

# INSPECTION REPORT

**Pool School and Community College**  
Redruth

Lea Area: Cornwall

Unique reference number: 112057

Headteacher: Mrs Elizabeth Terry

Reporting inspector: Mrs Susan Kearney

Dates of inspection: 13<sup>th</sup> – 17<sup>th</sup> September 1999

Under OFSTED contract number 708068

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

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
Type of control:	County
Age range of students:	11 - 16
Gender of students:	Mixed
School address:	Church Road Pool Redruth Cornwall TR15 3PZ
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Malcolm Moyle
Date of previous inspection:	16 <sup>th</sup> – 20 <sup>th</sup> September 1996

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Norma Ball Lay Inspector		Attitudes, behaviour and personal development Support, guidance and students' welfare Partnerships with parents and the community Attendance
Chris Griffin	English (including literacy)	Curriculum
Andrew Bird	Mathematics (including numeracy)	Assessment
Nye Davies	Science	Teaching
Andrew Lyons	Design and technology Information technology	
Joanna Peach	Modern foreign languages Equal opportunities	
Barbara Barnes	History Special educational needs	
Ian Stuart	Geography Religious education	
John Ayerst	Music Drama	Efficiency of the school Staffing
Jenny Adey	Art	Spiritual, moral social and cultural development
Andy Henderson	Physical education	Accommodation and resources

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## MAIN FINDINGS

### What the school does well

- Students make good progress in Years 10 and 11 and satisfactory progress in earlier years.
- Students with special educational needs make good progress overall.
- Teaching is good.
- Teachers manage the students very well.
- The school manages its finances well.
- The school provides good value for money.
- The behaviour and attitudes of students are good.
- Relationships between students are also good.
- The school has good links with the local community.
- Standards are improving year on year and GCSE results are above average in comparison with similar schools.
- Careers guidance is good.
- The staff have a good range of experience and expertise.

### Where the school has weaknesses

- The provision for information technology is unsatisfactory and standards of attainment are below average.
- The school does not make sufficient use of assessment information in tracking the progress of all students.
- Students are not sufficiently encouraged to be independent and to take an active part in decisions about their own work. There are few opportunities for them to take responsibility.
- Planning for the spiritual development of students is insufficient.
- Systems for monitoring what is happening in all areas of the school are a weakness of the management team.
- There is no appraisal of staff performance to identify training needs and clarify roles and responsibilities.
- Higher attaining students are not sufficiently challenged.
- Standards and provision in music are unsatisfactory.
- The school does not comply with the statutory requirements for collective worship, information technology, appraisal and some aspects of the Code of Practice.

**The strengths of the school outweigh the weaknesses. The school has already recognised many of the weaknesses and begun to act on them. The governors' action plan, stating how the weaknesses are to be addressed, will be sent to parents and guardians of students in the school.**

### How the school has improved since the last inspection

The school has developed satisfactorily since the last inspection. GCSE results are improving each year and students make good progress as they move through the school. Governors are more involved in financial management and the long-term development plans. In particular, they have worked with the headteacher to eliminate a significant deficit in the school budget and financial control is good. There are some improvements to systems to monitor the progress of students and a culture of achievement is now beginning to permeate many aspects of the school's work. The provision for religious education is improved and buildings have been refurbished and organised more conveniently.

The school has a satisfactory capacity to improve further. A significant amount of time has been spent since the previous inspection in improving the financial situation of the school. This has been achieved mostly through staff changes which have been negotiated with sensitivity and with good regard for the morale of other staff in the school. The school development plans already identify several of the issues reported by this inspection.

Although the facilities for information technology have recently improved and students have access to better computers, standards in information technology remain unsatisfactory. The governors and the senior management team have not set up effective systems to monitor and evaluate what is happening in many areas of

the school. Standards in music and support and monitoring of teaching and curriculum development are unsatisfactory. There is no teacher appraisal system in place. The individual education plans for students with special needs have been recently reviewed but are not yet sufficiently well developed. The school does not plan sufficiently for developing the spiritual awareness of students and opportunities for students to take more responsibility still remains an issue from the last inspection. The school still does not meet its statutory obligation to provide a daily act of collective worship.

### Standards in subjects

The following table shows standards achieved by 14, 16 and 18 year olds in national tests, GCSE and A/AS-level examinations in 1998:

Performance in:	Compared with all schools	Compared with similar schools	Key	
Key Stage 3	D	A	well above average	A
GCSE Examinations	C	A	above average	B
A/AS – levels	N/a	N/a	average	C
			below average	D
			well below average	E

Standards and examination results of students aged 14 have improved in line with national trends in all three core subjects of English, mathematics and science since the last inspection. This improvement is also reflected in GCSE results in the majority of subjects.

In Key Stage 3 National Curriculum tests in 1998, the average levels across all core subjects of English, mathematics and science are below national expectations when compared to all schools but are well above when compared to similar schools.

At the end of Key Stage 4, GCSE results in 1998 averaged across all subjects are broadly in line with the national average when compared to all schools but well above when compared to similar schools. The proportion of students gaining 5 or more grades A\*- C is below average in comparison with all schools and above in comparison with similar schools. Based on the last three years students' results are close to the national average and information from the school indicates that results in 1999 will show a similar pattern. The best results are in design and technology and drama with students performing less well in religious education and music. From work seen during the inspection students in both key stages attain standards in the three core subjects of English, mathematics and science in line with expectations.

### Quality of teaching

	Overall quality	Most effective in:	Least effective in:
Years 7-9	Good	English, geography, design and technology, drama	Music,
Years 10-11	Good	English, art, geography, mathematics, design and technology, drama, history	Music
Sixth form	N/a	N/a	N/a
English	Good	N/a	N/a
Mathematics	Good	N/a	N/a

Teaching is good overall. It is satisfactory or better in 94 per cent of lessons; in 49 per cent of lessons it is good or better. In 6 per cent of lessons the quality of teaching is unsatisfactory or poor. Most teachers are well informed about students who have special needs but some remain confused about different stages on the register of special educational needs. Strengths of teaching are teachers' knowledge and understanding of their subjects, the use of time and good use of resources. The management of students is often very good. Where there are weaknesses, it is in matching material to the different needs of students. There is a particular weakness in some lessons in providing sufficient challenge for students of high attainment.

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

### Other aspects of the school

Aspect	Comment
Behaviour	Mostly good. Students show positive attitudes to learning in the majority of classes and relationships at every level are generally good.
Attendance	Satisfactory. Attendance and unauthorised absence are broadly in line with the national average.
Ethos*	Satisfactory. The school is an orderly place where individuals are encouraged to relate well to each other. In many lessons, there is a sense of purpose and students and teachers have high expectations.
Leadership and management	Satisfactory. The headteacher provides sound leadership and governors show genuine enthusiasm and concern for the well being of the students. Support and monitoring of teaching and curriculum development are unsatisfactory.
Curriculum	Satisfactory. All students including those with special needs are provided with the opportunity to study appropriate subjects and generally make good progress in their learning, although the provision for information technology remains unsatisfactory throughout most years.
Special Educational Needs	Students with special educational needs make good progress at both key stages and the overall provision is satisfactory because of very good support from learning support assistants in many lessons.
Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Satisfactory overall although the school does not plan sufficiently well for the spiritual development of students for it to be fully effective.
Staffing, resources and accommodation	Teachers and support staff provide a good range of expertise and experience. Although the school operates on a split site, which does present some problems, the accommodation is adequate.
Value for money	Financial control is good and the school gives its students good value for money.

\*Ethos is the climate for learning: attitudes to work, relationships and the commitment to high standards

### The parents' views of the school

What most parents like about the school	What some parents are not happy about
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It is easy to approach the school with problems or questions to do with children.</li> <li>The school encourages children to get involved in more than just their daily lessons through trips abroad and working in the local community.</li> <li>Very good support is given to children coming into the school from small primary schools.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The school's ability to keep parents well informed about children's progress.</li> <li>The work that children are expected to do at home.</li> <li>Some unsatisfactory teaching in a few subjects.</li> <li>The frequent use of supply teachers to cover staff absence, particularly in English.</li> <li>Poor provision in information technology</li> </ul>

There is strong support from parents for the school. Parents report improvements in many aspects of their children's school experience. They particularly value the care and attention given to students and the friendliness of the environment. Parents express only a few minor concerns which include the disruption to their children's education in music and religious education where some teaching is less than satisfactory. They are also concerned about some lessons, particularly English and religious education, where long term absence of staff has created the need to regularly employ temporary supply teachers. Parents have a perception that the school does not have the quantity or quality of resources of other local schools particularly in information technology. This inspection supports the views of the parents but acknowledges recent improvements in information technology equipment.

## KEY ISSUES FOR ACTION

In order to improve further the satisfactory standards achieved by the school, the governors, headteacher and senior managers should:

- i. Provide all students with the full programme of study in information technology by:
  - providing appropriate equipment to cover the programmes of study;
  - identifying the training needed by all teachers to deliver the requirements in their subjects;
  - planning and delivering a scheme of work which meets statutory requirements and includes assessment criteria.

Paragraphs 113 - 118

- ii. Improve the effectiveness and consistency of information given to students and their parents about how they are progressing with their learning by:
  - standardising marking and assessment across the whole curriculum;
  - providing parents with more appropriate information in annual reports;
  - monitoring and reviewing student targets using National Curriculum language and sharing targets with students;
  - providing more specific targets which relate to their individual needs for all students requiring an individual educational plan.

Paragraphs 42 - 25

- iii. Ensure that opportunities for spiritual development throughout the curriculum are identified and exploited effectively, that religious education and music are improved and that a daily act of collective worship is provided.

Paragraphs 46 – 48, 52

- iv. Improve the support and monitoring for teachers by:
  - regular evaluation of standards of attainment in each department by senior managers and identifying the progress made by students of all levels of attainment;
  - setting clear targets for improvement in each subject area so that standards are raised;
  - clarifying roles and responsibilities to improve effectiveness, linked to a thorough system of teacher appraisal which meets statutory requirements;
  - providing opportunities for regular and effective classroom observation to support teaching and curriculum development.

Paragraphs 38, 54, 67 – 68, 72

In addition to the key issues above, the following less important weaknesses should be considered for inclusion in the action plan. These include:

- v. Continue to improve accommodation and plan to move all buildings onto one site.  
Paragraphs 27,76
- vi. Monitor the progress of high attaining students more closely.  
Paragraphs 18,30,35,40,54
- vii. Develop the range of teaching styles to meet the needs of students of different abilities.  
Paragraphs 28,33
- viii. Produce a policy for developing literacy, numeracy and information technology skills across the curriculum.  
Paragraphs 11 – 17



# INTRODUCTION

## Characteristics of the school

- 1 Pool School and Community College is a mixed 11-16 comprehensive school situated between the towns of Redruth and Camborne in Cornwall. The school has 922 students on roll and is of average size when compared with other schools of the same type. The number of students on roll has fallen over the last three years from 979 in September 1996 at the time of the last inspection. The attainment profile of students on entry to the school is below average but is showing a pattern of improvement over the last three years. Students come from a wide range of social backgrounds with a significant proportion from homes which are less privileged as indicated by the below average percentage of children in high social class households in neighbouring wards. The school has prepared an application with other local schools to form an Education Action Zone to help raise attainment. The percentage of students eligible for free school meals is 21.6%, which is above the national average. A very small number of students come from homes where English is not the first language. The proportion of students identified as having special educational needs is 22.3 per cent, which is above the national average. There are 5.4 per cent of students with statements of special educational need on the special educational needs register which is also above average.
- 2 The school is located on two sites either side of a busy road. There is pedestrian access between the two sites by way of a bridge but the difficulties in the accommodation mean that students spend time moving between sites and encounter problems in wet weather. The main school is set in pleasant and extensive grounds and the fabric of this building is satisfactory. Some teaching takes place in the original Victorian buildings which are far from adequate and offer poor provision.
- 3 The school's aims are:
  - To provide genuine equality of opportunity for all students.
  - To provide a happy, caring and disciplined environment.
  - To provide high quality teaching for effective learning and motivation.
  - To help students acquire knowledge and skills relevant to adult life and employment, with the will to use them in a fast changing world.
  - To promote positive attitudes and patterns of behaviour to support personal and social relationships.
  - To foster in students a respect for all ethnic groups, others' religions and cultures and their beliefs and moral values.
  - To encourage a spirit of enquiry.
  - To encourage in students an appreciation and concern for the environment.
  - To provide a broad, balanced and differentiated curriculum for each individual which seeks to maintain continuity and provide progression from the ages of five to eighteen.
  - To promote full co-operation between students, teachers, parents and governors.
  - To establish a partnership between school, industry and the community it serves.
  - To develop in students an understanding of the wider community and of the ways in which individuals and groups relate.
  - To work with and for our community, identifying and meeting needs and providing opportunities for all.
- 4 Current priorities of the school are:
  - To move the school onto one site and to reassess accommodation needs.
  - The Education Action Zone project.
  - A lottery funded theatre development.
  - Developments in information technology.

