

INSPECTION REPORT

**Bishop Ramsey
Church Of England Voluntary Aided
Secondary School**

Ruislip, Middlesex

LEA area: Hillingdon

Unique reference number: 102429

Headteacher: Mr M Udall

Reporting inspector: Mr I Benson
2739

Dates of inspection: 26th February – 2nd March 2001

Inspection number: 191018

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Voluntary Aided
Age range of pupils:	11 – 18 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Hume Way Ruislip Middlesex
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	The Reverend David Coleman
Date of previous inspection:	April 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
2739	Mr I Benson	<i>Registered inspector</i>		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development; How well does the school care for its pupils? How well is the school led and managed?
9931	Mrs M J Kerry	<i>Lay inspector</i>		The school's results and pupils' achievements; How well are pupils taught? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
12844	Mr M Saunders	<i>Team inspector</i>	English; English as an additional language.	
6044	Mr R Perkins	<i>Team inspector</i>	Mathematics.	
20243	Dr D Benstock	<i>Team inspector</i>	Science.	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils
31685	Mrs V Girling	<i>Team inspector</i>	Art.	
10561	Mrs A Fraser	<i>Team inspector</i>	Design and technology.	
27368	Mr M Merchant	<i>Team inspector</i>	Geography.	The Sixth Form.
25744	Mr T Osgerby	<i>Team inspector</i>	History.	
8052	Mr K McKenzie	<i>Team inspector</i>	Information technology.	
7636	Mr A Sinah	<i>Team inspector</i>	Modern foreign languages.	
12276	Mr T Payne	<i>Team inspector</i>	Music.	
18888	Ms J Boulton	<i>Team inspector</i>	Physical education; Equal opportunities.	
27803	Mr J Clarke	<i>Team inspector</i>	Special educational needs.	

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

This 11-18, mixed, split-site Church of England Voluntary Aided comprehensive school of 1166 pupils is situated between Ruislip and Eastcote in the north of the London borough of Hillingdon. The school attracts pupils from a wide area and is regularly over-subscribed. The socio-economic profile shows that more pupils come from advantaged than disadvantaged households and 3.3 per cent [well below average] are eligible for free school meals. The vast majority of pupils are white: 8.7 per cent come from ethnic minority backgrounds. 1.3 per cent of pupils [above average], who are fluent in English, come from homes that have English as a second language. A below average proportion of pupils [13.9 per cent] is on Stages 1-4 of the special needs register: 1.7 per cent [broadly average] has Statements of special educational needs. Pupils' attainment on entry to the school varies, but is generally above average.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This very good school is well led and managed and provides good value for money. The school has increased in effectiveness, as its well-conceived strategy for improvement has been well implemented. Pupils are well taught and standards are well above the national average. Their personal development is well supported through a good quality curriculum that is complemented by a wide range of learning opportunities, visits, exchanges and extra-curricular activities. The quality of teaching and learning and standards are good and are particularly high in the Sixth Form.

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

- Standards reached by pupils at 14, 16 and 18 years are well above national averages
- The quality of teaching and learning is good in Years 7 to 11 and very good in the Sixth Form
- Very good leadership and management are provided by the governors, headteacher and his colleagues
- Pupils' attitudes and relationships are very good, and their behaviour is never less than good
- The curriculum is of good quality and offers very good support for pupils' personal development
- Parents think very highly of the school and are justified in doing so

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

Although no major weaknesses are identified, the following are areas that need some improvement and are already part of the school's development plan:

- Devise and implement a more coherent cross-curricular approach to literacy
- Devise and implement a more coherent cross-curricular approach to numeracy
- Further implement the cross-curricular information and communications technology programme
- Share good practice in teaching and learning across the curriculum.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Since the last inspection in April 1996 very good progress has been made in school improvement. Both the governing body and staff show a high commitment to further improvement. Standards have continued to rise at Key Stages 3 and 4 and in the Sixth Form. The senior management team has been restructured and responsibilities clearly defined. This has enabled the implementation of a highly effective systematic programme of monitoring and evaluating all aspects of the school's work, including teaching. The programme also involves heads of subjects in observing lessons, sharing good practice, monitoring the attainment and progress of pupils and reviewing the impact of these on the raising of standards. Assessment has been improved and significant progress has been made in the analysis and use of data related to external tests and examination results. This has included the development of a programme of target setting for subjects and individual pupils. The annual academic tutoring day now includes a review, with pupils and their parents, of standards reached in core subjects as well as other matters.

