward to yet higher achievements.

42. Governors have strong commitment to the school. They are very supportive of the headteacher and staff. They give their time freely, and use their individual professional skills generously on behalf of the school, as for example in financial matters. They have a clear understanding of the challenges facing the school and, with the headteacher, they have ensured that the school's recent change of status and funding have been as well managed as possible. The two committees that governors run meet regularly and the issues considered are well documented. The committees allow governors to develop some specialist knowledge of aspects of the school. However, these committees have very wide-ranging areas of responsibility, limiting to some extent the degree of specialization possible. Governors visit the school regularly, link with departments and some observe lessons so as to inform themselves of standards of work and teaching. Governors meet their statutory requirements, except for the omission of a daily act of collective worship for all pupils.

43. The headteacher's personal effort in monitoring and evaluating standards of teaching and learning has been exceptionally effective in raising standards. He has undertaken training as an OFSTED inspector to assist him in managing his monitoring responsibilities. Teaching has improved considerably and the headteacher's regular twice-yearly observations of all teachers, accompanied by follow-up professional discussions with those teachers, have contributed greatly to improving standards of teaching and learning. Many teachers indicate the benefit they have gained from his contribution. The school's response in providing for training needs which emerge from monitoring is very well managed. The school subscribes to the service provided by the local education authority for the analysis of data of test and examination results. This provides a useful analysis for governors and management to enable them to judge whether attainment is as high as it should be. Senior management is developing further the use and interpretation of this data within the school, so that informed decisions can be reached on the relative performance of pupils of differing levels of ability. This process has begun and is a target of the school

development plan. However, the process needs to go further and involve all departments in responding to how pupils' achievements might be further improved.

44. Some heads of department monitor teaching within their departments, but this is not yet universal practice. In general, heads of department are effective in ensuring standards of teaching and learning are good, including those subject leaders appointed since the previous inspection. The management of special educational needs is good. There is no overall co-ordination yet in place for GNVQ courses. These courses are managed separately by each subject-provider, but whole school co-ordination could assist sharing of good practice in, for example, methods of teaching and learning and practice of assessment and verification.

45. School development planning identifies appropriate areas for improvement. The plan is well linked to the school's aims and values, and provides an effective means of directing the school to clearly defined targets over an appropriate time-scale. The school's priorities are well indicated in planning. For example, one practical target is to raise pupils' attainment further by extended use of data on assessment. The financial implications of planned items are taken into account, and success criteria are generally sufficient.

46. The school uses its funds well. The change in funding accompanying the recent change of status has been particularly well managed. Governors' oversight of finance is effective and the good practice followed when the school was grant maintained has been continued. Governors have carefully retained a substantial reserve to guard against contingencies during the period of transition, as the school's income is a little below average. However, some needs, for example for additional learning resources, might now be met from this contingency fund, because the local authority has acquired wider financial responsibilities for the school. Specific funding, for example for staff training, is used very well.

47. The school applies the principles of best value well. Its standards of achievement compare very well nationally. It challenges itself well to make good provision beyond that formally required, for example through the wide range of extra-curricular opportunities available. Competition for services and financial procedures and controls are very well managed. Consultation takes place, for example parents are regularly invited to express their views on school matters. However, parents could be further consulted on, for example, proposed curricular changes.

48. The timetable generally enables teaching and learning to take place appropriately. However, there is some unevenness in the balance of timetabled time in mathematics. For example, some classes in Years 8 and 10 have two lessons in this subject on the same day. In Year 11, some classes in one half of the year group have two lessons in an afternoon, although the other part of the year does not. These distributions of time are unhelpful to pupils' learning in this subject. The two-week lesson timetable is not matched to the homework timetable, with the result that pupils sometimes receive too much or too little homework.

49. There are no significant equal opportunity issues outstanding, other than those raised in the timetabling for mathematics. All pupils have equal access to the curriculum, and those for whom English is an additional language are not disadvantaged. Equality of opportunity features in almost all subject policies, and this is reflected in teaching throughout the school.

50. Overall, there are sufficient appropriately qualified teaching and support staff to meet curricular needs. However, there is a lack of technical support in art, and in science, technical support is insufficient to support fully the extensive range of courses available. The lack of foreign language assistants in modern foreign languages is unhelpful to the further development of pupils' oral skills. These limitations lead to a restriction in the range of teaching and learning opportunities available in some lessons. In-service training provided is of good quality, although reduced funding for the current year has reduced training opportunities. Formal procedures for staff appraisal are in abeyance. However, teaching continues to be very well monitored and evaluated by the headteacher. There is very effective induction of newly qualified teachers and other staff new to the school, and these staff are making a good contribution to standards of teaching. Newly qualified teachers follow a very valuable professional development programme and ongoing support from within their subject departments. The school is an extremely effective provider of initial teacher training in partnership with the South-West London Teacher Education Consortium. The school's training programme has been chosen as the model for all schools working within the consortium.

51. Overall, the standard of accommodation is good and meets the needs of pupils in all subject areas. New buildings since 1996 have significantly improved accommodation for English, art, music and drama. Specialist accommodation enhances pupils' learning in a high proportion of subjects. However, in science, some lessons have to be taught out of laboratories and this adversely impacts on the quality of teaching and learning. Rooms are grouped together in most subjects, assisting departmental co-ordination well. The school has an adequate number of rooms, but curricular need puts increasing pressure on space. Some classrooms are too small to permit a good range of teaching methods and learning styles. Geography and history, in particular, have inadequate space for investigatory resource-based learning.

52. Resources for learning are satisfactory overall. They are good in information technology, music, physical education, science and special educational needs. The Learning Resource Centre is a particularly valuable resource for independent learning. There are shortages in textbooks for modern foreign languages and geography, and some poor quality and ageing texts in English. Some resources for media studies are old and unhelpful to learning, particularly given the nature of the subject. Resources for the teaching of pupils with special educational needs are good. They include computers, books, and suitable teaching aids for addressing needs.

53. Since the previous inspection, management has resolved most of the key issues well. Statutory requirements for information technology and religious education in the sixth form have been met. However, all pupils do not have the opportunity of a daily act of collective worship. The headteacher, senior management and heads of department have improved the quality of teaching very effectively. Changes in senior management have resolved the concerns for curriculum and assessment. Resources are now linked to planning. The management and organisation of the special needs department are now good. Individual education plans are of good quality, well focused on pupils' needs, and give clear advice to teachers. Those pupils who have special pastoral needs are now included on the register, so that there is a complete picture of the whole range of special needs. The outcomes that pupils with special needs achieve indicate that in-class support, although minimal, is sufficient. The school has now gained Investor in People status, in recognition of the emphasis given by management to achieving high quality staff development and training. Many accommodation issues have been resolved, but others remain, mainly due to lack of funding. The new performing arts suite is impressive and there is now further provision for science and sixth form. However, accommodation in

science and design and technology remains insufficient for numbers of pupils. Learning resources have improved, particularly in music, but some shortages remain.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

54. In order to develop further the standards achieved by pupils and the quality of educational provision, the school should:

- (1) Improve students' achievement at A level by closer monitoring and mentoring of students identified as underachieving, and further inform and involve parents in programmes of improvement.
(See paragraphs 6, 13, 37)
- (2) Make standards in Key Stage 3 national tests in English consistently high by further developing the precision and technical accuracy of pupils' writing.
(See paragraphs 2, 3, 56, 62, 75)
- (3) Ensure that all departments meet pupils' learning needs by further use of assessment data to identify individual needs and require all departments to respond to these. (This issue is recognised in the school's own planning.)
(See paragraphs 34, 43, 71, 117)
- (4) Extend the use of computers in those subjects in which they are underused, and provide sufficient modern textbooks where there are deficiencies by providing more funding as necessary.
(See paragraphs 3, 10, 19, 21, 84, 89, 102, 106, 108, 111, 113, 115, 122, 127, 130)
- (5) Provide parents with more information on how their children are getting on through the annual report at Key Stages 3 and 4, and further consult and advise them on curricular changes.
(See paragraphs 39, 47)

55. In addition to the key issues above, the school should consider the following other weaknesses for inclusion in its action plan:

- Match the homework timetable to the lesson timetable so that the homework which pupils receive is evenly distributed through the week, enabling them to plan their time better.
(See paragraphs 19, 38, 48)
- Adjust the school's timetable where necessary to provide: a fairer distribution of lessons in mathematics; improved continuity of lessons for information technology at Key Stage 3; extended time for lessons for personal and social education and careers education at Key Stage 4. (The latter is a target in school planning.)
(See paragraphs 21, 24, 48, 113)
- Extend subject links in English, mathematics and science with primary schools.
(See paragraph 25)
- As far as possible, further extend to all pupils, on a daily basis, the opportunity of an act of collective worship.