## Key indicators

### Attainment at Key Stage 3<sup>1</sup>

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3  
for latest reporting year:

Year	Boys	Girls	Total
1998(97)	97	84	181

National Curriculum Test Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Number of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	Boys	56	56	51
	Girls	63	47	38
	Total	119	103	89
Percentage at NC Level 5 or above	School	66(51)	57(56)	50(59)
	National	65(56)	60(60)	56(60)
Percentage at NC Level 6 or above	School	26(16)	33(31)	18(22)
	National	35(28)	36(37)	27(39)

Teacher Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Number of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	Boys	51	70	64
	Girls	53	55	54
	Total	104	125	118
Percentage at NC Level 5 or above	School	58(42)	69(56)	66(53)
	National	62(59)	64(63)	62(61)
Percentage at NC Level 6 or above	School	27(14)	38(25)	34(25)
	National	31(28)	37(37)	31(29)

### Attainment at Key Stage 4<sup>2</sup>

Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest  
reporting year:

Year	Boys	Girls	Total
1998 (97)	107	87	194

GCSE Results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A* to G	1 or more grades A* to G
Number of pupils achieving standard specified	Boys	34	96	104
	Girls	39	83	85
	Total	73	179	189
Percentage achieving standard specified	School	38(36)	92(88)	97(93)
	National	44.6(43.3)	89.8(88.5)	95.2(94)

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1 Percentages in parentheses refer to the year before the latest reporting year

2 Percentages in parentheses refer to the year before the latest reporting year

## Attendance

Percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year:

		%
Authorised Absence	School	8.4
	National comparative data	7.9
Unauthorised Absence	School	0.9
	National comparative data	1.1

## Exclusions

Number of exclusions of pupils (of statutory school age) during the previous year:

	Number
Fixed period	25
Permanent	0

## Quality of teaching

Percentage of teaching observed which is:

	%
Very good or better	14
Satisfactory or better	94
Less than satisfactory	6

## **PART A: ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL**

### **EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS AT THE SCHOOL**

#### **Attainment and progress**

- 5 The previous inspection reports standards of students aged 14 in all three core subjects of English, mathematics and science are below average but that standards improve as students pass through the school. Overall examination results show steady improvement year on year although more slowly than the national trend. The proportion of students awarded grades A-C over the three years 1993-1995 is broadly average although it is well below average in 1996. The percentage of students achieving grades A-G is above average. The progress made by students, particularly those of lower attainment, is judged to be satisfactory or better.
- 6 Standards and examination results of students aged 14 have improved in line with national trends, in all three core subjects of English, mathematics and science since the last inspection. This improvement is also reflected in GCSE results in the majority of subjects.
- 7 Attainment on entry is below average, although National Curriculum tests in 1998, taken by students aged 11 at the end of Year 6, indicate that standards are improving year on year. In 1998, the proportion of students failing to reach Level 3 in English is above average.
- 8 In Key Stage 3 National Curriculum tests in 1998 the average levels across all core subjects are below national averages when compared to all schools but are well above when compared to similar schools. Attainment in English is above average but less than mathematics and science. Attainment in mathematics and science is well above average in comparison with students from similar schools. Teachers' assessments of standards indicate similar attainment in other subjects overall.
- 9 At the end of Key Stage 4, GCSE results in 1998 averaged across all subjects are broadly in line with the national average when compared to all schools but well above when compared to similar schools. The proportion of students gaining 5 or more grades A\*- C is below average in comparison with all schools and above average in comparison with similar schools. Based on the last three years, students' results are close to the national average and information from the school indicates that results in 1999 will show a similar pattern. The best results are in art, design and technology and drama with students performing less well in religious education, modern foreign languages and music.
- 10 In work seen during the inspection, attainment was judged to be in line with national averages in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science and in most other subjects. It is below expectations in Key Stage 3 in art, information technology and music, and below expectations at Key Stage 4 in music. Attainment in information technology is well below expectations at the end of Key Stage 4. Although there are variations from year to year and subject to subject there are no significant differences in the attainment levels of boys and girls either in work seen or in examination results.
- 11 Students enter the school with below average levels of attainment in literacy. They make good progress and overall levels of attainment seen during the inspection are broadly in line with national expectation. Despite this, structured opportunities for the students to improve their literacy skills are not planned consistently across the curriculum.
- 12 Standards of speaking and listening are better than reading and writing. In English, mathematics and drama, students receive good opportunities to develop oral skills and do well. In science, students respond well to excellent opportunities for discussion in some lessons but this practice is not extended across the department. In Key Stage 4 history, there is some lively discussion on subjects such as Marxism, but students have to do too much listening and too little speaking at Key Stage 3. There were not enough chances for planned speaking and listening in most other subjects.
- 13 Reading standards are broadly average and most students cope independently with the reading demands of the curriculum. However, in some mathematics sets, the wide range of reading skills is not addressed. In modern foreign languages, art and music and drama, there was little evidence of reading. Higher attainers extracted information effectively and efficiently in science. Reading is a prominent part of English. Every lesson starts with a short session of silent reading and students respond well.

- 14 Standards of writing are broadly average, although there is a wide discrepancy between the standards of lower attaining students when set against those of middle and higher attaining students. Some good examples were seen in science, mathematics, geography and modern foreign languages. In history, higher attainers wrote accurately but with a limited range of expression. There is a lack of consistency of marking and expectation of writing standards across the curriculum. Correction of errors in particular is not consistent, neither is there an agreed spelling policy
- 15 The school does not have a literacy policy to guide teachers of all subjects in the development of literacy skills. The formulation of a literacy policy has been identified as a target for the current academic year. The evidence of the inspection confirms this as an important and necessary development.
- 16 The standards of numeracy at Key Stage 3 are satisfactory. Applications focus mainly on measurement, timelines, grid references, graphs and statistics. The standards of numeracy at Key Stage 4 are satisfactory and applications focus mainly on the use of formula, the tabulation and interpretation of data, money, space, shape and measure and degrees of accuracy. Numeracy is a strength of the mathematics faculty across both key stages. A 'warm-up' session at the beginning of all lessons, for all abilities, devoted to mental calculations, longer computational exercises, review of previous numerical work and the use of the calculator is a common event. However, often students' individual strengths and weaknesses are not monitored. Students with special educational needs with numeracy targets are monitored through their individual education plans by the learning support assistant. Numeracy was used in work in geography, history, design and technology, science and special education needs. There is no whole-school policy on numeracy, but work has begun to raise teachers' awareness across the curriculum. There is no reference to numeracy in schemes of work with the exception of geography and mathematics. Data available from Key Stage 2 Standard Assessment Test scores is used by the mathematics faculty for setting students at the end of the first half-term in Year 7.
- 17 Students have too little opportunity to develop their skills in lessons so that they are effective users of information technology. Some students use their home computers to support their coursework, particularly at Key Stage 4, and some use the school's computers at lunch and break times. The computers in the learning resource centre are used for research with some groups of students. Provision has recently been improved, but it is too early to see the effects of the new investment.
- 18 Progress is good overall and it is better at Key Stage 4 than at Key Stage 3. It is unsatisfactory in music and poor in information technology. In English, design and technology and drama, students of all abilities make good progress. Progress in mathematics and science is satisfactory overall. Higher attaining students do not always receive adequate support and make less progress in some subjects. Examples of good practice were observed in English lessons especially for Year 11 students, in physical education, design and technology and in some history lessons. The school has a clear policy on differentiation, but it is not being adhered to consistently; neither is there good awareness or adherence to the school's Most Able Students policy.
- 19 Students with special educational needs make good progress at both key stages. This judgement has been made on the strength of many performance measures. These include above national average pass rates at GCSE, evidence of good progress in reading and understanding through both key stages, high completion rates at Key Stage 4 in core subjects, and the impressive performance of students with statements of special educational needs at GCSE. In addition, students with special educational needs make at least adequate progress in core subjects, and good or very good progress in design and technology.

#### **Attitudes, behaviour and personal development**

- 20 The school has maintained the good standard of behaviour noted in the previous inspection report. Students show good attitudes to learning and relationships in the school are good at all levels. Personal development is satisfactory but the school has failed to extend the limited range of responsibilities for students, or to encourage them to take more initiative in developing skills valuable for independent learning.
- 21 The majority of students show good attitudes to their work and stay on task well. Good attitudes are most evident when students are engaged in interesting work, for example students in Year 9 were absorbed in a personal social education lesson which was based on a game in which two different cultures tried to understand their different customs. Students often show a pride in their tasks and present their work well. However, where lessons lack pace and interest, students can be distracted, talkative and lose interest in their work. Students work well co-operatively. Students use resources well and show care in handling

instruments and equipment. For example, Year 10 students on a visit to Cornwall College made careful use of soldering irons when working on small circuit boards during an electronic engineering class.

- 22 Behaviour in and around the school is good. In most lessons students behave well, listen attentively and show respect to staff and to each other. Corridors and stairways can be very congested at lesson changes but students show generally good-natured tolerance in moving about the school. Students are aware of the standards of behaviour expected of them and seek to meet them. There have been 25 fixed period exclusions and overall there has been no significant increase in exclusions since the last inspection. Students understand the sanctions for poor behaviour but the new rewards policy is not yet fully understood. Students are still familiarising themselves with this policy. Bullying, mostly of a verbal nature, does occur but is well handled by staff when reported. Students show respect for personal property and there are few incidents of vandalism or theft. The school is justly proud of the behaviour of students when out of school and on work experience placements.
- 23 Relationships in the school are good. In class and at leisure, students relate well to each other and are polite to staff and other adults. When given the opportunity students co-operate both in class and in extra-curricular activities. They share tasks well, both in paired and group work. Many good examples of positive relationships which exist in the school were seen during the inspection. For example, the care and kindness shown by staff and students for a student in a wheel chair. Also a trip was made by a large number of senior students to Cornwall College, when students were observed to be kind and helpful to each other and interested in the progress their peers were making in new classes such as electronic engineering and business studies.
- 24 The personal development of students is satisfactory. However, many students have less developed independent learning skills. They are overly dependant on teacher support and seldom explore and develop ideas, research topics for themselves and organise and extend their studies without close supervision. The previous inspection identified the limited opportunities for students to exercise responsibility in the day-to-day routines of the school as a weakness. The school has begun to extend the range of jobs that students can apply to do around the school and students now help in several faculty areas. There is a school council representing the views of students although students feel that it is ineffective. Many students are very willing to give help and support at such school events as the open day for new parents.

## **Attendance**

- 25 Students' attendance levels are satisfactory at almost 91per cent and are broadly in line with the national average for secondary schools. The majority of students arrive at school on time. Attendance figures are correctly reported to parents.
- 26 Average attendance has improved marginally since the previous inspection. This reflects the clear emphasis placed on the importance of regular and prompt attendance. Levels of unauthorised absence are similar to the national average at 1per cent. There is a variation in levels of attendance between year groups with lower levels noted in Years 10 and 11. The school is aware that for some older students there is some disaffection with school life. As well as seeking to re-engage these students the school also tries to find suitable alternative courses and placements. In all year groups there have been absences for ill health including ailments such as glandular fever and viral infections. The school has a small number of students who have long term health problems that affect their regular attendance. Registers are taken promptly at the start of each session but there is a lack of consistency in ensuring that all registers are closed correctly at the end of registration. This was reported to the school.
- 27 Punctuality in arriving at school may be affected in a few instances by traffic problems in the area, resulting in the buses arriving late. There are a few students who show persistent patterns of late arrival. Most late arrival is contained within the tutor period at the start of the day. Students show a sense of urgency in their movement around the school and seek to arrive at lessons on time. They move as best they can between the school sites but the regular flow of large numbers of students does result in a delay to the start of some lessons.

## QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED

### Teaching

- 28 Teaching is good and is a strength of the school. Teaching is satisfactory or better in 94 per cent of lessons. It is good in 35 per cent of lessons seen and very good in a further 14 per cent. The quality of teaching across the curriculum is having a positive effect in raising standards and promoting progress.
- 29 Teaching is good at both key stages overall. The best teaching is in English, mathematics, design and technology, art, drama and geography. In art, design and technology and drama, teaching is very good in some lessons. In science, information technology, modern languages, physical education and religious education, teaching is satisfactory overall and many of these subjects have some good or very good teaching. In some lessons in music, teaching is unsatisfactory. Teaching of core skills such as literacy, numeracy and information technology in subjects across the curriculum is under developed in both key stages and the school does not have an overall policy.
- 30 At both key stages teachers have a good knowledge of their subjects and lessons are mostly planned thoroughly to meet the requirements of the scheme of work. Although planning in design and technology is very good, there are weaknesses in planning in mathematics, science, information technology, geography, music and physical education. This is related to a lack of extension work for higher attaining students and is having a negative effect on the standards achieved by these students. Relationships in the classroom are good and often very good. Students behave well and co-operate with each other in groups. For example, students work together in pairs very effectively when on the computers and in science in Year 11, when students were plotting graphs to investigate the effect of electric currents on magnetic fields. In most lessons, teachers use a good range of strategies to engage students' attention and ensure a good pace. In particular, design and technology lessons are characterised by a very lively pace using all the available time well. In a smaller proportion of lessons in science, information technology, modern languages, history and music, teachers use a limited range of teaching styles. Too often, students sit and listen passively for large proportions of the lesson. This is an issue identified during the last inspection. Explanations are clear and resources are appropriate and managed well. For example, in science a very well planned lesson supported by good resources helped all students in a mixed ability group to understand the effects of electrical charge.
- 31 Homework is set and marked regularly and is used to reinforce learning. The school's assessment policy is not, however, applied consistently. In some subjects, for example English, science and design and technology, written comments on the students' work are constructive. Targets are set to help students to improve their work. In science, teachers use assessment folders to track a student's progress and in design and technology, at the end of each project, helpful comments and clear assessments set targets for students to improve their next piece of work. The development of core skills in science is recorded in a student's 'skills passport'. When teaching is less effective there is too much teacher direction, students are not actively engaged and there is undue emphasis on recording information rather than promoting understanding. In the few unsatisfactory lessons, teachers' expectations are too low and they do not insist on an appropriately high standard of behaviour.
- 32 Most teachers are well informed about students who have special educational needs but some are still confused about different stages on the register of special educational needs. The special educational needs co-ordinator provides teachers with a wealth of information about students, including reading and spelling levels, standardised assessment grades and the nature of learning difficulties, where appropriate. In addition, a clearly written, comprehensive and detailed guidance booklet about special educational needs has been produced both for teachers and for learning support assistants. Teachers do adapt work in some lessons to meet different levels of ability, as in a religious education lesson where sentence starters for the 'Nazareth News' were provided for some students, but this is by no means common practice. There is a very high level of support in lessons and this is nearly always used effectively by teachers. Advance planning and liaison with support staff is usually adequate and sometimes good, as in geography where worksheets are given out in advance of lessons. Communications with subject departments is, however, undeveloped. Learning support teachers do attend occasional departmental meetings, but there is no formal link system with subject representatives. It was reported in the last inspection that links with subject departments needed to be strengthened. This is still the case.
- 33 The quality of teaching was good at the last inspection and has improved still further. Outstanding issues for development include the planning of work to meet the needs of all students. Development is also

required for the high achievers. There is a lack of challenge and pace in some lessons where a limited range of teaching styles is used.