There is now a high degree of consistency across both of the school's sites in terms of ethos, the operation of policies and the standards expected from pupils regarding, for example, behaviour, attendance and punctuality. Pupils from other cultures are valued and contribute their perspective to the school's work across the curriculum. All matters relating to health and safety have been addressed, some of them through a major rebuilding programme at the upper school site and, at lower school, through refurbishment. Dedicated teaching accommodation for special educational needs has been provided. With growth in the science provision, one additional laboratory is being constructed at lower school but a further one is also needed at upper school.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1998	1999	2000	2000
End of Key Stage 3 tests	A	A	A	B
GCSE examinations	A	A	A	B
A-Levels/AS-Levels	A	A	A	N/A

Key

well above average A

above average B

average C

below average D

well below average E

The school's results have been well above average at age 14, age 16 and post 16 for the last three years. In the case of post 16 results, this is an improvement since the last inspection in 1996. At the end of Key Stage 3, the improvement in results in core subjects is broadly in line with national trends. At the end of Key Stage 4, improvement in average points score in core subjects is above the national trend. Results for GNVQ Intermediate courses are well above average. Those for GNVQ Advanced courses show some fluctuation over time compared to national averages, but represent good achievement. There is also good achievement in the accredited vocational courses in Key Stage 4. Work seen in Key Stages 3 and 4 and in the Sixth Form supported the strong picture

presented by the results, with very good standards in mathematics, science, design and technology and geography. Work in the Sixth Form was of particularly good quality. Standards of literacy and numeracy are above average. Pupils who have special educational needs and English as an additional language make good progress. The school sets itself realistic but challenging targets, and the achievement of pupils is very good.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils' concentration and response to learning is impressive. They work hard in class, enjoy challenge, are well organised and their attitudes to the school as a community are very positive.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Pupils' behaviour is good. They show responsible attitudes as they move between sites and around both upper and lower school. They enjoy contributing to and benefiting from the school and supporting pupils younger than themselves.
Personal development and relationships	Pupils are mature, self-disciplined and confident. Their personal development is well supported within the curriculum, and relationships are of a high standard.
Attendance	Attendance is well above national averages. The monitoring of absence is very thorough and effective.

Pupils attitudes to school, their work and to learning are very good. They are committed to helping others as, for example, peer counsellors, members of the school council or through charity and community work. They show great responsibility in their movement about the school and between sites. Levels of fixed period exclusion are low. Levels of attendance are well above national averages and pupils benefit from public recognition for achieving full attendance over one or more years.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Teaching has improved significantly since the last inspection. In 5 per cent of lessons teaching was excellent, it was very good in 33 per cent and in 38 per cent it was good. Altogether, in 97 per cent of lessons teaching was satisfactory or better, with unsatisfactory teaching in five lessons, most of which was in Year 9. In mathematics and science, teaching is good in Key Stages 3 and 4 and the Sixth Form, and in English it is satisfactory in Key Stage 3 and good in Key Stage 4 and the Sixth Form. Teaching is good across the curriculum. It is very good in geography and design and technology, satisfactory in English and modern foreign languages, and good in all other subjects. Major strengths of the teaching are subject knowledge, high expectations and effective use of

homework. These strengths enable pupils to learn rapidly and in depth. The teaching of basic skills is good and the teaching of pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory. All pupils, including those with special educational needs and English as an additional language, make good progress. Gifted and talented pupils are identified and well supported to make good progress.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum is of good quality in both Key Stages 3 and 4 and in the Sixth Form. A wide range of well-supported extra-curricular activities, fieldwork, visits and exchanges complement teaching and learning within the taught curriculum.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Provision for pupils who have special needs is good. They are well taught and the support provided enables them to make good progress.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Provision for pupils with English as an additional language is good. They work well, benefit from the good curriculum offered and achieve good standards in their learning. All of these pupils have good standards in English.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	The provision to support pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good. Support for pupils' spiritual and moral development is very good and that for their social and cultural development is good. Pupils benefit greatly from the school's Christian ethos.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good provision is made to care for all pupils. The good quality programme of careers, personal, social and health education, as well as tutorial work, enables the needs of all pupils to be met.