(See paragraph 28)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	212
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	54

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
4.7	30.2	44.3	19.8	0.5	0.5	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	1033	246
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	29	0

Special educational needs	Y7– Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	9	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	188	0

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	29

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	13
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	24

Attendance

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
	%		%
School data	5.5	School data	0.3
National comparative data	7.9	National comparative data	1.1

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	1999	212	0	212

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	180	174	176
	Girls	0	0	0
	Total	180	174	176
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	85(62)	83(80)	82 (80)
	National	63(57)	62 (60)	55 (57)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	28 (27)	57(51)	36 (41)
	National	28 (28)	38 (37)	23(28)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	167	179	174
	Girls	0	0	0
	Total	167	179	174
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	78 (80)	80 (84)	82 (81)
	National	64(54)	64(61)	60 (60)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	20 (20)	54 (54)	34 (34)
	National	31(24)	37 (35)	28 (30)

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4

Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	180	0	180

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	123	173	175
	Girls	0	0	0
	Total	123	173	175
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	68 (63)	96 (94)	97 (95)
	National	46 (46)	91 (88)	96 (93)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	45 (41)
	National	39 (36)

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

Attainment at the end of the sixth form

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A-level or AS-level examinations	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	111	0	111

Average A/AS points score per candidate	For candidates entered for 2 or more A-levels or equivalent			For candidates entered for fewer than 2 A-levels or equivalent		
	Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
School	14.2	0	14.2 (14.3)	1.5	0	1.5 (3.0)
National	17.7	18.1	17.9 (17.6)	2.7	2.8	2.8 (2.8)

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

Vocational qualifications		Number	% success rate
Number in their final year of studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	14	86
	National		73

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	4
Black – African heritage	7
Black – other	2
Indian	16
Pakistani	4
Bangladeshi	6
Chinese	7
White	1233
Any other minority ethnic group	0

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	2	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	39	1
Other minority ethnic groups	2	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)	83.5
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	16.3:1

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y7 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	12
Total aggregate hours worked per week	319.5

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	78.8
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	24.5
Key Stage 4	20.4

Financial information

Financial year	1998-9
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	£
Total income	3253182
Total expenditure	3225806
Expenditure per pupil	2583
Balance brought forward from previous year	79509
Balance carried forward to next year	106885

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out

1279

Number of questionnaires returned

434

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	42	49	7	3	0
My child is making good progress in school.	45	48	5	0	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	29	60	6	1	4
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	25	54	17	3	2
The teaching is good.	30	62	4	1	4
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	24	48	20	4	4
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	45	44	6	2	4
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	63	33	3	1	1
The school works closely with parents.	19	51	20	3	7
The school is well led and managed.	41	48	7	1	4
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	40	51	6	1	3
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	42	46	5	2	5

Other issues raised by parents

Parents' comments in written observations and in the meeting held for parents were largely on the issues from the questionnaire. Despite reservations by some individuals, parents considered that the school had good discipline and that relationships were good.

The inspection team is grateful to all parents who expressed views. These were very helpful to the inspection process.

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

**Reference to similar schools throughout the report is to boys' schools and to mixed schools which contain a similar proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals. This is considered to be a valid indicator by which to compare schools with pupils of similar backgrounds.*

ENGLISH

56. In 1999, pupils' average point score in the end of Key Stage 3 national tests was above average in comparison with all schools. Compared with similar schools*, the score was below average. Compared with all schools, scores in 1998 and 1997 were below average and close to the average respectively. Boys' performance in mathematics and science has consistently been better than in English over the last four years. Though the proportion of boys achieving level 6 or higher in 1999 was above the national average, it was a lower proportion than in science and considerably lower than in mathematics.

57. GCSE English and English literature results in 1999 were significantly above the national average for both A* to C grades and A* to G grades. This has been so in English over the last three years when compared both with all pupils in maintained schools and with boys' results in maintained schools. English literature results for A* to C grades in 1998 and 1997 were in line with, and slightly below national averages respectively, but above average for achievement of A* to G grades. Relative to other subjects in the school, however, boys have usually performed less well. A feature of the GCSE results has been the dearth of A* and A grades in 1999 and previous years.

58. Achievement of A level English literature A and B grades in 1999 was in line with the national average, and well above the national average in 1998 and 1997. Results at the A to E grades have been consistently above national averages. Overall, results reflect students' prior attainment at GCSE.

59. In work seen during the inspection, overall attainment by the end of Key Stage 3 is above average. This judgement matches the current above average ability profile of boys on entry to the school. They speak confidently and clearly, with a good choice of vocabulary and appropriate tone. They listen very attentively to each other and their teacher. These skills are a strong feature of their attainment. A lively and intelligent discussion in a Year 9 lesson about how Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet came to fall in love was a typical example of the frequent opportunities which teachers create for learning and practising speaking and listening skills. Writing is often well extended and presented, reflecting the variety of writing opportunities and encouragement which teachers provide. Reading aloud is usually accurate and often expressive, and pupils' understanding of their reading is good. Lower attainers are less certain about sentence punctuation, and spelling errors persist in this group and among higher attainers too.

60. Overall, attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 in work seen during the inspection is in line with the national average. Pupils know their texts and use evidence to support their analysis. Their speaking and listening skills continue to be a strong feature of their attainment, as, for example, in a simulated "round table" presentation about key characters in Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*. They can use a variety of writing styles competently. Although coursework is often thorough and extended, this practice also produces loss of control over organisation, focus and accuracy, making standards for some pupils below what they could be.

61. Attainment in the sixth form is in line with the national average overall. The few higher attaining English literature students can articulate key issues, conduct perceptive analysis and make judgements based on secure knowledge. Most students can contribute to class discussion and ask and answer questions readily, but a few students in Year 13 lacked confidence and were passive in the classroom. Students in a Year 12 class, however, worked together well and were able to present an agreed conclusion from their group discussion.

62. Although in the last inspection report the judgements made about standards were rather indefinite, it is possible to say that standards have improved at Key Stage 3 and have at least been maintained at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form since that time. Nevertheless, by comparison with similar schools and with other subjects in the school and by the dearth of results at the highest levels, standards could be higher. This applies particularly at Key Stage 3, where the department should make standards consistently high by refining the preparation for Key Stage 3 tests and further developing the precision and technical accuracy of pupils' writing. In other respects, the department has substantially addressed the issues raised in the last inspection report that are within its control. The evidence of this inspection, particularly in relation to the pupils' very good attitudes to their work and to the quality of teaching, suggests that the department is in a good position to raise standards further.

63. The quality of teaching is good overall at both key stages and in the sixth form. Teachers' good subject knowledge and interest in their subject create enthusiasm among pupils of all levels of ability, including those with special educational needs, for their work. Teachers help them to understand often complex reading material and to express their understanding in a variety of oral and written activities. In a very good Year 10 lesson on Byron's poem *Darkness*, the teacher set high expectations and involved pupils in the rich imagery of the poem to the extent that they were able to "translate" it into their own terms and were pleased by their own achievements. Teachers plan thoroughly and present clear aims for their lessons. They set demanding tasks and offer interesting opportunities for pupils to demonstrate their understanding. In a good Year 7 lesson, the teacher effectively drew the analogy between rhythm in poetry and "beat" in music by encouraging pupils to clap the "beat" of a limerick, thus involving all pupils and establishing the importance of patterns of sound in poetry. Teachers use homework effectively, both to encourage preliminary preparation for forthcoming activities, and to extend the work of the lesson. This was apparent in sixth form lessons on Ted Hughes' poems and on Shakespeare's *King Lear*, where background research and preliminary reading contributed to students' confidence in tackling presentations or discussion about these complex texts. Teachers manage their pupils particularly well. They are well informed about and conscious of their individual needs, including those of pupils on the register of special educational needs. Pupils make good progress in understanding and developing the skills needed for success in the subject without distraction because teachers provide effective feedback and support.

64. The English department is working hard to raise standards and has already created a positive response to the subject among the pupils, but it does so against the background of an unappealing and acoustically distracting environment. There is monitoring of standards of teaching and learning by senior management and head of department, but this has not yet been fully effective in making standards in English equal with those in mathematics at Key Stage 3. It has a limited range of textual resources, many of which are worn or outdated. Pupils' opportunities to use information technology are insufficient. These features do little to enhance the quality of pupils' English experience, or to help the department to raise the profile of the subject as required in one of the key issues in the last inspection report.