### **The curriculum and assessment**

- 34 The overall curriculum provision is satisfactory at both key stages. However, there are weaknesses in the provision for information technology, which fails to meet requirements, and in opportunities to study a second foreign language. The school does not have a separate curriculum policy although aims set out in the prospectus make reference to aspects of curriculum. The school has clear policies for sex education, charging and special educational needs, but as yet there are no whole-school policies for the development of literacy, numeracy and information technology. The governors' curriculum committee is involved in debates on different curriculum models but does not take an active part in monitoring or evaluating decisions.
- 35 National Curriculum requirements are met in all subjects except information technology and the provision for information technology is unsatisfactory. The school has made insufficient improvements since the previous inspection, which reported information technology as a key issue. The time allocated to religious education at Key Stage 4 is well below minimum recommendations although the overall provision is in accordance with the Agreed Syllabus. The school has a policy on equality of opportunity but its effectiveness is not monitored and there are concerns about the progress of high attainers. Students with special educational needs enter a full range of examinations and make good progress but there are weaknesses in some aspects of provision.
- 36 The breadth and balance of the curriculum is satisfactory overall. At Key Stage 3 the curriculum is satisfactory, although the time allocation for music and information technology is unsatisfactory. Total teaching time is above the minimum recommendation which compensates for time lost at both key stages because of students arriving late through movement from one site to another. Appropriate arrangements for grouping students exist in mathematics in Year 7 and English and science from Year 8. Students study both French or German in Key Stage 3 but insufficient numbers choose to study two languages in Key Stage 4 which is a weakness. There are good procedures for students choosing their Key Stage 4 options which include a module of careers education. The lack of opportunity for students to study measurement and control in information technology has not been satisfactorily addressed and computers are insufficiently used in the curriculum.
- 37 The balance of the Key Stage 4 curriculum is satisfactory although the time allocation for religious education is below national recommendation. The overall teaching time is also below national recommendations. Time allocated to the core subjects of English, mathematics and science is broadly in line with national recommendations. Students are grouped by ability in English, mathematics, science and modern foreign languages. Although students are offered the opportunity to start a second foreign language, take up of this option over the last three years has been too small to allow it to be taught. Many students opt for courses in expressive arts. The school runs vocational courses in conjunction with Cornwall College. This is a popular option with over 60 per cent of the current Year 10 following a range of vocational areas. Students receive a certificate from the college on completion of the course but the quality is variable and the school does not monitor the provision sufficiently. Information technology does not comply with statutory requirements and is insufficiently used in the subjects of the curriculum. Good careers education is provided at Key Stage 4, enabling students to make appropriate choices about their future employment, training and educational needs. The programme for personal and social education is well devised and taught through the school's Lifestyle Programme.
- 38 Provision for students with special educational needs is satisfactory. This is mainly due to the very high level of good quality support by learning support staff in lessons. However, school's procedures do not fully comply with the guidelines in the Code of Practice and there is a lack of clear understanding about the nature and purpose of independent educational plans. Targets are a combination of some specific goals with long term objectives and strategies. They are not clearly set against criteria which acknowledge success, and which relate to the very different learning difficulties and circumstances of the individual students concerned. There is no agreed date for reviewing the extent and rate of progress for each student.
- 39 The careers programme is well planned and taught. There are good links with staff from the local careers service who meet students in Year 9, Year 10 and Year 11. There is a strong emphasis on ensuring that students receive the guidance and information that they will need to make careful and informed decisions. Students feel well supported by the provision. All students take part in work experience during Key Stage



4. A strength of the scheme is that students take responsibility for arranging, with support and monitoring, their own placements. Employers comment positively about the students' attitudes.
- 40 Overall curriculum planning is satisfactory. The lack of a curriculum policy that clearly defines the broad underlying curriculum principles means that there is a lack of coherent direction to curriculum development. Planning within subjects is good in history, geography, design and technology and more recently in English, and satisfactory elsewhere except for information technology which is unsatisfactory. Curriculum links with primary schools are still inadequate, although there has been some development in English. Too little use is made of information about students' prior attainment in mathematics and art. Overall, subject schemes of work pay too little attention to matching tasks to suit the differing attainments of the students. However, there are some good examples in science, English and design and technology. Planning for the development of literacy skills is unsatisfactory and constrains the progress students make in all subjects.
- 41 Extra-curricular provision is satisfactory. Sports clubs and teams are popular although some students report a lack of variety and some inconsistency in the programme of events. There are also activities such as computing, music, singing and technology. The school provides quiet study sessions at lunchtime. There is an annual drama production and residential trips and foreign exchanges. The school does not monitor attendance and participation and has no way of knowing whether all students have equal access to activities.

### **Assessment**

- 42 Procedures for assessing students' attainment are satisfactory, although as with the findings of the previous report, there continues to be variations between departments. Some subjects make good use of formal assessment at the end of units of work and the key stages with clear indications of standards of attainment. Subjects which have some good aspects of assessment are art, science, design and technology and mathematics.
- 43 Records are accurate and up-to-date but a lack of standardisation continues to confuse students at both key stages. Good examples are found in design and technology and science, which make use of National Curriculum levels which students respond to positively in a culture of self-evaluation. When work is assessed it is not always made clear what is required of the students to make further progress. Negotiating agreed targets, identifying students' strengths and weaknesses and writing helpful comments in exercise books and reports are not common features.
- 44 Initial identification procedures for students with special educational needs are sufficiently thorough and result in a wide range of helpful information, including standardised test scores, which are passed on to subject teachers to enable them to plan effectively. The statutory requirements laid down in the annual review of students with a statement of special educational needs are met. There is helpful input from the careers service and clear transition plans for statemented students at the end of Key Stage 3. There is an established system of monitoring and review of the progress of students with special educational needs and learning support staff speak knowledgeably about the needs, provision and progress of individual students. However, some students' files provide minimal information.
- 45 Assessment continues to be little used by subject directors to facilitate curriculum planning. This is more evident at Key Stage 3 than Key Stage 4. The skills required by all managers for the collation, interpretation and evaluation of both school and national data are not used sufficiently well. There is limited value-added analysis of data. Targets to improve academic results and identify strategies to achieve them remain at an embryonic stage in most departments.

### **Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development**

- 46 The school's aims include clear expectations for moral and social development and behaviour. There is also an expectation stated in the school development plan for the development of the spiritual dimension of students and reflection where appropriate in the curriculum. However, provision for the development of students' spiritual awareness is unsatisfactory. There is no specific policy and the process of identifying spiritual, moral, social and cultural content in the curriculum is at an early stage.
- 47 Students attend one assembly weekly. Assemblies are carefully planned and there are some opportunities for reflection. For example, in an assembly that linked the conversion of St Paul to modern conversion in a scientific context, students were asked to close their eyes and reflect on ways of improving or even

changing themselves. There is no expectation on non-assembly days of worship or a spiritual dimension during tutor times and in consequence the school does not comply with the legal requirement for a daily act of collective worship.

- 48 There is evidence of spiritual provision at times in art, music, drama and science but opportunities across the curriculum remain limited. Since the last inspection, provision for religious education has improved and now complies with statutory requirements. However, the school is still not meeting statutory requirements for daily collective worship and the promotion of students' spiritual development overall remains unsatisfactory.
- 49 Provision for moral development is satisfactory. There is a strong moral framework, which underpins the work in personal social education. Topics include rights and responsibilities in relationships and parenthood. Teachers provide appropriate role models and the school's expectations of behaviour make clear the principles that distinguish right from wrong. There is a strong work ethic in mathematics and in design and technology. In history, students consider early factory conditions in the cotton industry and in English there is a regular 'quote of the week' which introduces a moral precept from a well known work which is subsequently discussed in lessons.
- 50 Provision for social development is good. There are good opportunities for students' personal and social development through the different subject lessons, a wide range of residential and day trips and sporting activities. Visits include field trips and overseas modern foreign language trips. School events such as drama productions, the citizen's tea party during activity week and shows by the magic club are beneficial in developing students' self-confidence and social skills in general. There is a special educational needs programme on self-esteem and personal social education has introduced a topic on citizenship. Science considers both moral and social issues in discussions on local land use and, in geography, Year 9 students find out about world population and the uneven distribution of wealth through role-play. Opportunities for the students to take more responsibility remain limited. The school has just initiated a scheme to offer students posts of responsibility in English, mathematics, science, information technology and modern foreign languages and plans to re-instate the paired reading scheme.
- 51 Overall the provision for students' cultural development is satisfactory. Local culture is well represented, there are drama visits to events, musical appreciation, visits to art exhibitions and craft workshops as well as having a Cornish bard on the staff. However, opportunities to appreciate the diversity of other cultures are less developed. Students learn about other faiths in religious education, the science department has links with a school in Sri Lanka and art and drama consider aboriginal art and land rights. However, the provision is not planned systematically or sufficiently to enable students to understand the diversity of culture in today's multi-cultural Britain.
- 52 Since the last inspection standards in moral, social and cultural provision have been maintained. However, spiritual provision is limited and the school does not comply with legal requirements in providing a daily act of worship. Opportunities for students to take on more responsibility are planned but have still to be fully developed.

### **Support, guidance and students' welfare**

- 53 Parents and students value the care and guidance provided by the school. The promotion of students well being, health and safety is satisfactory. There are satisfactory procedures in place to monitor students' progress and personal development, behaviour and attendance. The support and guidance provided for students makes a valuable contribution to their personal development and the standards they attain.
- 54 Monitoring of progress and personal development is satisfactory. Students are well known to staff who assign importance to their pastoral role. However, monitoring of students' academic progress is not organised systematically and remains largely informal. Students are given good opportunities to explore areas valuable to their personal development through the well structured personal and social education programme in all years. Careers guidance is good and valued by students. Good use is made of outside agencies and speakers to support both study programmes. The school is beginning to focus with increasing care on the monitoring of academic progress of all students but as yet the systems lack rigour. Information is not used effectively to support planning or to provide guidance to help students raise their standards. A tentative start has been made with some collection and analysis of data on coursework and examinations which, in a few instances, is being used to set targets for students to improve academic results. This process is still in the early stages of development and not evident in all areas of the curriculum. The school has begun to work towards meeting important key issues raised in the previous

inspection report. However, it has not fully addressed important points about assessment and progress clearly identified in that report.

- 55 The generous level of in-class support for students with statements of special educational needs contributes significantly to these students making satisfactory and often good progress in lessons. Many examples of unobtrusive, sensitive and effective support were observed across the curriculum, as in art and in English. Sometimes, other students with special educational needs but no formal statement also benefit from the added support, depending on the arrangements made by the subject teachers concerned. Provision is, however, not always consistent. The school does not fully comply with the clear guidelines and systematic procedures of the Code of Practice particularly in the first few weeks of the term when students first enter the school.
- 56 There is satisfactory monitoring of behaviour. There is a clear policy which sets out a simplified code for all students. The policy is mostly implemented consistently. Records are kept of incidents of poor behaviour and parents are informed quickly where there are concerns. The school employs an appropriate range of reports to monitor behaviour. Students are clear about the standards expected in school and the steps that may be taken where behaviour does not reach these standards. The school has recently introduced a new rewards system which students are aware of and exploring tentatively.
- 57 Monitoring of attendance is satisfactory. Registers are checked on a regular basis by tutors, student guidance directors and the education welfare officer who calls weekly at the school. There are clear systems in place to follow up on concerns of attendance and punctuality by telephone and also a series of letters.
- 58 The school has effective and satisfactory procedures to ensure the health, safety and well being of students.
- 59 There are clear guidelines for health and safety both in school and off site during visits. Regular checks are made of the site and premises and risk assessments have been carried out. Fire drills are organised now on a regular basis. However, in the recent past particular circumstances meant that in some terms there were no fire drills. New directions for fire drills are now in place. Arrangements for students who are unwell in school are sensible and there is a medical room with a waiting area that students may use. Three staff have first aid qualifications. Satisfactory arrangements are made for serving school meals with a number of small serving areas available to students to cover both sites. The school is clean and the caretaker and cleaning staff take pride in its good appearance.

#### **Partnership with parents and the community**

- 60 The school enjoys a satisfactory and effective partnership with parents and the community. Parents are appreciative of the way in which students are encouraged to get involved in more than just their daily lessons. Parents also feel that it is easy to approach the school with problems or questions about their children.
- 61 Information provided by the school is satisfactory and has some very positive elements. The school prospectus and supporting documents for new parents are clear and well presented. However, the prospectus and the annual report of governors to parents do not contain the full range of information that is required. For example, insufficient information is given on the arrangements for disabled students. In the prospectus there is no outline of the charging and remissions policy, sporting aims and provisions, or the provision for careers education and advice. In the annual report of governors there is no information for parents on the progress made on the school's action plan following the previous inspection report. Curriculum focused events for parents and the information presented to parents and students at the annual open evening is valuable in providing some guidance for parents on what is taught in the school. However, overall information about subjects in the curriculum is limited and there is insufficient guidance to enable parents to fully support and help their children. This inspection confirms the concerns expressed by parents. The school offers an effective induction programme for new students and their parents. Also helpful to parents is the meeting in Year 9 to explain the option choices available in Key Stage 4, which provides parents with useful information to support their children's choices. Regular newsletters from the school set out clearly for parents a range of essential information on routine and administrative matters as well as keeping them up-to-date with school events. The students' personal organiser communicates clearly to students and parents the homework schedule and assignments to be completed. Some parents are unhappy about the work which their children are expected to do at home. The inspection does not support their views and judges that homework is of good quality and designed to support and augment classroom studies.

- 62 Parents' involvement with their children's learning is satisfactory. Parents attend a range of consultation and social events at the school and give generally sound support with homework. A few parents are involved with extra-curricular activities, such as rugby and netball, and support practical subjects from time to time. Parents also give good help with trips and visits out of school. The Friends of Pool School is a very committed and active body raising funds from a range of activities including the popular Fun Day in the summer. The school has recently introduced a brief interim report on students' progress for parents and this has been welcomed. The annual report to parents is linked to the annual parents' consultative evening. Some parents do not feel that they are kept well informed about their children's progress by the school. The inspection supports this view and notes that the reports are very descriptive about course content but are lacking in any form of diagnosis of strengths and weaknesses of students. There is insufficient information about attainment and few references to predicted National Curriculum levels.
- 63 Parents of students with a statement of special educational needs are appropriately involved in annual reviews. Parents of students without a statement but receiving additional support are informed appropriately and encouraged to take part with the school in their child's learning. Some contribute effectively to their child's progress by participating in a paired reading scheme at home, monitored by learning support staff. There is a helpful printed guide for parents about how to support their child's reading but none to explain how the Code of Practice is implemented in the school. The school's policy for special educational needs covers the philosophy behind and main points of provision but is not clear or detailed, nor is it included, even as a summary, in the prospectus. The governors' annual report to parents does not provide them with a clear picture of what has happened over the past year with regard to special educational needs and how successful their policy is.
- 64 The school has developed a good partnership with the community and this has a very positive impact on the quality of learning and the standards of attainment. Classroom studies are extended and enriched by a range of visits both locally to museums and galleries as well as to places of geographical and historic interest, such as Truro, Portreath and Tehidy, and visits further afield to the Scillies, Germany and Switzerland. Visitors to the school also bring valuable experience and expertise to classes such as personal and social education. There are links through the Year 10 work experience programme as well as the Education Business Partnership to local employers that are well used by the school. Likewise good and supportive relationships exist with Cornwall College and Truro College. Students participate enthusiastically in a range of community initiatives and are especially supportive of local elderly residents. The school is widely available to the community and offers a venue to an extensive range of academic, social and sporting activities.