The school work well with its parents and is fortunate in benefiting from their commitment to the school and its strong Christian ethos. The curriculum is of good quality and, at Key Stage 4, has used innovative methods of meeting the learning needs of all pupils, including those disappplied from aspects of the National Curriculum. The Sixth Form curriculum is an interesting mixture of GCE A / AS Level and GNVQ Intermediate and Advanced courses. As a result pupils at all levels of attainment, including those with English as an additional language and those who have special educational needs, benefit and are able to reach high standards in their work.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The head teacher and his senior colleagues provide very good quality leadership and management. There is a lucid educational rationale for the school's work and an ethos in which high standards are promoted and valued.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governing body is very effective. It has put in place clear aims and policies to guide its own decision-making and that of the leadership team.
The school's evaluation of its performance	There is now a systematic and coherent programme of school self-evaluation in place. Senior and middle managers play effective roles in its implementation.
The strategic use of resources	The strategic financial planning to support achievement of educational priorities is excellent. Clear targets in the development plan and effective targeting of all resources ensures that developments are successfully implemented.

The provision of staffing, accommodation and learning resources is satisfactory. There is a good match of staff to their current deployment and there are sufficient learning resources for the curriculum. Significant investment has been made in computers since the last inspection. However, as yet, insufficient use is made of information and communications technology to support pupils' learning across all subject areas. Accommodation in the upper school is of good quality and generally sufficient, although changes to the science curriculum have resulted in the need for another laboratory in upper school, in addition to one currently under construction on the lower school site. Whilst monitoring and evaluation programmes are very effective, currently, there is insufficient monitoring of teaching in English and performance data in science is not always well analysed, especially against benchmark and other indicators. The school applies the principles of best value very well.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High expectations, good teaching and good progress; • Staff encouraging and generous with time, helping pupils to become responsible; • Home values reflected by the school; • Good behaviour and effective action on bullying; • Homework about right; • Very positive and speedy response to complaints; • There has been much improvement since last inspection, especially the premises, due to the work of governors; • Good leadership and management. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Modern foreign languages; • Access to information and communications technology especially in Key Stage 3.

Inspection evidence fully supported the positive views of parents, particularly with regard to the quality of teaching, the strength of leadership and management, the positive attitudes and behaviour of pupils and the degree of improvement since the last inspection. As regards the use of information and communications technology, this is not yet fully embedded across the curriculum, and parents concerns in this area are justified. This is however, an area that the school is already actively working to improve. In modern foreign languages standards at Key Stage 4 are improving and the teaching is also improving. However, the school continues to monitor closely standards and quality in this area as part of its development plan.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1. Pupils' attainment on entry is above average overall. The school undertakes comprehensive testing of pupils soon after entry as part of its own value-added processes. This information supplements the patchy data received relative to Key Stage 2 from the large number of partner primary schools, and establishes a secure and consistent baseline against which later progress can be evaluated. These tests show that, although there are minor fluctuations year on year, a typical cohort on entry is above average, but with relatively few of the highest and lowest attaining pupils.
2. At age 14, pupils' results in National Curriculum tests are well above the national average for English, mathematics and science, and this has been sustained over the past three years. The trend in results over the past three years is broadly in line with the national trend. The picture is especially strong in mathematics, where nearly two-thirds of pupils achieved Level 6 or above in 2000, and in English, where the percentage attaining Level 6 is also well above average. In science, results for pupils attaining Level 6 are above average.
3. In comparison with similar schools, results in English are well above average, in mathematics they are above, but in science they are below average. Taken together, however, results for all three subjects are above average compared to similar schools. Both boys and girls are performing better than national averages in all core subjects over the past three years, but the better than average effect is more pronounced in boys' performance than in girls'. In other subjects, standards are at least in line with the average at the end of Key Stage 3, with well above average standards in geography and history, and above average in design and technology (DT) and modern foreign languages. In art and physical education (PE), standards are above expectations.
4. Standards of work seen give clear evidence of the source of these results. In the great majority of subjects, evidence from scrutiny of work and discussions with pupils show standards at the end of Key Stage 3 are at least above average. In mathematics and geography they are well above average. In information and communications technology (ICT) and music, standards are in line with the average. In the case of ICT, this represents good improvement since the last report, where this was an area of weakness. The good quality teaching in Key Stage 3, despite some minor weaknesses, ensures that all pupils maintain, and often improve, the standards that they were attaining on entry.
5. At age 16, pupils' results in GCSE examinations are well above average, as measured by the proportion of pupils gaining five or more Grades A*-C and five or more Grades A*-G, one or more Grades A*-G, and by the average points score. This strong picture has been sustained for three years. When compared with similar schools, results are still well above average in terms of five or more Grades A*-C and one or more Grades A*-G, although they are slightly weaker, but still above average, in terms of five or more Grades A*-G and of the average points score. Improvement in average points score in English, mathematics and science has been above the national trend, and there has been marked improvement in the number of one or more passes. As in Key Stage 3, the