Spoken English, reading, writing and listening across the curriculum

65. Most subjects make a good contribution to developing pupils' standards of literacy, and standards are good overall. Opportunities for speaking are especially good in geography, religious education, physical education, art and personal and social education. Pupils are usually articulate and confident, for example in art when explaining their methods using correct vocabulary. Fewer opportunities are apparent in music, science and mathematics, although when these occur, pupils manage them competently. Opportunities for reading are much less frequent in other subjects than they are in English, although pupils are competent when heard reading aloud. Good use, however, is made of key words, work cards, diagrammatic explanations and reference material in, for example, art, physical education, mathematics and science through good use of classroom displays. Opportunities for writing are frequent in all subjects, including personal and social education, and standards of written work and presentation are good. However, some writing is inaccurate in most subjects. Pupils throughout the school have good listening skills. They are consistently attentive to their teachers and listen carefully to their peers, respecting the ideas and views of others. The school's literacy strategy supports the needs of pupils with special educational needs well, and is clearly widely supported in most areas of the school. More attention should still be paid to creating opportunities for reading aloud in the classroom and encouraging further reading outside lessons.

Drama

66. Results in drama have been regularly above national averages. Achievement in 1999 was particularly good when all GCSE pupils achieved A* to C grades. Drama occurs as a discrete subject throughout Key Stage 3 and as an option at Key Stage 4. Strong curricular links with English, history and personal and social education benefit the pupils. An A level drama course is being offered for the first time this year. On limited observation in this inspection, standards are above average at both key stages, and average in the sixth form. Pupils use space well, have good control of movement, are confident about presenting their improvisations to the class, and are able to evaluate their own work against the standards expected. Some higher attaining students in the sixth form produce very good analytical writing about drama-theory. The quality of teaching is very good overall, particularly in the area of evaluation of pupils' work and encouraging self-evaluation through video recordings. The head of department provides strong support for her colleagues, inspires pupils and students with her own enthusiasm for the subject, and makes a significant contribution to the life of the school by involving many boys in very successful drama productions, like the recent *Lord of the Flies*.

MATHEMATICS

67. Pupils' attainment on entry to the school is currently slightly above the national average. Attainment in the end of Key Stage 3 national tests in 1999 was well above the national average at both levels 5 and 6. In comparison with similar schools, pupils' standards at level 5 are above average and broadly average at level 6. Pupils' scores have continued to improve, and have remained above the national average. Pupils attain similar standards in mathematics to those they achieve in science, and above those they achieve in English at the end of Key Stage 3.

68. There has been an upward trend in GCSE results since the last inspection and they have been maintained well above national averages. In 1998 and 1999, two-thirds of pupils achieved GCSE A* to C grades. However, in 1999 no boys gained A* grades for the first

time since the previous inspection. Pupils achieve standards at GCSE in mathematics in line with those that they achieve in their other subjects.

69. Attainment at A level, although above average, has declined slightly in recent years. In 1999, all students entered passed the examination, but the proportion gaining A and B grades dropped to 30% from 45%, the standard of the two previous years, mainly because of a reduction in achievement of these grades in single pure mathematics. No students achieved grades A or B in statistics in 1999.

70. In lessons observed, pupils' attainment at Key Stage 3 is above national expectations, and well above in some lessons. Higher attaining Year 9 pupils achieve very high standards. For example, they have very good understanding of trial and improvement methods in finding two numbers which, when added together, total 10 and, when multiplied together, make 20. Boys demonstrate high level thinking skills when devising formulae to enter into spreadsheets, or when using calculators. Projects completed in Years 8 and 9, show similar high standards of knowledge and understanding. Lower attaining pupils have a good sense of number when calculating percentage discounts on purchases.

71. At Key Stage 4, pupils' attainment is above that expected nationally. Higher attaining Year 11 pupils have very good numerical skills, for example when doing calculations without the aid of calculators. They interpret the points of intersection of numerous lines, enabling them to find the maximum and minimum values for sets of constraints successfully. Lower attaining Year 11 pupils are working successfully towards attaining a GCSE grade. Standards of presentation at both key stages are good, with many pupils showing processes leading to the final solution of a problem. However, pupils do not write enough in their exercise books for these to become an additional learning resource. Gifted pupils who have already attained GCSE A* grades have no structured course leading to further qualifications in mathematics during Year 11. This results in a lack continuity and progression in mathematics throughout Key Stage 4 for high attainers, and the school should ensure that the pupils it identifies as gifted should progress as well in Year 11 as they do in Year 10.

72. In the sixth form, A level students are achieving standards which are at least those expected for their course, and many often achieve well above these. For example, Year 13 students following the course in mechanics worked successfully and with enthusiasm to resolve the forces acting upon racing cars travelling on banked tracks. Overall, standards for most A level students are as high as they should be. However, clashes of timetabled lessons have an adverse effect upon the standards for sixth form students retaking GCSE. Most students are unable to attend more than half the lessons, and 12 out of 19 students have poor attendance records. Progress is seriously reduced by these circumstances.

73. Since the previous inspection, good standards of work have been maintained. Teachers' subject knowledge and the quality of teaching have improved. All teachers are now subject specialists. The new head of faculty has energy and a sense of purpose. New schemes of work are already resulting in improved continuity and progression in teaching and learning. An additional classroom now enables almost all subject lessons to take place in the same area, improving departmental co-ordination. Pupils are now benefiting from the use of information technology and graphical calculators. Mathematical Fundays that increase Year 7 pupils' perception and enjoyment of the subject have been recently introduced. The home project in mathematics for parents of boys in Year 7 has been well received over the last three years.

74. The quality of teaching is good overall. One in four lessons is of very good or excellent quality. These lessons result in learning of equally good quality. Teachers' expectations are high, for example over the last two years a small number of selected Year 10 pupils have gained GCSE A* grades. They are the forerunners of an accelerated programme of learning now in place for classes of higher attaining pupils in Years 7 to 9. Lessons are well planned, ensuring that basic skills are well taught and subject content is clearly understood by pupils. Questions are used effectively to assess pupils' understanding and extend their knowledge. Teachers assess pupils' standards and progress accurately and well. Pupils benefit from subsequent support and gain in confidence in the subject. The very best teaching provides exciting challenges and helps pupils to develop their own mathematical strategies and gain greatly in understanding of the subject. In well-taught lessons, teachers stretch pupils' skills of recall, requiring them to visualise and put mathematics into diagrammatic form, extending their learning well. However, in some lessons, although satisfactory overall, teachers talk for too long and do too much thinking for their pupils. Small classes for lower attainers in Years 8 to 11 give pupils good access to teachers, and pupils with special educational needs usually make good progress despite the lack of provision of support assistants.

75. Pupils usually behave very well. They are keen to learn and to share their findings with teachers and their peers. They work at a productive pace, except in cramped conditions in the computer room. All pupils receive their entitlement to information technology, but the room available is unhelpful to teaching, and this was a principal factor contributing to the one instance of unsatisfactory learning which was seen during the inspection. The quality and regularity of the faculty's marking of books are inconsistent and lead to unacceptable variation in the standards of presentation of written work. Pupils have insufficient information to inform them of their relative progress. Timetabling of mathematics has a number of shortcomings that reduce the effectiveness of teaching. Despite very good pupil-teacher relationships that create a positive working atmosphere and careful teacher planning, even the best teachers and their classes tire towards the end of a second lesson, when two are timetabled on the same day. Even sixth form students find the poor distribution of lessons difficult to overcome. The effect upon standards resulting from two halves of the same year group having either a good or poor distribution of lessons is not evaluated. Monitoring procedures have yet to be put in place.

Numeracy

76. The mathematics faculty has planned a whole-school policy for numeracy. This will be implemented shortly. Despite the current lack of a policy, teaching in science and design and technology provides pupils with good opportunities to apply the methods of calculation taught in mathematics. Pupils' good skills in use of number evident in mathematics are, for example, also reinforced through the calculation of prices during shopping exercises in modern language lessons. Pupils confidently record data in English, physical education and science. For example, in physical education they measure and accurately record times and pulses during health-related exercises. In English at Key Stage 3, pupils illustrate pictorially the rhythmic and rhyming patterns observed in limericks. In science, students are able to explain first principles and use formulae successfully to help resolve forces acting within a crane. However, in geography, the use of statistics, the collection and use of data and the analysis of results to enable predictions to be made are less evident than is usually the case. Pupils' use of calculators and computers, when available, is usually purposeful in design and technology, geography, mathematics and science. Year 12 students use graphical calculators successfully to gain a practical understanding of the second differential of a function. However, although pupils use mental mathematics well to solve arithmetical problems, some Year 11 pupils unnecessarily resort to using a calculator.