## **THE MANAGEMENT AND EFFICIENCY OF THE SCHOOL**

### **Leadership and management**

- 65 The leadership and management of the school are satisfactory overall. The headteacher was appointed immediately following the last inspection. Her first priority was to put the school finances into surplus as an overspend of £250,000 had just been found, putting the maintenance and development of the school at risk. She encourages a clear focus on students making good progress and improving standards, and members of the senior management team and governors generally understand this vision. All adults working in the school share a genuine loyalty to the school and the students.
- 66 The governing body has been restructured since the previous inspection and several new members have joined the group. Committees are appropriately organised and meetings are well documented. There has been considerable debate about relocating the school onto one site and the local education authority is supporting developments in this matter. This was a key issue in the previous inspection report and only limited improvement has taken place. Governors have recently supported a bid by the school to be part of a local Education Action Zone to help raise standards in the school. The two key issues in the previous report which relate to the involvement of governors in long term development plans and financial management have been addressed. A significant achievement is the removal of a large deficit in the budget. There is also an improvement in both the amount and quality of information provided to the governing body and opportunities for members to engage in debate. Some governors are beginning to understand more fully their roles and responsibilities. However, the rate of improvement since the last inspection has been reduced by long term absences of staff in key posts. The impact of these absences cause parents to express concern and this inspection supports their views.

- 67 The contribution of staff with leadership roles is satisfactory overall with significant weaknesses in some senior posts. The senior management team has recently been extended and good appointments have been made to co-ordinate core subjects. This is beginning to have an impact on raising standards and indicates that the school does have satisfactory capacity to continue to improve. There remain some weaknesses in the overall leadership of expressive arts and information technology and there has been a vacant post for the faculty director of humanities for some time. In addition, there is no appraisal system and so job descriptions are not reviewed regularly and training needs, roles and responsibilities are not informed by any rigorous audit. The senior management team has devolved the responsibility for classroom monitoring to faculty directors. Although the main focus of training is to improve the range of teaching styles, and this inspection judges teaching to be good overall, there has been minimal monitoring of the curriculum and teaching. The quality of some aspects of the vocational curriculum in Key Stage 4 is unsatisfactory. The development of the school is constrained by a lack of quality information held at senior management level because monitoring and evaluation of both teaching and curriculum development are unsatisfactory. There has been insufficient improvement in addressing this key issue since the last inspection.
- 68 The implementation of the school's aims, values and policies is satisfactory. Improvements have been made in several areas of the school including changes to the pastoral system, the rewards system, registration procedures and student support and guidance. However, the senior management team is not always very effective in monitoring the way policies are put into practice. There is no overall co-ordination of equal opportunities. The school does not monitor rigorously the attainment or progress of different groups of students. There is a strong commitment to the support and integration of students with special educational needs in the school, and much evidence of good intention. However, the school shows some weaknesses in recent judgements regarding an amended version of the previous individual education plans.
- 69 There is a positive ethos in the school and relationships are good. The environment reflects a sense of purpose which is shared by all adults who work to support the students.
- 70 There has been satisfactory improvement overall since the last inspection. However, statutory requirements are not fully met in the information available to parents through the school prospectus and the governors' annual report. More seriously, and identified as key issues in the previous report, information technology does not comply with National Curriculum orders and the school does not meet the legal requirement for a daily act of collective worship. There is no appraisal system and the school does not fully implement the Code of Practice.

#### **Staffing, accommodation and learning resources**

- 71 The overall provision for staffing in the school is good. The school has sufficient numbers of teaching and non-teaching staff to meet the needs of its curriculum. The numbers of classroom support assistants are above average and correspond with the above average numbers of students with statements of special educational needs. Overall, there is a good balance of experienced teachers and expertise. Teachers are well qualified in the subjects that they teach and there is little non-specialist teaching. Support staff - administrative staff, premises staff, technical staff and learning support assistants - make an important contribution to the standards and quality achieved by the school.
- 72 The provision for staff development is satisfactory and the monies allocated are above average. Teachers and support assistants apply to attend courses and their applications are considered against the needs of department and school development plans. Most of the applications made are agreed, but because teaching is not systematically monitored, the school cannot be sure that specific needs are being addressed. All staff have job descriptions but appraisal is not in operation and does not meet requirements. There have been no newly qualified teachers appointed to the school for some time so that arrangements for their induction have not been required.
- 73 The quality and range of resources are satisfactory overall, and are good for those students with special educational needs. Since the last inspection, investment by the school has improved book provision to satisfactory levels, and resources are generally sufficient and used well. Computer provision has been updated since the previous inspection, and good specialist rooms are in place, together with satisfactory provision in the library. Elsewhere across the curriculum, provision is generally poor, and overall the student to computer ratio of 13:1 is still well below the national average. Library provision is satisfactory and well used, with book stocks at appropriate levels for non-fiction, and particularly fiction.

- 74 Priority has been given to improving resource provision in the school, despite budgetary constraints. Funding for resources is generous, and a new departmental system for allocation has been introduced, linked to subject development planning. This system is effectively monitored by the headteacher directly, and should ensure progressive improvement of resources. As yet, at this early stage, there is no discernible link between spending on resources and standards of attainment in subjects. However, other than in the specific lessons in Key Stage 3, the application and use of information technology in subjects is poor. This inadequate provision was noted in the previous inspection and progress towards improving this weakness is unsatisfactory.
- 75 Accommodation is satisfactory. The school is making effective use of its available accommodation, which is generally sufficient to meet the current demands of the curriculum. However, concerns raised at the previous inspection remain, particularly with regard to overcrowded classrooms. In several subjects, notably science, art and design and technology, teachers continue to operate in small spaces which are cramped for the size of classes. Good management by teachers reduces the negative impact in these situations, but teaching and learning styles are severely restricted. However, the school is working to overcome these and other issues arising from the previous inspection. Redecoration and some refurbishment has improved the learning environment, particularly in lower school, and additional teaching space has been created in art and modern foreign languages. Provision for drama has been improved and there is additional storage space for physical education. In addition, facilities to improve disabled access have been provided. Although the school is seen as suitable for students with disabilities affecting mobility, there is considerable delay when moving between sites.
- 76 The Headteacher and Governors, in conjunction with the local education authority have recently made good progress in establishing a Private Finance Initiative bid which is intended to move the school on to a single site, and to tackle some of the current problems the school faces. Despite this positive action to provide sufficient, appropriate accommodation, many concerns raised at the previous inspection remain unresolved. Provision for science is barely adequate, and existing laboratories are too small, well worn and outdated. The accommodation for music and history is in poor condition, and the changing accommodation for physical education is inadequate for a school of this size. Teaching of religious education takes place in rooms furthest away from other humanities lessons, restricting the development of the subject. The constraints of the split site remain, affecting staff and student punctuality to lessons, and exposing students to regular transfers between sites using the potentially hazardous bridge. Students' sensible, co-operative behaviour reduces risk here, and also ensures tolerable movement around the severely congested staircases and narrow corridors in lower school. However, both these issues require urgent consideration and review.
- 77 Elsewhere, locker provision is good, but adds to congestion along already narrow corridors. There is little graffiti, and both classrooms and cloakrooms are sensibly used. Provision for dining is well managed, but far from satisfactory. Library provision is well organised and managed, but the provision of study facilities requires further consideration. Around the two sites, social facilities are restricted, and litter is cause for concern. Cleaning standards are high. The learning support centre is a welcoming place for students and parents.
- 78 Overall, despite the considerable limitations of provision, there has been some improvement in accommodation since the previous inspection. Whilst the school is generally supporting students' learning effectively, many inadequacies remain, and should be urgently dealt with.

### **The efficiency of the school**

- 79 In terms of financial prudence, financial planning is of good quality. The present management has resolved a large deficit in a relatively short time and has put the school into a relatively strong financial position. To achieve this it was necessary to reduce staff numbers and, while difficult decisions needed to be made, the teaching force is now well equipped to meet the requirements of the school's curriculum and the morale of staff has remained high. The process of financial planning is mixed. In general, plans are appropriate but the absence of systematic monitoring in a number of areas means that the audit of the school's needs is not as rigorous as it could be. There are a number of staff whose roles are not sufficiently clear including members of the senior management team.
- 80 The school has good financial control with regular monitoring at all levels. The new bursar has constant oversight of spending. Governors are kept fully informed about levels of spending and the state of the school's finances. A recent auditor's report found no significant weaknesses with the school's financial management. Monies provided by the local educational authority for students with statements of special

educational need are used to employ support staff to meet the requirements of students' statements. Overall, financial responsibilities are well defined.

- 81 Teaching and support staff are well deployed and accommodation is used as effectively as possible. There is, however, clearly an inefficiency of time for both students and teachers in the split site arrangement. Even so the school takes steps, as far as possible, to minimise the effects of the split site. Overall, resources for learning are used efficiently. Spending on learning resources is well above average; this is to remedy earlier under spending. Teachers make bids for resources against their development plans and success criteria are built into the process from the beginning. Recently the school took advantage of a local authority loan to re-equip the information technology provision. At present this is not fully used but arrangements are in hand to increase use.
- 82 The school works with many students whose socio-economic circumstances are less favourable than average. Students enter the school with a range of attainment but the typical attainment is below average. Overall the quality of education provided, particularly teaching, is good, and students make good progress through the school. Costs are about average. The school uses its funds well and provides good value for money.

## PART B: CURRICULUM AREAS AND SUBJECTS

### CORE SUBJECTS

#### English

- 83 Students have below average attainments in English when they enter the school. In the 1998 end of Key Stage 3 tests, attainment is broadly in line with the national average and above the average for similar schools. The proportion of students achieving the expected Levels of 5 or higher in the 1998 tests is close to the national average and well above the average for similar schools. The proportion attaining the higher Levels of 6 or higher is above average in comparison with similar schools but below the average for all schools. Overall attainment for the period 1996-98 is below the national average. However, results of both boys and girls improved at a rate faster than the national average for this period. Girls' attainments in tests are higher than those of boys are. Results provided by the school for the 1999 tests show a further increase in the average level of attainment. The proportion attaining the higher Levels of 6 or better increased significantly from 26 per cent in 1998 to 39 per cent in 1999.
- 84 In the 1998 GCSE English examinations the proportion of students attaining grades A\*-C and grades A\*-G is broadly in line with the national average. A higher proportion of girls gained the higher grades than boys, although the gap between boys and girls was in line with the national average. The proportion of students who achieved grades A\*-C is very high in comparison with students who had achieved similar attainments in their end of Key Stage 3 assessments. In 1997, the overall proportion attaining A\*-C was below the national average, mainly because boys' attainments were well below the national average. The proportion attaining grades A\*-C in GCSE English literature in 1998 is broadly in line with the national average. A higher proportion of girls than boys attained the higher grades. The proportion of candidates who achieve passes in GCSE literature at all grades is, however, greater than the national average. Results provided by the school for the 1999 examinations show a small drop in the proportion attaining grades A\*-C in English. The proportion of girls achieving A\*-C increased from 1998 but the proportion of boys fell. With the exception of the improved boys' results in 1998, the gap between girls' and boys' attainment at GCSE has not been narrowed satisfactorily. In 1999, the proportion of both boys and girls attaining grades A\*-C is lower than in 1998.
- 85 In work seen during the inspection, overall attainments are in line with expectations at the end of both key stages. Scrutiny of a limited amount of work from last year's Year 11 show the boys' attainment to be below the expected level. The work of boys currently in the school is broadly in line with expectations for each key stage. Progress in relation to what students have previously achieved is good at Key Stage 3 and satisfactory at Key Stage 4. By the end of Key Stage 3, most students listen well and express themselves clearly and confidently using standard English. Higher attainers use a range of vocabulary and phrasing. Most students read independently and cope well with the texts they are given. A minority of students are below expected levels in reading with regard to both fluency and comprehension. Overall standards of writing are in line with expected levels. Most students have a basic accuracy in spelling, punctuation and grammar. A significant minority of higher attainers write with flair using an extensive vocabulary. Lower attainers are below average in spelling, punctuation and grammar. By the end of Key Stage 4, most students speak and listen at a standard that is line with national expectations. Most give clear explanations. Many argue clearly and use the contributions of other students to take discussions forward. Most read at a level in line with national expectations. These students select information quickly. Lower attainers are below the expected level but make sensible statements about the characters they study. More than half write at a level in line with the expected level, especially after redrafting. A small number of higher attaining students write with flair in both their personal writing and their analytical writing. Lower attaining students have more limited expression but punctuate simple statements accurately. They write neatly and legibly.
- 86 Progress is good overall. It is good at Key Stage 3 and satisfactory at Key Stage 4. In lessons, students make good progress in both key stages. They learn and complete a good quantity of work, such as the Year 10 lower set who discussed, planned and wrote formal letters during their lesson. During Key Stage 3, higher attaining students increase their range of written expression and accuracy. On entry, middle attainers have weaknesses in paragraphing, spelling, punctuation and grammar but these standards improve during Key Stage 3. During Key Stage 4 progress is satisfactory. Higher attainers show particular improvement in their critical interpretation of texts. They identify examples of irony and make links between the events of a text and the writer's themes. Middle attainers improve their ability to recognise different layers of meaning in a text. Year 11 students show they can understand a text such as Penelope Liveley's 'The Darkness Out There' at both a literal and symbolic level. Lower attaining



students, including those with special educational needs, make good progress overall. Their progress at Key Stage 3 is satisfactory. Students make satisfactory progress in reading although progress in writing is too slow in accuracy and content. Their progress is good at Key Stage 4 because written work improves in length, paragraphing, spelling and punctuation. They write lengthy character studies about characters from difficult texts such as 'Great Expectations' and 'Macbeth' and enter successfully GCSE English and English literature.

- 87 Overall, students have a good attitude to their work in English at both key stages. They find the work interesting. They enjoy expressing their opinions. They maintain good concentration on written tasks in lessons. During Key Stage 4 their approach to course work shows a good capacity for studying independently but opportunities for this are less evident in Key Stage 3 work and lessons. Students work well together in paired, small group, and whole-class discussions. A Year 11 group sustained a perceptive and spontaneous whole-class discussion about the sensitive issues in 'Playing Sandwiches' by Alan Bennett. Behaviour is mainly good across the attainment range. The exceptions are in middle sets in Years 9 and 10 where some immature classroom behaviour on the part of small groups of boys sometimes impedes the flow of lessons.
- 88 Teaching is good at both key stages. It is the most significant factor in helping the students make good progress. Currently, staffing is stable. The school has effectively addressed the consequences of a long term absence that caused some justifiable parental concern. Teachers have good knowledge about both the content of their subject and about a range of appropriate teaching methods. Planning is thorough. A good feature is that several teachers begin lessons by clearly telling the students what the learning aims of the lesson are and how they will tackle them. Most lessons have a clear sense of purpose, good momentum and a sensible blend of activities that sustain the students' interest and help them to make progress. The last report's judgement that expectations of higher attaining students were too low has been effectively addressed. Certain techniques, such as annotating overhead transparencies of texts, are very effective in extending the students' knowledge and understanding about a writer's use of language. Student management and control are mainly good and help the students to concentrate and understand precisely what they have to do. The management of a small group of less motivated, middle attaining boys is not consistently effective. Marking is of a good standard, but the best practice is not consistently adopted throughout the department. Homework makes a good contribution to the continuity and progress of the students' learning.
- 89 The difficulties noted in the last report regarding the department's efficiency and effectiveness have impeded the department's development. Procedures for schemes of work that provide a coherent curriculum for all students, for making and recording assessments, and for using assessments to help raise attainment and guide classroom practice were, until recently, unsatisfactory. However, the appointment in April of an acting head of department has led to a significant improvement. The new appointment has made, and continues to make, clear sighted judgements about what the department needs to do to improve. She ensures that action to achieve this improvement is being carried out. She receives first rate support from a good team of teachers who are responding positively to clear educational leadership. They feel involved in both the formulation and carrying out of policy. After a period of drift since the last report, the department is now moving on with purpose. Its members understand that there is still much to do to improve the curriculum, schemes of work, boys' attainment and assessment procedures but are implementing a clear programme of action.

## **Drama**

- 90 The proportion of students achieving A\* to C grades at GCSE has been well above the national average in recent years. In 1999, however, the numbers are well below average and the school is challenging these results. From work seen during the inspection standards of attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 are above national expectations. Similarly students' attainments at the end of Key Stage 3 are generally above national expectations.
- 91 Dramatic skills are well developed through Key Stage 3. Students demonstrate invention and imagination in a variety of techniques such as mime and role-play and they show good social skills and learn to work successfully together. Co-ordination, physical skills and spatial awareness are developed well. Students criticise their work constructively and support their peers well. Much of the work is thoughtful and creative and improvisation is usually of good quality. Students demonstrate good language skills and they plan their work carefully as they extend their performances. Towards the end of the key stage, as they move into Year 10, students begin to develop understanding and skills in character portrayal. At Key Stage 4, students develop more formal skills and techniques. They analyse and perform from script and research their work carefully to support and inform their performances.

- 92 All students make good progress through both key stages and progress is often very good in lessons. In almost all lessons students are engaged in practical activities. Most of the tasks presented to students provide opportunities for them to explore and imagine, and they are consistently challenged to raise their performances. Students gain knowledge and an increasing awareness of dramatic skills and concepts as they move through the school. Students with special educational needs are able to meet the needs of the subject and to achieve success. They make good progress and sometimes are helped by classroom assistants.
- 93 Students' response to drama is good, and often very good, at both key stages. They are always well behaved. They come to the lesson anticipating success and excitement and they respond to lessons with enthusiasm and imagination. Lessons provide a rigour to which they respond with energy. Students feel safe in the drama studio, which enables them to explore with confidence.
- 94 The quality of teaching is mostly very good at Key Stage 3 and good at Key Stage 4. Teachers have a good level of subject knowledge and understanding and a high level of personal dramatic skill. They are skilful at joining in practical work to lead by example. Lessons are generally rigorous and a variety of well chosen strategies are used to reinforce high expectations. Lessons are well prepared with clear dramatic intentions and meet the needs of all students in the class. A good variety of appropriate strategies are employed. Relationships are very good. Students are well controlled and behaviour is not an issue. Time is used very successfully and lessons move at a good pace with energy and rigour. Effective assessments are made as part of the teaching process. Homework is set when appropriate for students at Key Stage 4.
- 95 The curriculum for drama is broad and balanced at both key stages and sufficient time is provided. At Key Stage 4, the subject is popular and groups are large. There is good provision for drama in extra-curricular activities and the school presents regular productions. The most recent was 'West Side Story'. The team of drama teachers is well led by the teacher in charge. Since the last inspection the need for two rooms for drama on some occasions in the week has been reduced to just two periods a week by careful timetabling.

## Mathematics

- 96 The results of the Key Stage 2 national tests in mathematics for 1998, show that the attainment of students entering the school is below average for their age. The 1998 results of the National Tests taken at the end of Key Stage 3 show students' performance to be close to the national average for all students and well above the national average in comparison with schools with students from similar backgrounds. The percentage for all students reaching Level 5 or above and Level 6 or above was close to the national average for all students and well above the national average in comparison with students from similar backgrounds. The trend over the previous two years shows improvement at a better rate than that nationally. Teachers' assessment at Key Stage 3 shows a similar picture, with levels of attainment close to the expected levels. The school reports that test results in 1999 show a further increase in the average level of attainment. The proportion of students attaining Level 6 or above has continued to rise although less than in English and science.
- 97 At the end of Key Stage 4, the figures for 1998 show the proportion of students obtaining GCSE mathematics grades A\* to C was below the national average for all schools but represents an increase on the previous year. The proportion of students in 1998 achieving GCSE mathematics grades A\* to G was higher in comparison with the national average and represents an improvement on the previous year with all students being entered. Over the past three years, the results show a rising trend with girls performing better than boys. Results provided by the school for the 1999 examinations show a continuing increase in the number of students attaining GCSE mathematics grades A\*-C with girls significantly better than boys. The gap between girls and boys attainment at GCSE has not been reduced sufficiently.
- 98 From the lessons observed and the scrutiny of students' work, the level of attainment for students at the end of both key stages is in line with national averages. Students with special educational needs show satisfactory standards of attainment in line with their ability. At both key stages, students are beginning to develop strategies for solving problems when using and applying mathematics. Students are able to extend a concept and articulate their thinking through set tasks. For example, at Key Stage 3, an investigation into finding representative values for grouped sets of statistical data prompted students to propose a hypothesis and test it.

- 99 Students' numerical skills are satisfactory. There are planned 'warm-up' opportunities in the scheme of work which focus on consolidation of knowledge, skills and understanding at both key stages. Higher attaining students reinforce their understanding of number through extensive recorded work and completed exercises. For average and lower attaining students, and students with special educational needs, work is less detailed, but expectations are still high, resulting in organised notes interspersed with satisfactory diagrams.
- 100 Standards of literacy are satisfactory. The schemes of work at both key stages provide some planned opportunities in information technology but are at an early stage. Attainment in algebra at both key stages matches national expectations. Students can use simple substitution and transposition of letters for numbers to the transformation of formulae. They use algebra as a tool for solving complex problems, applying all appropriate skills well. Good standards of presentation and accuracy help students to understand shape, space and measure. Examples of work seen at Key Stage 3 range from the properties of simple regular shapes and units of measure to the surface area and volume of simple solids. At Key Stage 4, high attainers can identify two-dimensional planes, apply Pythagoras' Theorem and solve problems using trigonometry well. Levels of attainment in handling data are satisfactory across both key stages for all abilities. Low attainers plot frequency graphs of simple sets of data and determine their representative values and calculate the probability of simple single events. High attainers can construct cumulative frequency graphs, distinguishing between discrete and continuous data and calculate the probability of combined events applied to realistic information.
- 101 Progress is good at Key Stage 3 and satisfactory at Key Stage 4 with girls performing significantly better than the boys. Levels of attainment at the start of Key Stage 3 are below the national average but in line with the national average by the end of the key stage. Good progress is linked to the rigorous setting policy and a structured scheme of work that allows for continuity and progression across both key stages. National Curriculum attainment targets and levels of attainment are not yet included in all schemes of work. There are limited systems to track students' progress, to identify their strengths and weaknesses and establish targets in line with national curriculum levels. This is negatively affecting the progress of all students and is an essential tool in any strategy to identify under performance by boys. There is evidence of good recall of earlier work by the students and an ability to use and apply it to new situations although the focus of many lessons tends to be on process rather than on understanding and learning outcomes. Students in the lower sets remain well motivated throughout the lesson and benefit from carefully focused teaching despite the large class sizes. Students with special educational needs make satisfactory progress with the help of appropriate support and structured work. Challenging work is provided but seldom takes the form of open-ended tasks more suitable for the high attainers. Good progress is linked to the regular and effective use of homework, coupled with monthly or end-of-topic assessment tests. Student relationships with their teachers are very good and contribute significantly to their progress in mathematics.
- 102 Students' response to mathematics is very good at both key stages. They display a positive attitude, are interested in their work and concentrate for the full lesson without losing sight of the learning objective. Students are generally receptive, willing to listen and contribute to discussion without undermining the good pace of the lesson, although they do not often pose questions. They support one another in grasping mathematical concepts displaying maturity and good collaboration, working together on exercises. However, as reported in the previous report, students continue to have limited opportunities to show achievement in the applications of mathematics and their knowledge and skills in the subject are better than their understanding.
- 103 The quality of teaching is satisfactory or better in all lessons at both key stages. Good subject knowledge and contextual understanding, careful planning, good pace and a variety of resources supporting different tasks and activities are features of the best lessons. Teachers do not always allow sufficient time for students' responses to be formulated and students are seldom encouraged to express themselves fully. Planning does not take sufficient account of the different needs of students and there is limited material designed to extend the higher attainers. There is a marking and assessment policy in the department although the implementation by teachers is not consistent. There is little critical and evaluative comment in exercise books and reports to help students and support future learning. Self-assessment and target setting is at an initial stage of development and requires monitoring.
- 104 The curriculum is broad and balanced and satisfies the statutory requirements. Schemes of work are detailed for all levels of attainment and records are accurate and up-to-date. The leadership and management of the department are very good with regular minuted meetings. Procedures for the assessment of students' attainment are in place although they do not inform curriculum planning and classroom practice. Assessment at Key Stage 4 is used to predict grades, set targets and determine

strategies for improving students' performance, although not sufficiently rigorously. A well qualified and committed staff, satisfactory accommodation but with depressing entrance areas, and adequate resources, contribute to the improving standards achieved by all the students. There are clear aims for the mathematical education of the students, with projected figures set to improve. There has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection.

## Science

- 105 The most recent information for students entering the school in 1999 shows attainments for boys and girls below the national average. In the 1998 national tests at the end of Key Stage 3, the proportion of students gaining Levels 5 and above is close to the national average for all maintained schools, the proportion attaining Levels 6 and above is below national averages. When test results are compared with schools of similar intake the proportion of students gaining these levels is well above average. There are no significant differences in the attainments of girls and boys. Test scores over the previous three years are below national averages. The teachers' own assessments of the students' attainments are significantly above test scores and indicate some unreliability in teachers' skills. In 1999 test results provide by the school show similar levels of attainment to the previous year.
- 106 In the 1998 GCSE examinations at the end of Key Stage 4, results are well below the national average for double award science. However, comparisons with national figures are misleading as a significant number of students take single science or rural science and biology, physics and chemistry. Students in these subjects attain results in line with individual expectations. In 1999 GCSE results for double award science show a significant increase in the numbers of students attaining grades A\* - C partially as a result of the option for separate sciences being withdrawn. Over the last three years there are no significant differences in the attainments of girls when compared to boys.
- 107 In work seen at Key Stage 3, attainments are overall in line with national expectations; however, higher attainers are not always challenged enough and their work does not reflect the levels of which they are capable. This lack of challenge for the higher attainers was identified in the previous inspection report. Most students have a satisfactory knowledge and understanding of scientific processes, and students can undertake investigative work ensuring a fair test. Higher attaining students in Year 7 were able to use a range of resources to explore the effects of static electricity, whilst lower attaining students in Year 9 used an effective demonstration of transverse and longitudinal waves to describe the characteristics of each wave type.
- 108 In work seen at Key Stage 4, attainment is in line with national expectations for both girls and boys. Again at Key Stage 4, higher attaining students are not achieving their potential. For example, higher attainers in Year 11 were unable to identify all the factors which might affect the strength of an electromagnet during an investigation. In Year 10, students took part enthusiastically in a lesson investigating the evidence to support the theory of plate tectonics, gaining real scientific understanding from this well prepared lesson. Students with special educational needs attain at appropriate levels, in particular when in-class support is provided. Students demonstrate wide variations in their numerical skills; higher attaining students are mostly confident in their use of number, whilst some lower attaining students have poorly developed mental arithmetic skills. Many students demonstrate good speaking and listening skills and exercise books contain well structured notes. Little progress has been made since the previous inspection in the use of information technology to support the teaching of science.
- 109 At both key stages, overall girls and boys make satisfactory progress in lessons. Higher attainers make less progress than expected. This is due to a lack of planning to extend their knowledge and understanding in a number of lessons. In some lessons students make good and sometimes very good progress. These lessons are characterised by very good planning and use of resources, ensuring challenging work and a fast pace to the lesson, for example in investigating the structure of the earth using information of the density of different materials. Students with special needs make at least satisfactory progress and sometimes good progress where learning support is available.
- 110 The students' attitudes and behaviour are at least satisfactory and usually good or very good in all lessons at both key stages. Good behaviour is a feature of lessons. Students listen well and respond to the instructions of their teachers. The active participation of students is more variable; the best lessons demonstrate a fast pace and students are challenged to plan, investigate and evaluate. In some other lessons there is some degree of passive listening compared to active participation. This results from teachers talking at the students and not using strategies to engage the students actively from the start of the lesson. This limited range of teaching styles observed in some lessons has still not been satisfactorily addressed from the previous inspection report. Relationships between students and teachers are good and are a strength of the department.