Pupils reach high standards in spatial awareness, particularly in art and design and technology. In art for example, Year 7 pupils have good realisation of ellipses and perspective. They build upon this skill and become technically very competent.

SCIENCE

77. Attainment at the end of both key stages and the sixth form is above average. In national tests at the end of Key Stage 3 in 1999, the percentage of pupils reaching levels 5 and 6 and above was well above the national average, and this has been the pattern for the past four years. The proportion of pupils at level 5 and above was well above the average for similar schools, but at level 6 and above, it was below average. Pupils achieve similar standards in mathematics, but they do better in science than in English in end of Key Stage 3 tests.

78. The proportion of pupils gaining GCSE grades A* to C in double science is well above the national average, and has been so since 1993. Pupils' attainment in single award science in 1999 was also above the national average. Pupils attain similar standards in science to those they achieve in their other subjects.

79. In 1999, the proportion of students gaining A level grades A and B in physics was slightly below the national average. In chemistry, results were average, although in previous years they have been significantly above average. In biology, results were above average in 1999, but well below average in 1998. Recently, there has been an overall reduction in the proportion of A and B grades to below average for all schools. However, almost all students usually gain a pass grade.

80. Throughout both key stages and in the sixth form, pupils' attainment in science lessons is generally good and occasionally it is very good. For example, pupils in Year 11 are very successful at using sensors and data-logging to gain understanding of cooling due to evaporation. At Key Stage 3, pupils successfully test the acidity and alkalinity of a range of common substances. Attainment is less secure where pupils are not fully engaged in their learning, and do not readily use their own first hand experience to assist their predictions.

81. Since the last inspection, an extended range of teaching methods has improved the quality of teaching and the sharing of good practice, especially in investigations at Key Stage 4. Pupils' learning has benefited considerably. Teachers continue to develop pupils' skills in information technology, particularly in data-logging. There are no longer serious, outstanding health and safety issues. Teachers and technicians are familiar with safe working practice and daily routines reflect this. Policies and procedures are in place and schemes of work at Key Stage 4 have been completely revised. Information from Key Stage 3 is used increasingly to improve the targeting of National Curriculum levels for pupils and there are improved arrangements for revision for pupils taking GCSE. Following the introduction of environmental science and human biology, more students are taking science subjects at A level.

82. The quality of teaching is never less than satisfactory and usually good. Learning is of an equally good standard at both key stages and in the sixth form. Teachers have very good knowledge and understanding, particularly within their own science specialism. They organise and plan individual lessons conscientiously. Teachers' expectations are high for many pupils and intended outcomes are usually clear to the pupils, for example, in a Year 9 lesson on indicators. This clearly contributed to their understanding and the overall success of the lesson. Whole-class questioning is used effectively and the pace of lessons is generally good, supporting the rate of learning well. A good range of teaching and learning strategies is used. Homework is well thought out, relevant and clearly extends learning. Progress in lessons is

good at all key stages, and for pupils of all levels of ability, including those with special educational needs. Pupils are challenged and confident and show clear gains in knowledge, understanding and skills. This was shown well in Year 10 where low attainers made good progress in their work on sense-receptors and the unreliability of some responses. Pupils in Year 11 enjoy their practical work on pH, and present their findings with confidence. They speak and listen well. Most pupils take pride in their work and books are well looked after. They are keen, willing and attentive and approach their work with enthusiasm and a sense of enjoyment. They enjoy the challenge of new learning. This was well shown by Year 8 pupils in their work on testing for glucose and starch in energy drinks, and during a Year 9 lesson on the electromagnet and its common uses. Pupils enjoy practical work in science. They work well together with good concentration. However, at Key Stage 3, teachers do not provide sufficient opportunity for open-ended problem-solving, for making and testing hypotheses, and for developing pupils' skills of planning, investigation, prediction and evaluation.

83. Teachers assess work effectively. They mark pupils' work regularly using praise and helpful comment, which enhances progress. Assessment is regular, such as end of unit tests and the outcome of practical investigations. Scores and levels are often displayed in pupils' books, and can be seen regularly by parents. Information is occasionally used to modify teachers' planning of the next stage of learning. Teachers provide a good number and range of extra-curricular activities. These include the science club with practical activity and hands-on experience, visits to science museums, Kew Gardens, the Royal Institution lectures, field trips and many more. These experiences do much to extend pupils' learning and experience of the subject. The quality and amount of pupils' work on display throughout the department are good and some is excellent, providing a stimulating environment in which to learn science.

84. Capable leadership and monitoring of standards ensure that the department fully meets the statutory requirements of the National Curriculum. The head of department has a clear vision, enthusiasm and an effective style so as to maintain good standards. Specialist accommodation, although extensive, is insufficient. Rooms are fully used and some lessons occur out of laboratories. A team of four well-qualified and experienced people provides high quality technical support to lessons. However, even with the anticipated return of a colleague on maternity leave, technician time is barely sufficient. Resources generally are of good quality and sufficient to support an appropriate level of practical problem-solving. Although teachers are rapidly developing skills of using computers in science and administration overall, there is insufficient use of computers in most pupils' day-to-day experience.

ART

85. The proportion of pupils achieving grades A* to C at GCSE in recent years has been well above average. In 1999, achievement of GCSE grades A* to C compared very favourably with national results and all those entered achieved at least a GCSE A* to G grade. The proportion of GCSE A* and A grades achieved was high. Pupils achieve higher standards in art than they do in most of their other subjects. The proportion of pupils taking art, however, has been lower than average recently.

86. A level results have not matched this high attainment at GCSE. No students gained A or B grades at A level in the last two years and many candidates failed to gain a grade at all. Results have compared poorly against the national average, although numbers have been too small to make statistical comparison valid. GNVQ results have been above average, however, and students have gained a number of distinctions and merits. All students have passed their course.

87. By the end of Year 9, pupils' attainment in most aspects of art is above average. They are particularly strong in the technical elements of painting and drawing. Pupils possess a high level of spatial awareness, which they use to very good effect in their drawing and two-dimensional work. Some pupils in Year 7 showed very good critical awareness when discussing the topic of Impressionism. Their analytical skills are well developed by the end of Key Stage 3. The curriculum now includes an appropriate range of work using media in addition to painting and drawing, for example, ceramics and weaving. However, in these areas, boys' skills are only average through the key stages. It is in their mark-making and two-dimensional skills that attainment is particularly high, with some excellent work observed in Year 9. A small number of pupils, identified through assessment as demonstrating exceptional performance, have already embarked on GCSE work, and were producing a high standard of portraiture in Year 9. Pupils with special educational needs progress well in art, with practical work of a similar standard to their peers.

88. Pupils' GCSE work at Key Stage 4 is well above average. It reflects the high attainment indicated by recent examination results. Their strengths in drawing and painting are maintained, and most pupils use this as the main focus of their coursework. Three-dimensional sculptures, for example ceramic models of hands, show average levels of skill. Critical studies and art-appreciation work show a good degree of critical analysis. Pupils' main strengths, though, continue to lie in two-dimensional work, with some paintings and drawing displaying an unusually strong individual interpretation of ideas from a stimulus. Throughout the school, pupils use the specialist vocabulary of art with confidence to explain the development of their work. In a project about Surrealism, Year 10 pupils understood the ideas of transformation and unusual juxtaposition clearly, and produced very good pencil drawings from direct observation. By Year 11, attainment is well above average. In the sixth form, standards vary and are broadly average overall. Year 12 A level students' curriculum has been redesigned to address the shortcomings in A level standards, and their work is more comparable with A level expectations than that of Year 13. GNVQ standards are high compared with the expectation for their course, especially in practical work.

89. The head of department has managed to improve almost all aspects criticised in the last report. Attainment has improved very significantly, from average in 1996, to above average at Key Stage 3, and well above average at Key Stage 4. However, use of information technology is still inadequate. Assessment, although currently useful, does not wholly conform to requirements at Key Stage 3. The lack of a technician exacerbates the difficulties of managing a department with divided accommodation. Some old accommodation restricts large-scale three-dimensional work.