- 111 The quality of teaching at both key stages is satisfactory overall and in some lessons it is good or very good. Teachers are knowledgeable and experienced and have good relationships with their students. However, they use a limited range of teaching styles in some lessons and tasks which do not always meet the needs of the higher attainers. This has a negative effect on standards. Lesson planning is variable within the department and ranges from very good, with well developed resources to stimulate scientific thinking amongst students, to satisfactory. Teachers keep good records of students' attainments and each student has an assessment folder containing their assessment information which moves with them from year to year. Books are generally well marked often with useful comments to inform progress. Homework forms a regular and useful extension to class work.
- 112 Arrangements for assessing and recording work meet statutory requirements. Leadership and management of the department is good. The head of department has developed and implemented, with her colleagues, some important initiatives to monitor the progress of students within and between key stages. Schemes of work have been reviewed and updated, with a particular focus on developing an active and investigative approach to science. The application of core skills within science is monitored using a 'student skills passport'. Good teaching practice within the department is shared through a programme of paired lesson observations with feedback. The progress of students is monitored within a year, and across a key stage, to identify any areas where students are underachieving or teaching is being less successful. This information is used by the department to adjust the schemes of work. As yet the department does not use national benchmark data to provide further rigour to this process. Accommodation is unsatisfactory. Laboratories are too small and poorly laid out for the current size of teaching groups. This has a negative impact on standards and hinders the development of experimental and investigative science. Overall the department has made satisfactory progress since the previous inspection. One of the main areas where little progress has been made is the use of information technology in science. Although planning for information technology is adequate resources have not been made available.

### **Information technology**

- 113 Insufficient progress has been made since the previous inspection. The amount of teaching of information technology in the school has not increased although the school has recently made a significant investment in new equipment which is just starting to be used. Students have not learnt to apply information technology consistently as part of their programmes of study at Key Stage 3 or at Key Stage 4. In consequence, the school does not meet its statutory requirements. Students have insufficient access to computers within the subjects of the curriculum.
- 114 Attainment at the end of both key stages is unsatisfactory. There are plans to improve matters, but there is still a significant amount of work and training required by staff to make them a reality. Some work is taking place in Year 7 as part of subject programmes at Key Stage 3 using staff and time from key subjects. Students are at a very basic level of understanding although they make good progress in their lessons. For example, in English students work in the computer room to develop sound skills in using desk top publishing to aid their work. In design and technology they use drawing programmes effectively to develop simple three-dimensional figures which they shade to represent light falling on the object. In some science lessons they use the facilities in the learning resource centre to gather information from CD-ROMS and the Internet about their project work. However, the skills of organising and using this information are still under developed. The school plans to develop these trials into a substantial programme for all students in all years. In the other years, there is not a formalised structure for learning, except for those students on vocational courses in Years 10 and 11, who are gaining some experience. In some subjects in all years, like mathematics, some groups use computers to improve and rehearse their subject skills and gain confidence and experience in using the equipment. However, keyboard skills are at a low level. Students have insufficient opportunities to practise and develop skills in all strands of information technology in appropriate contexts across the curriculum. However, students make use of home computers and demonstrate sound levels of skill to support some aspects of coursework.
- 115 By the end of both key stages, students make erratic progress in their use of information technology as they have not had systematic planned opportunities. At both key stages, students with a special educational need make similar progress to their peers. Across the curriculum, progress is restricted as opportunities are ad hoc and do not allow students to develop as independent users of information technology. Similarly, there are no formalised structures for assessing and recording individual student attainment, so teachers do not know sufficiently the capabilities of their students to plan effective activities.

- 116 Students' response is satisfactory. In lessons where information technology is being used, students are enthusiastic and well motivated. Students gain enjoyment from using computers. Their behaviour is mostly satisfactory. Relationships are constructive and students respect each other and the range of facilities available to them. Some students, mainly boys, use the computers regularly at lunch and break times and this helps to consolidate and develop their skills.
- 117 Where information technology is part of a planned lesson, teaching is satisfactory. A small number of teachers are secure in using technology in their subject and committed to its application for skill development. The skills of the majority of staff are underdeveloped and this is an imperative of the current school development plan.
- 118 The technical staff are starting to provide sound support to teachers, although much of their time is currently spent developing the new facilities. Although outline development plans for information technology are in place, these do not include details of staff development. Leadership and management of the subject is unsatisfactory. There is insufficient senior management involvement, particularly in setting targets and monitoring developments. Co-ordination of information technology across the curriculum is under developed and not fully effective. Statutory requirements are not met.

### **Religious education**

- 119 The 1998 GCSE results are well below the national average by a highly significant amount for both boys and girls; no information is available to compare students' performance in religious education with the other subjects they took. Although in 1999 students were following a GCSE short course, none was entered for the examination. Disruption to the teaching programme through staff changes meant that students were insufficiently prepared for the examination.
- 120 In work seen, attainment by the end of Key Stage 3 is in line with expectations. Most students have a basic knowledge of world religions. In one lesson, because of very good progress, knowledge and understanding of aspects of Hindu worship were above expectations, with higher attaining boys and girls making perceptive comments. There are examples of high attainment in accounts of lives of notable people such as Florence Nightingale, Mahatma Ghandi and Archbishop Romero, with girls generally reaching higher levels than boys. The use, in one lesson, of a very good additional prompt sheet for lower attainers, including those with special educational needs, enabled those students to have some success in devising a newspaper page about the stoning of Stephen. Attainment by the end of Key Stage 4 is below expectations. The lack of work from the previous year is limiting the attainment of present Year 11 students. Within individual lessons, overall attainment is generally in line with expectations. In one lesson, most students were able to express opinions about marriage, though some, especially boys, were less competent in their writing. Some examples of topic work on subjects such as Life after Death, Racism and Abortion show an understanding of religious perspectives to these issues, especially from higher attainers. However, overall attainment in the specifically religious aspects of the Key Stage 4 course is below expectation.
- 121 Overall students make satisfactory progress. Progress at Key Stage 3 is satisfactory. It ranges from very good to poor. It can be very good with active learning in groups where teacher encouragement allows rapid progress, especially when reinforced by high quality discussion later in the lesson. When work is undemanding, students gain few insights; progress is slow for most, and very poor for the higher attainers. In some lessons, most students make good progress as they are challenged by the lesson's moral messages, but a minority make less progress because of a lack of sustained concentration. Often those with special educational needs make good progress when helped by classroom assistants.
- 122 Progress at Key Stage 4 is unsatisfactory. For individuals and in some lessons it can be good. Progress is related mainly to response. The majority of students show good attention and interest and, for example, extend their understanding of divorce from a Muslim perspective. Others go off their tasks at times with a consequent drop in work rate and progress. Generally, higher attainers make more progress, although there are exceptions for both boys and girls.
- 123 The students' responses at Key Stage 3 are satisfactory, but, like progress, they range from very good to poor. When it is poor, students' negative attitudes are apparent from their boisterous entry to the room, through an undercurrent of continuous chatter, to a lack of interest and poor study skills. By contrast, when motivated and interested by the teacher, students are enthusiastic and collaborate well. Talk is purposeful with students keen to do well. Between these extremes, lessons show variable behaviour and responses from students. Most students show respect for the teacher and other students. Others, mainly

boys, become restless and are easily distracted, and show little interest despite the effort of the teacher to engage them in the lesson. Responses at Key Stage 4 are satisfactory. Most students are interested with lively and sometimes noisy contributions. The majority give sensible answers and generally listen when required. However, there is sometimes some silliness and the trivialising of serious subject material. The work rate is too low from some, especially boys, with too much idle chatter.

- 124 Overall, teaching at Key Stage 3 is satisfactory. However, it ranges from very good to poor. In a very good lesson, a crisp introduction sets the scene, briskly moving to group investigations. A very good range of Hindu artefacts enabled all students to handle and assess a variety of objects and pace was maintained by time limits on the investigations. Firm control during the subsequent whole-class discussion maintained the momentum and a sound summing up concluded a fast flowing and interesting lesson. Better teaching shares lesson objectives with students, and good teacher knowledge means that students can be challenged by, for example, demanding biblical texts, but also set tasks with modern relevance. Sometimes control is insufficiently tight, and this is a major problem when teaching is poor. In such cases, teaching lacks pace and does not interest the students who are bored. Teaching makes no variation in demand for students of different abilities, nor has any provision to check students' understanding. Too much of the lesson is dominated by the teacher whose credibility is lost by failure to achieve the expectations stated at the beginning of the lesson. Teaching at Key Stage 4 is satisfactory. Aims are shared with students and lessons are logically planned with appropriate resources. Interesting teaching methods are used which are generally successful in involving most students and encouraging them to think. Such teaching has very good features. Sometimes unsatisfactory behaviour is not always effectively dealt with and the overall quality of the teaching is lessened, and the pace of lessons is reduced. There is scope for more opportunities for assessment within teaching and for higher attainers to be extended.
- 125 At the time of the previous inspection statutory requirements for religious education were not met. At present, the course, if well taught, meets statutory requirements, though the time allocated does not allow desirable exploration and development of key issues, especially at Key Stage 4. The subject faces many other problems at present. Staffing difficulties have caused problems of coherence and continuity, and full delivery of the course, particularly for the present Year 11, is not assured. When the short GCSE course for all Key Stage 4 was introduced, the potential for taking the subject forward was established. However, there are major weaknesses in the provision that is made. These include changes in staffing structures, the isolation of religious education teaching at one end of one site with the other humanities subjects on the other site, the long term absence of the head of subject and other staffing problems. Such problems have all put very great strains on the subject, and created issues of credibility with students and parents. Despite worthy efforts of some individuals, in many ways, the position of the subject is now weaker than it was at the previous inspection. Although resources have been improved and teaching rooms are good, major developments are required with assessment arrangements and the Key Stage 4 course.

## OTHER SUBJECTS OR COURSES

### Art

- 126 At the end of Key Stage 3, teacher assessments indicate that students are achieving levels of attainment that match national expectations but the accuracy of this data cannot be assured. The inspection evidence suggests that although some students' work meets the end of key stage requirements more students are still working towards the standard and so attainment overall is below expectations. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 is in line with the national average for schools with similar backgrounds but below the national average when compared to all schools. There has been a steady improvement in GCSE results over the past three years in line with national improvements. Girls' results have been higher than boys, which is also in line with national patterns. GCSE results in 1998, 60 per cent of students entered for art GCSE achieved passes at grades A\* to C. This year the school reports that 62 per cent of students gained these high grades.
- 127 In Key Stage 3, students are introduced to a range of materials including ceramics and they look at the work of various artists as well as art from different cultures. Although there are many examples of satisfactory standards from all students in their practical work, some higher attaining students would benefit from greater challenge as they are not achieving the levels of which they are capable. Standards are less satisfactory in the second National Curriculum attainment target of knowledge and

understanding. Students are introduced to the work of artists and craftspeople but have only a superficial knowledge of the historical and cultural context. In Key Stage 4, students continue to work with a variety of media and have the opportunity to specialise in ceramics. The ceramics course is emerging as a particular strength in a good department. In other lessons, Year 11 students are developing work from a summer project on light and the eclipse that at times achieves a spiritual dimension. Artists' workshops and visits to galleries are arranged in Key Stage 4; this has a positive effect on standards of work.

- 128 Students make good progress overall. Progress is satisfactory in Key Stage 3 and good in Key Stage 4. In some cases progress is very good in Key Stage 4. At this stage students take more responsibility for the direction of their work and students of all levels of attainment make good progress. The curriculum is well planned and accessible to all and in both key stages students with special educational needs are making satisfactory and better progress. In Key Stage 3, students with marked aptitudes do not always make sufficient progress, as expectations are not high enough.
- 129 Students' response to art is good. They work with interest and are capable of sustained concentration. They enjoy talking about their work and are able to use specialist vocabulary. Relationships are positive and students are able to work collaboratively together. Several attend extra art classes. Behaviour is good and classes are well managed. More students are choosing to study vocational courses linked to the local college. Some students are involved in projects such as a mural which is commissioned by the mathematics department in the school.
- 130 Teaching is good. In over two-thirds of the lessons observed teaching was good or better. Teachers know their subject well and in many lessons convey an enthusiasm and love of art to the students. In a few lessons teaching styles are more limited; no opportunities are provided for discussion or for students' presentations and evaluation of their work. Planning is good and properly linked to the National Curriculum. Schemes of work meet statutory requirements except in the use of information technology.
- 131 Good procedures for assessment are in place and useful feedback is given to students. However, assessment is not consistent in both key stages nor is the information held in a form that is readily accessible which makes it difficult to monitor progress. Marking is not consistent or informative. Homework is well established in Key Stage 4 but under developed in Key Stage 3 and could make greater demands on students.
- 132 Leadership is sound. The management of resources and of teaching is good. This is a good department that has made some gains since the last inspection. Strengths identified in the last inspection have been maintained including the good display of art work around the school. Since the last inspection a training programme for staff has been introduced, an extra teaching room has been creatively added to the ceramics area and there is now adequate teaching time in all years. More reference material is available although there are insufficient multi-cultural texts. Statutory requirements for information technology have still to be met.

## **Design and technology**

- 133 At the end of Key Stage 4, levels of attainment as shown in the GCSE results for the last two years, are above national averages for the number of A\* - C, and also A\* - G, in all the range of examination courses provided. Almost every student completes their design and technology course and is entered for the examination. The trend over time in public examinations at all grades is above average, with both boys and girls doing equally well and significantly better than the national picture. In the 1998 GCSE examinations, syllabuses in graphic products, textile technology, food technology, electronics and resistant material products all produced very similar good results. GCSE results for 1999 continue this positive trend for all examinations.
- 134 In work seen during the inspection designing skills of the majority of students in Year 10 are good and in Year 11 they are very good. Research is of good quality and is a strong feature in all courses. Portfolios for the vast majority of students at all ages are of good and very good quality and reflect all aspects of the design process. They are well researched and illustrated and are complemented by good quality products and models. Information technology is sometimes well used at Key Stage 4 by those students who have access to home computers, as a support for their coursework. Elsewhere its use is infrequent, and this feature of the National Curriculum is disappointingly inadequate, not meeting requirements.
- 135 In work seen at the end of Key Stage 3, in all aspects of design and technology students are attaining at least what would be expected of them for their age and most are at a higher level. Students have a very



good understanding of materials and components, which effectively supports both their designing and manufacturing activities. Good levels of craft skills are demonstrated in the range of manufactured articles produced in textile technology, food, and wood, metal and plastic. Measuring, shaping and cutting skills are highly developed. Numeracy skills are well used, particularly measurement, although students do not write at length.