90. Teaching and learning in the department are good overall. Some teaching is very good, particularly at Key Stage 4. Teachers skilfully provide pupils with the opportunity to develop their own creative ideas. They support them very well individually. Methods are highly successful in transmitting to pupils the wide range of the teacher's subject knowledge and understanding, which pupils then use to improve standards in their own work. Introductions to lessons are brisk, followed by the maximum opportunity for practical work. Where teachers lead plenary sessions, they mostly show a high level of skill in stimulating pupils' creativity and imagination. In some lessons, though, a more rigid, controlled style constrains this creativity. Overall, teaching is very successful in developing pupils' technical skills, especially those in painting and drawing. Pupils develop a good degree of independence as they move up the school, and almost always undertake their work with enjoyment. They show unusual perception in understanding their strengths and weaknesses.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

91. Over the past three years, GCSE results at grades A* to C have been significantly above the national average in all subjects covered by design and technology. In 1999, the percentage of pupils achieving a GCSE grade A* to C in graphic products and in electronic products was high compared with the national average. Pupils' performance in the combined course of resistant materials and business studies, however, was well below that achieved in the other subjects of design and technology, although it was in line with the national average for combined subjects. In 1999 overall, the proportion of pupils attaining the highest GCSE grade of A* was well above the national average. The proportion of pupils attaining grades A* to G grades has been above the national average in recent years.

92. Over the last two years, the proportion of students attaining A or B grades in A level design and technology has been above the national average, but the proportion attaining these grades in design and graphics was well below the national average. Over this period, however, almost all students entered for A level design and technology have gained a pass grade. Pupils achieve as well in design and technology at both GCSE and at A level as they do in their other subjects in the school.

93. At the end of Key Stage 3, most pupils attain standards that are above the national expectation and many attain standards well above expectations. Year 7 pupils have good understanding of basic electronic circuitry in the completion of their moisture-sensor project. Pupils show a good understanding of the processes and principles of designing in Year 8 when they design and make a wallet for a CD or floppy disk. In all projects they take good account of the appearance of products, fitness for purpose and issues of safety in their design outcomes. In a Year 8 sports-rattle project and a Year 9 measuring-tool project, their making skills are very well developed. Pupils' products are well crafted, showing good levels of skill in the use of tools and equipment. They have very good graphic skills, and the standard of presentation of design ideas is good.

94. In lessons at Key Stage 4, standards overall are well above the national average for the great majority of pupils. Some higher attaining pupils in Year 11 have already achieved a GCSE A or A* grade in design and technology and show good standards in the AS level for which they are currently studying. Most pupils produce modern, innovative and original design ideas. Pupils show good - and often very good - skills in using tools, equipment and machinery and are very conscious of the need for safe working practices. Most pupils use information technology very effectively in the completion of their coursework. They describe their design ideas fluently and well using technical vocabulary. Lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs learn successfully, make good progress and attain to their full capability.

95. In sixth form lessons observed and from evidence of students' samples of work, almost all are achieving at grade A or B standard at A level. Students' coursework reflects design ideas that show high levels of flair and imagination, with good awareness of users' needs and values. Most students successfully resolve conflicting requirements and constraints within products in the development of their designs. Students show sound knowledge and understanding of materials and components and build effectively on their prior work. Skills of graphicacy are very high and students readily use information technology where appropriate in the completion of tasks.

96. The department approached the findings of the previous inspection in a very positive manner and has fully resolved all issues. Standards overall have greatly improved at both key stages and in the sixth form.

97. Overall teaching is never less than satisfactory. The great majority is good and often better. In the sixth form, teaching in some lessons is excellent. Teachers demonstrate new techniques well. They expect pupils to pay attention to detail in the making of high quality products, coupled with safe working practices. All teachers have very secure knowledge and understanding of the design process and they explain the principles very effectively to pupils. In all lessons, good attention is paid to the development of appropriate numeracy, literacy and speaking skills. In every lesson, pupils are well tested in the correct use of technical vocabulary. Teachers' expectations are very high in relation to presentation and graphic skills, and pupils' high achievements result from these. Most teachers use a wide range of examples to good effect to motivate and guide pupils in their work. They provide a good range of worksheets, which challenge and extend higher attainers, but are sometimes insufficiently modified to meet the needs of lower attainers. The very high level of support by teachers for individual pupils compensates for this in part, but not fully. Most pupils are clearly aware of what they need to do, are well informed and motivated by the teaching and make good progress. In all lessons, teachers provide very good verbal feedback to pupils on their general progress and the marking of work provides a clear indication of what needs to be improved. In almost every lesson, good humour prevails, and an atmosphere conducive to positive learning is established. Pupils respond very positively to the teaching and behaviour is very good.

98. The head of department provides excellent leadership enabling a very clear educational direction for the subject. He provides very strong motivational support for both the staff and pupils. This has led to the greatly improved standards seen at both key stages and in the sixth form. Large group sizes in practical areas make learning more difficult. Pupils' excellent behaviour and competent teaching overcome incipient health and safety concerns in workshops caused by large numbers of pupils taught at the same time. The departmental technician provides an invaluable contribution to pupils' learning.

GEOGRAPHY

99. In 1999 and in recent years, GCSE A* to C and A* to G results have been consistently well above average. Boys perform well compared with boys nationally. Pupils achieve standards at GCSE in line with those in their other subjects. In recent years A level results overall have been close to the national average. However, the proportion of pupils attaining GCSE A* and A grades and A level A and B grades has been below national results.

100. In lessons observed, most pupils attain levels which are significantly above those expected nationally by the end of Key Stage 3, and well above by the end of Key Stage 4. By the end of Key Stage 3, pupils have a very good grounding in geographical skills and vocabulary. They use and interpret maps well and have a good understanding of spatial and environmental issues, but lack practice in graphic presentation of statistical data. By the end of Key Stage 4, pupils can explain a range of physical and human processes, for example, the action of rivers and glaciers and the use of urban land, extremely competently. They can also effectively rank developmental indicators and judge levels of development in selected countries. They produce high quality independent project work based on individual fieldwork. In the sixth form, attainment is average. Students generally organise themselves well and develop a good grasp of geographical concepts in a variety of contexts. Pupils with special educational needs work well, particularly when specialist

support is available, and produce work which is above that normally expected for their attainment level. Useful knowledge and understanding are gained of social and cultural issues through studies of Brazil and Japan and topics such as the Afro-Caribbean communities in Britain. Pupils' attitudes to the subject are very positive at all ages. Most display a real interest and enjoyment in their work. Behaviour is very good and the best is excellent. Pupils develop good relationships with their teachers and in many lessons a real rapport is evident. Pupils relate excellently to each other, are courteous and supportive when working in groups, as shown in a lesson when using CD ROM co-operatively to draw a timeline to show how London has grown over time. Pupils' responses to questions are well developed and analytical, but in some lessons response from all pupils is lacking.

101. The previous inspection report identified considerable strengths in teaching and learning. These have been sustained. The bridging course suggested at the beginning of Year 12 to aid transition from GCSE to A level has not been implemented, but a change to a modular syllabus and more rigorous entry requirements have been enacted. Further development of study skills and examination revision skills in the sixth form has not taken place. Inconsistencies in marking still prevail and comments on pupils' work do not sufficiently help pupils to improve their levels of attainment. Misspelling of key words is not always corrected so as to aid progress.

102. The standard of teaching is almost always at least good, with nearly half the lessons seen of very good or excellent quality. Teaching is a significant strength of the department, particularly so at Key Stage 4. Teachers are very committed and supportive, they relate positively to pupils, and their classroom management and control are excellent. The best teaching has clear and manageable aims shared with pupils and tested at the end of the lesson to ensure that learning is effective. Detailed and imaginative planning encourages pupils' interest and provides a variety of learning opportunities. The pace of lessons is good and they are presented in a challenging way with high expectation of achievement. In these lessons teachers have a secure knowledge of subject matter and their presentation is lively, dynamic, encourages genuine enjoyment of the subject and promotes learning well. Teachers use a good range of visual aids, including video extracts, displays of graphs on overhead projectors, maps and diagrams and topical materials making understanding of the lesson's objectives clearer. Teachers bring topics within pupils' experience and this has a positive impact on the quality of their learning. However, in some lessons teachers do not enhance learning enough because they do not reinforce main points visually on the whiteboard. Teaching enables pupils to develop skills of literacy and numeracy progressively throughout Key Stages 3 and 4, although numerical skills are not always fully developed. Learning is good at Key Stage 3, very good at Key Stage 4, and satisfactory in the sixth form. Teachers do not always grade work so that pupils are not made fully aware of their standard, and progress to overcome weaknesses. Pupils are not fully involved in evaluating their own work and setting targets to sustain progress. Fieldwork greatly enriches learning and the best work is of very good quality. However, it is inadequate at Key Stage 3, where pupils do not experience at first-hand an environment outside the local area. Information technology is being planned within the course, but this needs to be developed as a coherent programme linked directly to curricular themes.

103. The department is well led by a newly appointed, enthusiastic head of department. There is much potential for the further development of the subject. Overall, this is a strong and successful department. The subject is the most popular option at GCSE and A level. More departmental co-ordination is needed to establish a common approach, for example to assessment. The department should critically assess how learning can be further improved so that more of the highest grades can be achieved in national examinations. Accommodation is new and facilities are of high quality, although there is inadequate space

for investigatory resource-based learning. Wall displays contribute to a very good learning environment. There are some shortages in resources that limit progress, including textbooks for Year 9, large standing world display maps and a suite of computers.

HISTORY

104. GCSE results at grades at A* to C have been above national averages for the last three years. Pupils achieve results broadly in line with those which they gain in other subjects. A level results at grades A and B have varied over the last three years, and have sometimes been above and sometimes below national averages. Almost all students obtain a pass grade.

105. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is above the nationally expected level. Most pupils have a good understanding of the major events and changes in the periods they have been studying. For example, Year 7 pupils, in work on the medieval monarchy, provided thoughtful explanations of the conflict between Henry II and Thomas Becket. Pupils work well with historical sources. Year 9 boys successfully extracted information from school log books to find out about aspects of Victorian education. Pupils' oral contributions in class are usually fluent and often persuasive. Written work is generally accurate and well presented, although pupils are often reluctant to write in depth and in detail. At Key Stage 4, attainment in Year 11 classes is above the national average. Pupils are mastering the content of the course effectively, and have a good understanding of some of the underlying issues, for example the conflict between the communist and non-communist world after World War 2. They are also able to make good links between different parts of the course. In the sixth form, attainment in Year 13 groups is above the national average. Students have a good grasp of the 17th and 20th century topics they are studying, and can analyse relevant issues and questions. They research topics well and produce some persuasive historical writing, for example on different interpretations of the causes of the English Civil War.

106. Standards at Key Stages 3 and 4 have improved since the last inspection. Pupils' written work now reflects more accurately the quality of their oral discussion, although there is still some reticence about undertaking extended writing at Key Stage 3. The quality of teaching has become more consistent, but information technology is still seldom used to support the study of history.

107. The overall quality of teaching is good and none is less than satisfactory. In some lessons, teaching is very good. Teachers' subject knowledge is a strength and is used well to extend pupils' understanding. Planning is thorough and objectives in lessons are usually shared with pupils. This helps them to evaluate their own progress. Teaching methods are varied and well judged, although sometimes too much talk from teachers slows down the pace of pupils' learning. Video is used well to stimulate pupils' interest and enhance their learning. For example, two brief contrasting video extracts helped Year 8 pupils to understand the impact of war on people's lives in 17th century England. Skilful questioning, which extends pupils' understanding, is also a strength of teaching in the department. For example, probing and supportive questioning enabled Year 12 students to develop a good understanding of aspects of Mussolini's Italy. Pupils are well managed. Homework is set regularly and well integrated with ongoing classwork. Overall, the quality of pupils' learning is good. They work well and make good progress, including those with special educational needs. Attitudes to the subject are good and pupils enjoy their work in history.

108. Regular monitoring by senior management has contributed to improved teaching in history. Shared expectations within the department of what pupils can achieve, supported

by thorough documentation, help to ensure high levels of attainment. However, the limited use of information technology results in missed opportunities for raising standards in the subject, for example improving written skills through word processing or developing historical understanding through data-handling.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

109. The proportion of pupils attaining GCSE A* to C grades and A* to G grades was significantly below the national average in 1999. In 1998 all the pupils who entered for the GCSE information systems examination achieved an A* to C grade, but the numbers involved were too few to make any meaningful comparisons with the national average. The proportion of students attaining grades A and B in AS level computing in 1999 was significantly below average. In 1998 all students entered for the AS level examination in computing gained an A or B grade, a result well above the national average. Students attain less well in information technology than they do in most other subjects in the school.

110. In lessons observed and from scrutiny of pupils' work in timetabled information technology lessons and in that of a minority of subjects across the curriculum, attainment overall at the end of Key Stage 3 is broadly in line with the national expectations. There are clear strengths in pupils' skills in word processing and in using the computer to control, for example, a traffic light system, or to develop and test an electronic circuit in design and technology. In Year 7, pupils develop skills in using a spreadsheet, for example, to calculate expenditure for a shop. In Year 9 lessons, pupils show satisfactory skills in using a software package to produce slides for a presentation. Most pupils show fluency in basic operations, such as logging on to the network, loading program files and in using the keyboard and mouse.

111. At Key Stage 4, the great majority of pupils' attainment is in line with the national average. A very small minority attain above it. Most pupils show flair and imagination in using word processing or presentation software in, for example, design and technology coursework. Lower attaining pupils, particularly those with special educational needs, progress in line with their peers and make good gains in knowledge and understanding. In a Year 11 GCSE revision lesson, pupils confidently answered the questions asked by the teacher and attained in line with expectations. Across the curriculum, whilst there are some examples of good provision, for example, in mathematics, science and design and technology, in general, insufficient opportunity is provided for pupils to extend the skills learnt in discrete lessons for information technology. This limits pupils' progress in using information technology as a tool to investigate, research and solve problems and to understand the implications for working life and society.

112. Sixth form standards are broadly in line with those expected from their course. Students observed using computers show satisfactory skills in word processing their coursework, which often includes items resourced from the Internet. In the Year 12 A level course, students tackle the project of reporting on an administrative system with good levels of competence and confidence.

113. The school and the department approached the findings of the previous inspection in a very positive manner and have successfully remedied most of the issues raised. The subject now meets the requirements of the National Curriculum through timetabled information technology lessons in Year 7 and Year 9. Standards have improved. However, the fortnightly timetabling of lessons for information technology does not promote continuity of learning effectively for pupils at Key Stage 3. Although cross-curricular use of information technology has been clearly mapped and significant improvements have been made in, for

example, design and technology, many subjects do not use it enough. Some cramped accommodation is unsatisfactory and adversely affects the quality of learning when large groups of pupils are involved.

114. Teaching is satisfactory overall and good or better in a third of lessons specifically for information technology. All teachers are enthusiastic about the subject and effectively stimulate pupils' interest and motivation. They explain software concepts clearly and provide straightforward, effective demonstrations of applications, sometimes using a large screen so that all pupils can clearly see the processes involved. Teachers provide challenging tasks in using the software. The problems posed build and draw on pupils' knowledge and conceptual understanding of information technology and relate well to experiences they have had inside and outside school. Teachers provide high levels of individual support and guidance working with pupils at their computers. The teaching styles and methods impact positively on pupils' learning. Most pupils respond well to teachers and show good levels of interest, sustain concentration for long spans of time and make good progress in lessons. They have good attitudes to learning and behave well in lessons. Teachers are good at testing pupils' understanding of tasks. They effectively enable pupils to understand how well they are progressing in information technology and to understand how they can improve their work.

115. Curricular time for teaching the skills of information technology at Key Stage 3 is slightly lower than the recommended minimum, which, together with the fortnightly timetable cycle of lessons, restricts pupils' continuity of learning. Extended learning opportunities through cross-curricular provision are underdeveloped. The language in most written instructions booklets is too difficult for lower attaining pupils and some with special educational needs, and teachers have to work hard with individuals to ensure they progress well. The technical support provided in class is very good and contributes very effectively to pupils' learning.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

116. In 1999, GCSE results at grades A* to C in modern languages were well above national averages. They were higher in French and German than in Spanish. Pupils performed significantly better in modern languages than in their other GCSE subjects. GCSE results have improved considerably since 1997, when French results were at the national average, and German and Spanish results were well below. At A level, the numbers of students taking French, German and Spanish are too low to make valid comparisons with national averages at A and B grades in separate languages. However, in 1999, of the nine students who entered, two gained an A grade, one a B grade and six a C grade. This was a considerable improvement on the results in 1997, when only French was taken and more students obtained lower grades.

117. From pupils' work and lessons seen, attainment by the end of Key Stage 3 is above national expectations. Pupils develop their speaking and listening skills well over the course of the key stage, so that by Year 9 higher attainers can take part well, and with some confidence, in conversations about themselves and about what they have done in the past. Lower attainers are more hesitant in speaking, but they can generally follow the teacher's instructions in class well, particularly if the teacher has used the foreign language consistently during the course. Pupils' reading skills are restricted somewhat by the lack of textbooks available for homework. By the end of the key stage, there is a wide range of attainment in writing. The best work produced by the higher attainers is extended, accurate and has instances of flair and imagination. Pupils are beginning to use tenses, including the imperfect tense, with confidence. Lower attainers are much more limited by the length

and complexity of what they write, but with close guidance and support from teachers they generally complete assignments satisfactorily. The amount of written work required of pupils, however, varies significantly between classes in the same year. The 1999 end-of-Key Stage 3 teacher assessments were unavailable.