- 136 Students make good progress overall. By the end of Key Stage 3, students are making good progress in consolidating their designing and making skills in all the material areas. In consequence most students are making at least satisfactory progress in developing numeracy skills and are starting to make step-by-step plans to guide their work. In all material areas at this key stage students organise and manage their practical work to a high standard. Lower attaining students, and those with special educational needs, are making good, and often very good, progress in handling materials and tools. Presentation throughout the years is very good. This good progress accelerates through Key Stage 4 so that in Year 11 the portfolio work for lower attaining students is at least satisfactory and very good for average students. There is an absence of the very highest grades and this is an issue that the department recognises. There is insufficient access to computer aided design (CAD) and computer aided manufacturing (CAM) to support the work. In Year 7, students make very early progress in developing drawing skills applied to cartoon characters that they research at home. These ideas are then incorporated into an articulated toy that they make for younger children. In Key Stage 4, students accept the challenges of designing for a specific purpose so that they then produce a final product of quality. In lessons, with the direction of their teachers, they quickly draw conclusions and inferences from the given task
- 137 Students' attitudes to learning are very good throughout the school. The majority work very hard, listen attentively and sustain concentration well when working independently. In both key stages students take a great pride in their work and are more than willing to talk about it. Relationships with teachers are very good and students respond very well to the challenge of the tasks. All students show great consideration for each other and share and support each other naturally. For example, they stop and help their partner in practical lessons without being asked. Students report their design and technology lessons to be high points in their school week. Their behaviour in lessons is good.
- 138 The quality of teaching is very good because of the detailed scheme of work which is well applied. Teaching in lessons is rarely less than satisfactory. Teaching is characterised by teachers' confidence in their knowledge and expertise from which students can benefit, positive relationships with students, high expectations of them in regard to behaviour, and attainment in the design and make process. Very good planning and skilled management by teachers of available resources is also a key feature. Time is planned very effectively, the pace is very crisp and students work hard to achieve good standards. The development of exemplar materials at Key Stage 4, used to inspire students, and portfolios of levelled work at Key Stage 3 are an effective foundation for the close targeting of student progress and attainment. As marks are allocated in the coursework for the use of information technology, the absence of appropriate resources limits the highest attainment
- 139 The leadership and management of the department are very good. There is a clear commitment to high standards. Teachers work hard and use their skills and talents to greatest effect to support student learning. The technician support in the department is effective. Resources have been focused on developing interesting and rewarding projects for the students. Issues raised in the previous inspection have been addressed and the high standards identified have been continued and improved. The requirements of the National Curriculum are being met except for the use of information technology.

## Geography

- 140 Attainment at GCSE has been well below the national average for both boys and girls in recent years. However, the 1998 results show a marked improvement from 1997. In 1998 they are below the national average but not significantly so, and the gap between boys' performance and that of girls' is less than the national difference. Within the school, students' performance in geography is below their performance in their other subjects. However, the gap in 1998 is significantly smaller than in 1997. Provisional results for 1999 show further improvement and, overall, are similar to the previous year. However, the results of girls are well above average, whilst those of boys are well below. Teachers' assessments of students' National Curriculum levels at the end of Key Stage 3 show results in line with expectations in 1998. Provisional results for 1999 indicate a fall in standards with significant under performance by girls compared to the performance of boys.

- 141 In work seen, attainment by the end of Key Stage 3 is in line with expectations. There is little noticeable difference between boys and girls. When given the opportunity, higher attainers use a variety of styles, and writing can show sympathetic understanding of people living in other areas, such as Kenya. There is extended writing of some fluency with well sustained arguments, and work shows a good mix of graphs, diagrams and other techniques. Most students are able to understand essential characteristics of developing and developed countries, and understand terms such as Gross Domestic Product. However, in some lessons, the highest attainers do not have sufficient scope to reach the highest levels. The lowest attainers, including those with special educational needs, are capable of completing exercises such as filling in gaps with the correct word from a list. Attainment in work seen by the end of KS4 is in line with expectations. In one class of mainly high attainers, particularly high levels were achieved with challenging tasks which fully extended some very able students, mainly boys. Generally, all students, apart from the lowest attainers, maintain well presented files with coherent notes and answers to questions. Higher and middle attainers successfully integrate information from external sources, such as 'Geofile' or from the Internet, into their other notes. Overall, there is similar attainment by boys and girls. Although computers are used, there is insufficient evidence to make judgements about attainment in using computers within geography at either key stage.
- 142 Overall students make good progress. Progress at Key Stage 3 is satisfactory. In individual lessons, it is sometimes good. Because higher attainers' work often contains more sustained writing, their understanding and progress is generally greater than middle and lower attainers. However, sometimes the highest attainers are not challenged sufficiently by the exercises to allow them to make as much progress as they might. There is a strong correlation between the amount of active learning and the rate of progress across the ability range. When students are less involved in their learning, they make less progress. In one lesson, most students made good progress in understanding different employment structures as the teacher's clear explanation, reinforced by questions and information from the textbook, took students logically through the work. When supported by classroom assistants, most students with special educational needs make good progress as they experience success and gain confidence. By close co-operation with teachers and when they are given worksheets in advance, classroom assistants are able to assist students' progress in helpful ways.
- 143 Progress at Key Stage 4 is good. It was very good in one lesson when students worked in pairs to prepare presentations to the rest of the class. The quality of detailed comments on the 'coursework progress' sheets is enabling most students across the ability range to make good progress from the clear guidance received. The well maintained files of many students are helping their rate of progress. In individual lessons, progress is usually good as much work is covered, although the lowest attainers struggled to make notes during a video in one lesson.
- 144 The students' responses at both key stages are good; they are never less than satisfactory. Behaviour is good and most want to learn. Some students are content to let others answer questions, but there is a co-operative atmosphere in lessons. Notebooks and files are generally kept in good condition and students take pride in their work. In some lessons, students respond well to the teacher's lively style and well organised lessons. When working in pairs or groups, most talking is related to the tasks, and sometimes there is a positive buzz in the room.
- 145 Teaching at Key Stage 3 is good. It is never less than satisfactory. Teachers are knowledgeable and their enthusiasm for the subject contributes significantly to the quality of teaching. One highly effective lesson, involving students in groups, used them and sweets to represent proportionately the population and wealth of each continent. Much of the teaching is lively and lessons are briskly conducted, with much being achieved. High standards of behaviour are expected. Aims are clear and all lessons are well planned and coherently structured. Resources are adequate, but sometimes limited in depth. Although timing and pace are good, sometimes lessons with lengthy teacher instruction mean that the work is similar for students of all abilities in the class. In these lessons students' contributions tend to be from a minority and tasks can be too prescriptive, giving insufficient scope for the higher attainers. Such lessons lack variety of approaches. However, well devised field work exercises do encourage investigative work. The amount and quality of marking is variable. Homework is set regularly, though some is limited in scope. Teaching at Key Stage 4 is good. On occasions it is very good. There is expert teacher knowledge in one lesson containing a detailed and intellectually demanding explanation of plate margins on the earth's crust. This explanation was reinforced by good use of an overhead transparency. In a very good lesson on the same topic, very lively teaching, with excellent examples from everyday life, was combined with tasks that required students to prepare for and deliver presentations to the rest of the class in a short time period. Confident teachers are able to use topical matters to develop their teaching; hurricane Floyd being successfully discussed in one lesson. Resources at Key Stage 4 are extensive and well used, and skilful use is made of points made by students to develop discussion and stimulate thinking on issues such as

population problems. Marking by most teachers is thorough; it helps students' understanding and encourages high standards.

- 146 Geography has made satisfactory improvement in provision since the previous inspection and standards are slowly improving. The quality of teaching has improved and schemes of work have been sensibly updated. Fieldwork is a strength and recent investment in new equipment has been wise. Although assessment arrangements are thorough, the potential use of assessment as a tool to raise standards has yet to be exploited fully. The arrangements for the joint management of the subject generally work well, but there is a need for the development of management skills so that there are coherent strategies to monitor teaching and raise standards further.

## **History**

- 147 Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is just above expectations in terms of the numbers of students reaching the expected Level 5 and above, according to teachers' assessments. At the higher Level 6 and above, it is below, but not significantly so. GCSE results for 1998 are broadly in line with national averages in terms of A\* - C grades and the commendable 100% pass rate was above the national average. Moreover, the average grade score was above that for all maintained schools. Boys did particularly well as their A\*-C grades were above the average for all maintained schools. There were five A\*/A grades compared with none at the time of the last inspection. In 1999, the school reports that results are not quite so good, but A\*-C grades are still over 51% and all candidates have passed. Boys have not maintained their lead in A\*-C grades, with results reverting to the national pattern. The outlook for the current Year 11 is promising. After several years of wide fluctuations in results, the trend is of improving attainment.
- 148 From work seen during the inspection, standards at Key Stage 3 are in line with the national expectation. This is slightly below the teachers' assessments. It reflects the high level of new work in lessons early in the school year, and the extent of structured tasks with minimal writing in exercise books and worksheets, gives less scope for a wide range of writing. The grading of Year 9 assignments, on which teachers' assessments are based, is accurate although selecting from two assignments only may not provide a full picture of students' attainment.
- 149 In Year 9, students can extract information accurately and quickly from text, oral exposition and from a fast-moving video on the Industrial Revolution. They use historical terms accurately and have a secure understanding of chronology. They start with simple time-lines and sequence dates in Year 7 and develop these effectively through subsequent years to place accumulated and new information into context. Key elements observed in lessons during the inspection focused on knowledge, understanding and organisational skills, appropriate for a new school year. Students do not generally write at length in exercise books but, by the end of the key stage, some students are writing their assignments in coherent and purposeful prose. Writing skills are a relative weakness. Many students, including some with special educational needs, have difficulties in organising and recording their historical knowledge on paper.
- 150 The standard of work seen in lessons and in students' files in Years 10 and 11 is in line with expectations at this stage of their GCSE course. Students in Year 10 acquire a basic overview of social, political and economic life in Russia after only a couple of lessons. They can explain what an autocracy is and use historical terms such as 'civil service' and 'middle classes' appropriately. Higher attaining students can link causes clearly as in written accounts of Hitler's strategies in the battlefield. They can evaluate outcomes of events, clearly showing their effects. Year 11 students can detect bias, understand the concept of propaganda and recognise its usefulness as in maintaining morale after Dunkirk. They make accurate notes independently. However, some have difficulties organising their writing and do not appear to plan. Higher attaining students rarely use imaginative adjectives in their writing. Reading skills are at least satisfactory, progressing as students move up the school. Students rarely mis-spell historical terms, but everyday words like 'cities' and 'married' are inaccurate across a range of exercise books. Some students use computers to produce attractive and well presented research projects, such as on the Romans in Year 7, but the use of information technology is unsatisfactory overall.
- 151 Progress is good overall. Students at Key Stage 3 are making progress in line with expectations and those studying for GCSE make good progress. Progress within lessons was less evident than that over time, due to the introductory nature of work observed at the start of a school year. Progress in one Year 7 lesson was good because students participated in tasks that involved each person representing a historical event, and arranging him or herself in correct order of sequence. Some students managed to do this without help. By Year 8, higher attaining students are learning to make their own notes and students of average ability

can appreciate that there are several different reasons why Henry VIII wanted a divorce. Lower attaining students contribute to oral work and most cope with the fewer writing demands on worksheets geared to meet their needs. Students in Years 10 and 11 make good progress. Higher attaining students in Year 11 can detect more subtle propaganda, such as music chosen to accompany newsreels in wartime. Students of average ability grasp the basic ideological concepts of Marxism in a single lesson, helped by playing an imaginative game of capitalists and workers. Some students of lower attainment achieve reasonable understanding of the struggle poor families had in pre-revolutionary Russia. Progress is best where students are actively involved in their own learning. It is less assured in both key stages when students just listen to teacher instruction, even when the listening is interspersed with questions. Students with special educational needs make satisfactory progress overall in Years 7 to 9. Those who have additional support in lessons make good progress. At times support is not always available to these students when it is needed. These students make good progress at Key Stage 4, as confirmed by the 100 per cent pass rate in GCSE examinations.

- 152 Students' response is good overall, more consistently so at Key Stage 4. Most behave well although there is some silly behaviour by a minority of boys in Year 8. Students take care with presenting their work and use their personal organisers to record their homework carefully. They adhere to good work habits and settle quickly to tasks. At Key Stage 3, some students lose concentration when required to listen to teacher explanations, but enjoy being involved in learning, such as reading aloud around the class or working in pairs. At Key Stage 4, however, students in some classes seem to be content to be passive, while in others, there is lively participation.
- 153 Teaching is of good quality, more consistently so at Key Stage 4, and reflecting the pattern of students' progress. The acquisition of knowledge and understanding is a relative strength of students because specialist knowledge is a teacher strength, as is good planning founded on well developed schemes of work. There is consistency in the department with regard to establishing good work habits, good behaviour, quick and regular checks on understanding and no time wasting in lessons. All these promote students' learning from the start of Year 7 and bring rewards in the students' GCSE results. Some methods used are more effective than others; video clips and questions work better with students than teacher instruction, active participation in lessons better than heavily teacher-directed lessons. Homework tasks are geared to consolidating class work, with some imaginative tasks, as in giving advice to the Tsar before the outbreak of revolution in 1917. Students learn their source analysis skills well because teachers provide them with a wide range of materials including attractive books, reproduced quotes and cartoons, and good quality worksheets. However, teachers do not usually inform students of their current attainment levels, nor involve them in self-assessment nor provide them with clear targets and specific guidance as to how to reach a higher level. The main weakness of teaching is insufficient step-by-step guidance for students at an early stage about how to record what they know and think in sentences, then in paragraphs and finally in planned, extended writing.
- 154 The department is well led and efficiently managed. Good progress has been made in most of the issues from the last report and there is a commitment to on-going improvement. History makes an appropriate contribution to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development through the study units chosen. Teachers make the best of poor accommodation in separate buildings with many problems including leaking roofs in winter, resulting smelly carpeting, poor acoustics and cold. This affects the quality of learning for students, and contributes to the low uptake of history at Key Stage 4 which is a concern of the department.

### **Modern foreign languages**

- 155 Standards of attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 is average and the number of students achieving grades A\*-G is broadly in line with the national average. In 1998, 96.9 per cent of students achieved grades A\*-G in French compared to a national figure of 98.1 per cent. In German 95.9 per cent achieved A\*-G compared with a national figure of 98.4 per cent. In 1999, the percentage achieving A\*-G in French was 97.0 and in German all students achieved A\*-G grades. The number of students achieving A\*-C in the GCSE examination is well below average as only 14.4 per cent achieved these grades in French compared with a national figure of 41.3 per cent. In German, the figures are similar with 19.5 per cent achieving A\*-C in 1998 compared to a national figure of 48.1 per cent. The school enters a larger proportion of its students than the national figure for German and a smaller proportion for French, which has had an effect on the results. There has been a steady increase in the numbers achieving the higher grades since the last inspection. In 1999, 17.8 per cent achieved A\*-C grades in French and 25.8 per cent in German. The difference in grades achieved by boys and girls reflects the national picture where girls outperform boys.