118. At Key Stage 4, attainment remains above national expectations. Pupils continue to practise and extend their oral work well, in line with examination requirements. They have ample opportunity to copy the very good models of pronunciation provided by their teachers. Most higher attainers show good recall of the vocabulary they have learnt, because of the consistent learning and testing of new words. A small number of lower attainers is presented with reading material that is too difficult for them. In writing, higher attainers prepare well for their written coursework. They write at length and use tenses with support when required, but the level of accuracy and complexity of structure are generally not quite high enough to secure GCSE A* grades. Lower attainers find coursework difficult and their writing is often limited to very simple sentences.

119. In the sixth form, there is a wide range of attainment. Higher attainers learn to express their opinions and ideas very well, with confidence and accuracy in both spoken and written form. Lower attaining students are uncertain in controlling both grammar and vocabulary. To some extent, Year 12 students do not reach the expected levels of fluency in speaking, because the number of lessons allocated each week is low and there are no foreign language assistants to help students with oral work. Students have ample opportunity for private study with access to a very good range of listening and reading materials in the resource centre, but they do not have a monitored programme of study to guide them individually.

120. Since the last inspection, there has been an outstanding improvement in GCSE results. Results at A level have also improved, particularly in French. The introduction of three languages on an equal basis throughout the school has helped to raise the status of languages, and this innovation has been accompanied by an overall improvement in teaching standards.

121. The quality of teaching is very good at Key Stage 3 and good at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. Half the lessons seen were very good and included a small number of excellent lessons. A quarter of lessons were good, the rest being satisfactory, with one exception arising from poor management of pupils' behaviour. Nearly all teachers use the foreign language consistently well in the classroom and most have a very good understanding of how pupils learn languages. The prevailing style of teaching develops confidence and interest, because of its liveliness and directness. In one Year 11 French lesson, appropriate use was made of English to guide lower attaining pupils carefully through their preparation for speaking-coursework on future plans. Pupils' progress is good, including that of pupils with special educational needs. Teachers plan their lessons very well and often make very good use of the overhead projector to enliven and illustrate the words they are introducing. In most lessons, teachers' expectations are very high and the highest attainers are challenged both by the rapid pace of learning and the materials provided. In one Year 9 German lesson, higher-attaining pupils responded very well to the teacher's methodical and purposeful teaching approach, using excellent overhead transparencies, on how to cope with the complexities of German word order. Teachers check on pupils' performance in lessons well, and often give the immediate feedback pupils need so that they know how well they are doing. Marking is generally good, but pupils are not required to do follow-up corrections. Learning is supported by pupils' very good behaviour and attitudes, particularly at Key Stage 3. They listen and participate well. In one French lesson for Year 10, higher attainers, who learn both French and German, took part

very enthusiastically in a grammatical game and then split up into a carousel of activities to practise separate skills. All pupils concentrated very well and took turns with alacrity as question masters in the oral activity.

122. The new head of faculty ensures a very clear direction for the work and development of the subject and promotes high standards by example. Monitoring of teaching and very good target-setting procedures at Key Stage 4 have helped to raise standards. The introduction of information technology is not yet fully integrated into the teaching programme. The shortage of textbooks adversely affects reading standards and restricts the range of homework assignments.

MUSIC

123. GCSE results in music have been at the national average for achievement of A* to C grades for the last three years, but few A* grades have been achieved. A level results in music and music-technology have been consistently just below the national average for achievement of grades A to E, and achievement of A and B grades has been well below average. However, results have generally reflected the prior attainment of students. Pupils usually achieve standards in music below those that they achieve in their other subjects.

124. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is at the nationally expected level, and average at the end of Key Stage 4. Attainment of students seen in Year 13 is appropriate for this stage of the course, reflecting students' abilities. Some good work was seen at all levels, for example, a Year 9 piece of high quality involving a theme and variations, Year 11 pupils' successful reading of a score, a pupil in Year 10 using the concept of 'swing' to explain the nature of compound time, and an excellent improvisation on guitar by a Year 13 student.

125. Since the last inspection, standards at Key Stage 3 have improved, but GCSE and A level results have remained at a similar level, overall. Teaching and learning have improved. Most issues from the last inspection have been resolved. However, few students achieve higher grades in external examinations.

126. The quality of teaching at Key Stage 3 is satisfactory. It is good at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. A similar pattern is seen in the quality of learning at both key stages. The best teaching is characterised by good relationships and very good planning and preparation. These enable teachers to use questions effectively, and make pupils listen carefully to them and to music. Teachers manage and organise their classes well. They give pupils a sense of security in their work and in their approach to group-work. For example, a Year 7 whole-class session on improvisation using the pentatonic scale on tuned-percussion instruments was very well managed, and pupils extended their understanding of the topic well. Teachers give good developmental feedback which is helpful to pupils' progress. Pupils with particular musical abilities receive encouragement and guidance to refine their work within the learning process. The assessment system is a strength, and pupils are involved in their own assessment. This helps them to understand their level of achievement clearly. However, there is insufficient short-term target-setting in composition work, and some pupils find current practice frustrating. Some very good teaching was seen with Year 13 students on how to address the improvisation required for the A level examination. Teachers successfully combine technical expertise and advice with the building of students' self-confidence. The resulting quality of their work impressed the students themselves. Some concepts which pupils often find difficult to understand are well taught. For example, there was very good teaching of the concept of compound time, and one pupil responded with the very astute observation that the music was being 'swung'.

Pupils' attitudes to learning are good at Key Stage 3 and in the sixth form, and very good at Key Stage 4. Pupils with behavioural problems respond well to positive management and make good progress with subject learning. Pupils are strongly supportive of each other, and they respond with genuine enthusiasm when listening to the compositions of others. For example, an excellent piece of Year 9 pupils' work was very well received by the class. Year 7 pupils worked well together on a piece of whole-class pentatonic improvisation. Pupils with special educational needs progress appropriately.

127. Leadership of the subject is adequate in ensuring most pupils achieve their potential. However, information technology is not used enough at Key Stage 3, and developmental planning is weak and does not clearly focus on key targets for improvement. The withdrawal of Key Stage 3 pupils from music for support in literacy is unhelpful to their musical experience. Multi-cultural aspects of music are under-represented in the curriculum overall. On occasion the emphasis on traditional notation at both Key Stages 3 and 4 limits opportunities for creative work. The option system does not fully support access to music at Key Stage 4, or at sixth form level, particularly for more able pupils. Some pupils receive instrumental tuition, and there is a scheme available to support this and a good programme of musical extra-curricular activities, including regular musicals, involves many pupils. The jazz band is popular and its members are to visit Austria later this year to take part in musical activities there.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

128. Pupils' achievement of GCSE A* to C grades in sports studies is consistently well above the national average. Pupils obtain higher grades in this subject than in most others that they take. Achievement of GCSE A* to G grades is consistently above average. Since the last inspection, the proportion of A and B grades at A level has varied from above to below average. In 1999, the proportion of A and B grades was below average. A to E results were above average, and students achieve standards which compare well with those in their other subjects.

129. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is above nationally expected levels. A significant minority achieve well above national expectations. Pupils plan work well and effectively judge performance. Most pupils understand basic attack and defence principles in games and have good individual skills in performance. They participate enthusiastically in a health-related exercise programme and have good knowledge of healthy lifestyle. High attainers consistently use good techniques to outmanoeuvre opponents. In gymnastics, their performance is characterised by creativity and precision. Lower attainers often experience problems in transferring their individual skills to the pressures of a game situation. Their use of space and timing of passes are two particular areas of weakness.

130. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 is above average. Most pupils can plan tactics and use well-developed skills to beat opponents. In Year 11 badminton, they use good technique, footwork and shot-placement to outmanoeuvre opponents. High attainers in volleyball use a variety of serves in matches effectively, but lower attaining pupils in volleyball and badminton lack the techniques necessary to sustain worthwhile rallies. Year 11 GCSE pupils are on target to achieve above national expectations. They are confident and well informed in discussion and accurately analyse performance. Their theory work is well researched and presented, but lacks the enhancement of information technology. GCSE pupils' slightly disappointing mock examination grades indicate inadequate revision.

131. A level students are on target to achieve well beyond national averages at the end of Year 13. They have very good knowledge of the physiological and psychological aspects

of performance. Their application of individual skills, team skills and tactics to match situations, is often very good.

132. Since the last inspection, the department has raised pupils' already good standards of attainment still further. Improvements in teaching have ensured that levels of attainment have risen significantly at both key stages. Sixth form students have continued to achieve highly in activities of their own choice.

133. The quality of teaching is at least good in all lessons observed. In one out of every two lessons, it is very good. Teachers manage pupils very well and maintain very good relationships with their classes. They create an atmosphere that has a positive effect on learning. Teachers are very secure in their subject knowledge and plan lessons well. Their expectations are high, particularly with regard to performance, behaviour, kit and safety. Overall, learning is good at both key stages and very good in the sixth form. On entry, pupils quickly acquire new skills, basic rules and tactics. The health-related exercise programme helps them to develop knowledge of a healthy lifestyle well. Teachers provide opportunities for independent learning in a high proportion of lessons. In a Year 7 gymnastics lesson, pupils were required to plan basic balances and sequences and judge their partners' performances. They improved their understanding of basic technique and extended their ability to combine single movements into continuous ones. Learning is less effective in a small proportion of lessons where teachers do not give pupils the opportunity to use their own initiative enough. Teachers successfully adapt teaching to meet the needs of all pupils. In a Year 9 basketball lesson, most pupils practised the lay-up shot from a full dribble to the basket. Low attainers were hand-fed the ball before shooting, and in the same lesson, the teacher very successfully integrated a pupil with cerebral palsy into the activity. The teacher modified tasks, grouped him with supportive pupils and set a realistic and challenging target based on number of successful scores. The pupil achieved the target and made progress well beyond expectations. All pupils with special educational needs are fully integrated into lessons and make good progress. At Key Stage 4, pupils consolidate prior learning, develop tactical awareness and increase their knowledge of newly introduced curricular aspects. Pupils' attitudes to learning are very good and they progress well. They listen to instructions, communicate well in group-work and confidently try new skills. Pupils' progress is aided by well planned and challenging teaching. GCSE pupils increase their analytical skills and improve their ability to judge and correct performance. However, teachers miss the opportunity to enhance learning through the impact of information technology. In their written work, sixth form students are developing both their research skills and their ability to summarise findings. Homework is set and marked regularly and extends learning. The inclusion of teachers' comments as part of the marking of work clearly outlines strengths and highlights areas for improvement.

134. The subject is well led and well managed. The head of department monitors and evaluates standards effectively and provides clear direction for the work of the department. Pupils' learning benefits from the high proportion of physical education lessons taken by specialists. Closer liaison with partner primary schools could further improve continuity of learning at Key Stage 3. Good facilities, both on- and off-site, are well managed. The subject makes a considerable contribution to the social, moral and cultural development of pupils. The provision for extra-curricular sport is outstanding with 65% of all staff and pupils involved. Parents are extremely supportive. The school provides opportunities for all pupils to participate. Individuals and teams in a wide range of sports achieve excellent results at county, regional and national levels. Representative sport extends the highest attainers, and some students gain regional and international honours.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

135. By the end of Key Stage 3, pupils' attainment is in line with the expectations of the locally Agreed Syllabus for religious education. A few pupils are beginning to attain above expectations. This represents an improvement since the previous inspection and is due to the expertise, planning and challenge presented by teachers. Pupils acquire knowledge and further their understanding well. They are able to think with some depth about the topics they study. For example, in a Year 8 lesson, pupils watched the teacher demonstrate the washing of feet. This led to a discussion of a passage from the Bible and to a lively exchange of ideas and thoughts.

136. At Key Stage 4, all pupils follow a GCSE short course and by the end of the key stage, their attainment is in line with national expectations. Results in these examinations over the past two years have been above average, although only about a quarter of the total number of pupils in the year groups took the examination. During the inspection, pupils in Year 11 engaged in work on case studies about marriage and divorce. Teaching methods were good and the topic came to life and enabled pupils to analyse issues, such as why people marry, and to think about some of the problems that might be encountered in a marriage. Pupils across the key stage are able to present reasoned arguments, and listen to one another's views well. Almost all pupils show a lively interest in religious education and are very willing to join in discussions and give their views. Behaviour is good, and pupils use speaking and listening skills well. Many show considerable depth and initiative in their answers and opinions. For example, some work in Year 8 successfully conveyed ideas about how remorseful Judas Iscariot might have been following his act of betrayal.

137. There have been many improvements since the last inspection, and religious education is steadily increasing its standing in the school. Schemes of work have improved. They are now good and well linked to the locally Agreed Syllabus and to the requirements of the examination syllabus. They enable pupils to study a good range of topics, including world religions such as Sikhism, Judaism and Buddhism, as well as Christianity.

138. Teaching is good overall. All members of the teaching team have considerable expertise and qualifications. This is a strength of the subject. Although there is a variety of teaching styles, all teachers bring the subject to life with well-planned activities and challenges which fully engage pupils in most lessons. This impacts well on pupils' learning, and deepens their acquisition of knowledge and understanding. Teachers have established good relationships with their pupils and consequently have little difficulty in maintaining good standards of behaviour and interest. They use what resources are available well, giving pupils the opportunity to see and use artefacts from various world religions. For example, in a Year 11 lesson, pupils had the chance to see and discuss some of the objects used in the Jewish observance of the Sabbath. This enlivened the lesson and gave them some experience of the atmosphere of celebration. However, too little use is made of information technology for either research or presentation across both key stages. Teachers encourage pupils well, giving them frequent assessment and feedback about their work. Assessment at the end of each unit of study is good.

139. Religious education makes a significant contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. They consider aspects of worship in several religions, study the problem of suffering, and tackle deeper problems about the questions of life and death. Some pupils at Key Stage 3 have considered rules and the commandments, and made up a set of rules for an imaginary community. Leadership of the subject is good and, together with the team of teachers, the head of the department has raised the standards of

attainment, teaching and learning, and widened the curricular opportunities since the last inspection.

BUSINESS STUDIES

140. Business studies is provided at GCSE, A level and advanced GNVQ. Standards at GCSE are above average. The percentage of pupils achieving A* to C grades in 1999 and for the last two years has been well above average. Pupils achieve well in the subject compared with most of their other subjects. However, no A* grades have been achieved over three years. At A level all students have passed the examination over the last two years and attainment of A and B grades has been in line with national results. Attainment in the advanced and intermediate GNVQ business courses has been broadly in line with national standards. Most students obtain the full accreditation. In 1999 two out of five candidates obtained merits in either course. Observation of lessons indicates above average attainment.

141. Teaching overall is good. Quality varies from very good to satisfactory. Most teaching challenges students well and engages them actively in learning, for example, in very good use of groupwork in a Year 10 lesson on motivation, and Year 13 work on a business plan. Excellent relationships allow teachers to use methods which help to build students' confidence and take the opportunity to use their own initiative. However, some teaching, although satisfactory, gives less scope for students to use initiative and does not fully exploit the positive attitudes and willingness to learn of students, including those on the Year 13 GNVQ course.

142. Since the previous inspection, attainment and teaching have improved. There is no unsatisfactory teaching, although there is some variation in quality. Some over-directive teaching remains. Computers are used particularly well in the sixth form courses.

OTHER SIXTH FORM COURSES

143. The range of provision of A level courses beyond National Curriculum subjects is extensive. Some subjects offered do not run each year. A level ancient history, economics, environmental science, media and philosophy are currently provided. Numbers of students in most courses are small making comparisons unreliable, but environmental science is a popular option. In economics, attainment at A level was below average in 1999 at both A to E and A and B grades, but above in both categories in 1998. Teaching and learning are currently good. In environmental science, all students usually pass the examination and achieve their target-grades. Teaching is good and challenging. Students are interested and have good rapport with teachers. Very low numbers take A level ancient history, but results are usually well above average. One student, in an excellent Year 13 lesson in Latin, compared Cicero's skills as a lawyer with those of present day lawyers most adeptly. None of the three students passed the examination in A level philosophy in 1999. However, this was the first time there were failures in this subject over seven years. From observation of current lessons, standards are broadly average, although students were not well prepared for the work they were to undertake in a Year 12 lesson observed. In A level media studies, of the low numbers taking the course, all usually pass the examination. The quality of teaching and learning observed was at least good and some was very good.

144. Since the previous inspection, low numbers on such a wide range of courses makes comparison with 1996 unreliable. Most students attain the minimal targets set and some lessons indicate high standards.