- 156 In work seen during the inspection, attainment in both languages is in line with expectations at the end of Key Stage 3 and below expectations at the end of Key stage 4. Most students understand several sentences on a variety of topics such as shopping for clothes and professions and write or speak using sentences which are simple in structure and register. Higher attaining students are heavily dependent on structured support to produce accurate work. Many students with special educational needs attain levels which are above national expectations but more able students rarely progress beyond Level 4 and this is below the standard expected nationally. Students are better at listening than at speaking, reading or writing. By the end of Key Stage 3, most students ask and answer questions on topics such as holidays, school and the local environment and give basic opinions. Pronunciation and intonation are generally good as students are imitating a good model from the teacher. Only a few higher attaining students in Year 8 French or German lessons are confident in answering in longer sentences or using more complex grammatical structures.
- 157 Students make satisfactory progress in both key stages. By the end of Key Stage 3 most students, including those with special educational needs, have progressed in their ability to use French or German in everyday situations including talking about their weekend or school. However, the higher attainers are not able to do so with any great spontaneity or fluency and this constrains their progress. By the end of Key Stage 4, students have improved in their ability to understand and give information about themselves and the topics have become more complex, involving issues such as smoking and living a healthy lifestyle. Higher attaining students, however, do not make sufficient progress in their ability to speak and write confidently in a range of situations using a variety of tenses or more complex sentences. Students with special educational needs continue to make satisfactory progress in their ability to understand a wider range of topics.
- 158 Students' attitudes are good at both key stages. They behave well and respond courteously to teachers and each other. Most students concentrate well on the tasks set and there is a positive attitude to learning languages. Students behave well in the majority of lessons. Very few students take initiatives or any responsibility for their learning as there are very few opportunities to do so. They rarely use dictionaries without being prompted and do not have well developed strategies for working independently of the teacher.
- 159 The quality of teaching seen during the inspection at both key stages was satisfactory. Teachers have a good command of their subject, especially when teaching their first language. French and German are used well to give instructions in the classroom and this has a noticeable effect on students who have developed good pronunciation. There were good examples seen of imaginative use of the overhead projector and homework is set regularly and supports the learning. In lessons with a brisk pace, students achieved better quality as well as quantity of work. In lessons where poor teaching was seen, this was due to tasks being pitched at the wrong level and too long being spent on explaining tasks to students. Lessons are not always planned to offer activities which will stretch the more able. The range of teaching styles is limited and the opportunity to work collaboratively or on longer projects is not a regular feature of classroom practice. There are limited opportunities to work from authentic materials or read more extensively and the use of information technology is in its infancy.
- 160 The management of the department is satisfactory. Relationships are good and staff follow a common scheme of work. The scheme of work outlines topics to be covered but it does not identify in sufficient detail tasks that can lead to more extensive use of language and so planning for progression is weak. There is little analysis of examination results or comparisons with national or local trends and consequently there are too few targets set for students, particularly higher attainers. The method of recording the progress that students make is inconsistent and the reports are not of a high quality. The department has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection. The numbers of students achieving A\*-C, particularly boys, is still low but is rising consistently. There is no evidence of poor behaviour in low ability classes and teachers now all teach in a suite of rooms with good access to the resource area.

## Music

- 161 The proportion of students achieving A\* to C grades at GCSE in music was broadly average in 1998, but numbers were very small. In 1999, numbers increased but the proportion achieving A\*-C grades is less than in the previous year. From the evidence of the inspection, students' attainment is below the national expectation at the end of both key stages. At Key Stage 3, most students listen attentively and contribute thoughtfully to discussion. Listening skills are generally appropriate but performing and composing skills are less well developed. Skills in rhythm, pulse, meter and pitch are often limited. In general, students can recognise the main features of musical notation but most find difficulty in interpreting detail. The quality of class singing is also underdeveloped, but Year 8 students sing in time and in tune when singing in

unison. Those students who play instruments, however, usually demonstrate a higher level of musical skill. This is particularly clear at Key Stage 4. At this level most students have understanding of musical structures and other musical elements and they listen attentively and perceptively. At Key Stage 4, the extent of students' musical knowledge varies widely as does the quality of their appraisal of music listened to. The appraisal and analysis of their own performances is often limited.

- 162 Students make unsatisfactory progress overall. Progress at Key Stage 3 is unsatisfactory for most students, but it is generally satisfactory at Key Stage 4. At Key Stage 3, opportunities for students to develop skills in performing and composing are constrained by insufficient time given in music lessons to practical activities. The development of skills in pitch, meter, pulse and rhythm is similarly constrained. There is some advance in musical knowledge, as students move through the school, but many find it difficult to retain knowledge that has little immediate practical use. Students with special educational needs also make limited progress because the content of lessons does not usually match their needs. At Key Stage 4, students with a wide spread of prior attainment opt onto the music course and most make satisfactory progress. In most lessons there are periods when students develop their musical skills and understanding through involvement in practical music making. At both key stages boys and girls make similar progress.
- 163 Students' response to music is mostly satisfactory, but sometimes unsatisfactory at Key Stage 3. It is good at Key Stage 4. At Key Stage 3, students come to music with good behaviour and interest but too often slow pace and too much attention to detail causes restlessness and lack of attention. On occasions, this disinterest can develop into less than satisfactory behaviour. When teaching is poor, behaviour is poor. Sometimes students lack urgency in their responses but when their imagination is engaged they respond with enthusiasm. At Key Stage 4, students are engaged by the subject and anxious to succeed. Most sustain their concentration for the duration of the lesson. Opportunities for students to take responsibility for their own musical activities are, however, limited in lessons at both key stages.
- 164 The quality of teaching is mostly unsatisfactory at Key Stage 3, but it is sometimes satisfactory and sometimes poor. At Key Stage 4, teaching is mostly satisfactory and sometimes good. Teachers have good musical skills and technical knowledge of the subject. Understanding of students' musical development and progress in the subject is less assured, however, and the work set is often misjudged. For similar reasons, expectations of students are often not well related to their levels of skill and understanding. The content of lessons is usually carefully prepared but aims, in terms of the skills and concepts to be acquired by the different levels of attainment in the class, are less clearly defined. In most lessons, too long is spent on exposition or on directed discussion and practical work is left to a brief period at the end of the lesson. Students have few opportunities to make their own musical decisions. Relationships are good in most lessons but content does not always help to retain attention for the whole period. In poor lessons the management of students is poor. Time is not sufficiently used as a teaching strategy. Generally, the pace of lessons is too slow, usually when an exposition or explanation moves off the point. Resources are used satisfactorily. Day-to-day assessments are made as part of the teaching process but they are not always systematically recorded. Lessons are carefully evaluated, but assessments are not used consistently to inform future planning or to set expectations for individuals. No homework was set during the lessons observed at Key Stage 3 and evidence indicates that it is rarely set. Homework is set regularly for students at Key Stage 4.
- 165 The provision for music meets the requirements of the National Curriculum at Key Stage 3 but the time allocation is limited and below the national average. There are arrangements for assessment but no criteria set out to support assessment of progress in the subject. The provision for music in extra-curricular activities is satisfactory. There is a band, a singing group and a pipe band. About 80 students have instrumental lessons.
- 166 Since the last inspection time for music has not increased and is still below average at Key Stage 3. GCSE music is now provided for in curriculum time. Teaching is still mostly unsatisfactory.

## Physical education

- 167 Recent GCSE results have shown steady improvement since the previous inspection so that by 1998, 44 per cent of candidates achieved A\* - C grades, closely approaching the national average. Results for girls have been generally consistent and close to the national average, whilst results for boys have fluctuated, although their performance has mainly been a reflection of their capabilities on entry to the course. The most recent examination results in 1999 have dipped to well below previous levels, again with girls achieving more highly than boys. Attainment elsewhere in physical education is generally in line with

expectations for both boys and girls. By the end of Key Stage 3, standards are mainly in line with expectations with a majority of students reaching expected standards. In Key Stage 4 attainment continues to reflect average standards overall. Students following the GCSE course are demonstrating average standards in both theory and practical, with a less notable difference between boys and girls than previous examination results suggest. Since the previous inspection, standards in Key Stage 3 have been consolidated, whilst some improvement has been made in Key Stage 4. Of particular significance are the improvements which have been made in the development of students' skills in officiating and coaching alongside individual and team sports.

- 168 Progress in physical education is satisfactory, including for those students with special educational needs, who make appropriate progress towards the targets set for them. In Key Stage 3, both boys and girls are making satisfactory progress, and this continues to be the case in Key Stage 4 in both the core programme and GCSE work. In some lessons the progress of students is constrained by a lack of opportunity to make choices and decisions for themselves and is often directly related to teaching which is too controlled.
- 169 Students are co-operative and behave well in physical education. Attitudes towards the subject are positive, with good levels of interest and enthusiasm, particularly in Key Stage 3. Students generally are well prepared for their lessons, bring appropriate equipment and kit and are keen to be involved in activities. Participation continues to be very good for boys in Key Stage 4, although non-participation by girls is a concern in some groups. In general, students work physically hard, listen well to advice from teachers and use it purposefully to improve their skills, for example, when developing partner motifs in dance in Year 8 and in refining handling and recycling skills in rugby.
- 170 The quality of teaching is satisfactory. Subject knowledge and understanding is secure. Lessons are effectively structured, although some are slow to get underway. Teaching styles are directive, particularly in some boys' groups, and allow insufficient opportunity for students to take responsibility for their learning. Other than in dance, too few lessons include students' involvement in planning and evaluating their activities. This issue was a concern in the previous inspection and has not yet been successfully tackled, especially in games activities where problem-solving approaches are under-developed. The more successful teaching combines good subject knowledge with high expectations of student response plus positive feedback and evaluation to encourage learning. Where this was the case, for example in Year 7 netball, Year 8 hockey and dance, and Year 10 GCSE theory work on components of fitness, students were strongly on task, concentrated well, were engaged by the work presented and, importantly, made good progress. Generally, relationships and discipline are good and, when underway, lessons are usually purposeful and busy. Homework is regularly set in GCSE work, although marking does not provide sufficient guidance for improvement.
- 171 Curricular planning is good and requirements for the National Curriculum are met at Key Stage 3, although the balance of time allocated to the programmes of study requires review, with games activities dominating students' experience. Provision at Key Stage 4 is satisfactory and provides sound opportunities for student choice and specialisation. Arrangements for assessment are developing well with the introduction of an on-going student profile which records attainment as they move through the school, linked to good self-assessment procedures. Annual reports to parents are less helpful, fulfilling statutory requirements, but providing little guidance to support improvement and progress.
- 172 Subject leadership is satisfactory and day-to-day administration is sound, although routines and policies are not always consistently delivered. Procedures for monitoring the work of the department are not yet in place. Subject development planning is secure, but responsibilities are not widely shared and there is a lack of rigour in the identification and allocation of training. Facilities for physical education are satisfactory and are supplemented by the use of off-site facilities. Limitations include the very small gymnasium and changing rooms. Current arrangements for changing are unsatisfactory and do not make maximum use of available facilities. Resource provision is satisfactory and equipment is properly maintained. Risk assessment procedures are well carried out. With welcome support from non-specialist colleagues, the department ensures a range of competitive and recreational extra-curricular opportunities for boys and girls which are popular, well supported and which enable some to achieve high standards.

## **PART C: INSPECTION DATA**

### **SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE**

- 173 The school was inspected by a team of 13 inspectors who spent a total of 53 days in the school. The inspection took place during September 1999 in the second week of the school year. Year 7 students were very new to the school and teachers had many classes which were new to them. Inspectors observed 167 lessons and visited tutor periods, assemblies, extra-curricular activities and the general life of the school. A total number of 272 hours was spent on these activities.
- 174 Interviews were held with six students from each year group. Informal discussions were held with other students throughout the inspection.
- 175 Discussions were held with all members of the senior management team and teachers with responsibilities. All teachers were given feedback on the quality of their teaching.
- 176 The written work of six students in each year was examined, reflecting high, average and lower attaining students. Subject inspectors also examined work in their own subjects.
- 177 Other material and documents provided by the school were also viewed. A discussion was held with three members of the governing body. Written submissions from parents and local community groups were also considered. Comments made by approximately 30 parents who attended a meeting with the registered inspector before the inspection were taken into account. Questionnaires returned by 68 parents were analysed.



## DATA AND INDICATORS

### Student data

	Number of students on roll (full-time equivalent)	Number of students with statements of SEN	Number of students on school's register of SEN	Number of full-time students eligible for free school meals
Y7 – Y11	922	50	206	201

### Teachers and classes

#### Qualified teachers (Y7 – Y11)

Total number of qualified teachers (full-time equivalent):	49.76
Number of students per qualified teacher:	18.17:1

#### Education support staff (Y7 – Y11)

Total number of education support staff:	20
Total aggregate hours worked each week:	594

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes:	76.6
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Average teaching group size:	KS3	24
	KS4	23

### Financial data

Financial year:	1998
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	£
Total Income	2035942
Total Expenditure	2022870
Expenditure per student	2122.63
Balance brought forward from previous year	32121
Balance carried forward to next year	45193

## PARENTAL SURVEY

Number of questionnaires sent out:

932

Number of questionnaires returned:

68

Responses (percentage of answers in each category):

I feel the school encourages parents to play an active part in the life of the school

I would find it easy to approach the school with questions or problems to do with my child(ren)

The school handles complaints from parents well

The school gives me a clear understanding of what is taught

The school keeps me well informed about my child(ren)'s progress

The school enables my child(ren) to achieve a good standard of work

The school encourages children to get involved in more than just their daily lessons

I am satisfied with the work that my child(ren) is/are expected to do at home

The school's values and attitudes have a positive effect on my child(ren)

The school achieves high standards of good behaviour

My child(ren) like(s) school

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly disagree
18	65	15	3	0
49	45	6	0	0
25	46	26	3	0
20	57	20	2	2
22	57	12	9	0
28	60	10	1	0
15	75	10	0	0
19	63	4	10	3
19	58	21	1	0
22	62	12	4	0
22	57	18	3	0

### Other issues raised by parents

Frequent use of supply teachers is seen as a problem especially in English although parents acknowledge that there is some effective teaching in English. Parents have a perception that the school has less money than other local schools and report poor library resources, insufficient text books and fewer computers. They value the school making a counsellor available for students, trips abroad and the work that students do in the local community.

### Summary of responses

Parents feel very positive about the school's values and attitudes, involvement of students in activities outside normal lessons and they find it easy to approach the school with problems.

They are less satisfied with the work students have to do at home and how the school keeps them informed of students' progress.