good quality teaching, with its particular strengths in subject knowledge, systematic and productive use of homework, and high level of challenge offered to pupils, enables them to build upon and sustain the standards reached by age 14. The accredited vocational courses undertaken by some pupils in Key Stage 4 are only in their second year of operation but already all Year 11 pupils have achieved an accredited result, and almost all are working towards further qualifications.

6. As in Key Stage 3, standards of work seen in Key Stage 4 fully support the external examination results. In the majority of subjects, standards are above average; in PE, modern languages and ICT they are average, but in mathematics, science, DT and geography they are well above average.

7. Post 16 results present a strong picture, with the average points score for GCE A/AS levels well above average for the past three years. This is an improvement since the last inspection, when it was broadly in line. Inspection evidence, including scrutiny of work and discussions with pupils, confirms a picture of standards that are well above average. This is consistent with the very high quality teaching experienced in the Sixth Form, which enables pupils to develop skills of critical analysis, enquiry, and independent research.

8. Results in GNVQ Intermediate courses are also well above average. For GNVQ Advanced courses, results show fluctuations from above to below average, with below average performance over three years. These results, however, need to be interpreted in the light of small group sizes, which magnify fluctuations and also in terms of the good achievement of those students, who probably would not achieve an accredited result by any other means.

9. Standards of literacy and numeracy are above average. Pupils use numeracy across the curriculum confidently and effectively. In science, pupils determine lines of best fit correctly, read scales accurately and change the subject of scientific formulae successfully. In geography, they calculate the arithmetic mean and extrapolate trends in populations graphically, whilst in DT, pupils can calculate the torque and resolve moments of forces with a good degree of accuracy. Pupils speak confidently in discussion and in presentations, listen attentively and write fluently for different purposes. Where writing is well supported by writing frames, as in history, extended writing is produced across Key Stages 3 and 4 and in the Sixth Form. Within subjects, pupils are accustomed to use correct vocabulary and technical terms with understanding.

10. Most pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) attain the standards of which they are capable and make good progress. Sixth form students make very good progress. Pupils are tested for reading and spelling on entry and again after six months. Pupils who make the best progress are those who attend 'buddy reading' sessions, receive one-to-one teaching through a structured reading programme, or are involved in the Home / School support group. The vast majority of SEN pupils in Year 11 are entered for GCSE examinations, where many do better than expected, for example, in mathematics. However, the small group of pupils with the severest learning difficulties make the least progress, because they are taught in groups where not all pupils have SEN, and they receive insufficient, specialist, individual teaching.

11. Since the last inspection, the school has improved substantially its use of value-added data. There are now comprehensive systems for tracking the progress of every pupil and predicating grades across all subjects, enabling comparisons of performance to be made. This data indicates that the value added by the school is good with, for example, 85 per cent of current Year 11 pupils

achieving at or above expectations based upon baseline testing and Key Stage 3 results. There is monitoring of the performance of pupils, including by gender and ethnic group, which supports the good progress made by all pupils, including those with English as an additional language. The school is able to evidence the effective strategies it has in place, should the performance of any groups of pupils give cause for concern.

12. The achievement of pupils is very good. Lessons offer a high degree of challenge to all groups of pupils that lead to sustained and productive working. Pupils' own attitudes and their motivation mean that the pace is kept up through long timetabled lessons. Gifted and talented pupils are identified, and given suitably challenging work. The school currently has a focus on raising the proportion of the very highest grades. The achievement of Sixth Form pupils is especially strong, with pupils working in impressive depth in a wide range of subjects.

13. The school uses the data available to set realistic targets, founded in good knowledge of each cohort of pupils. In 2000, targets were slightly exceeded. For 2001, targets are lower, due to the nature of the intake. The process of target setting is securely based on past track record and should produce challenging but attainable targets year on year.

14. The school has successfully maintained the high standards seen at the last inspection in the main school. In the case of the Sixth Form, it has improved standards so that they are now well above average. This is good progress since the last inspection, and shows a clear link with the improved teaching profile.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

15. Pupils gain confidence, self-discipline and maturity as they move through the school. They are eager learners, concentrate and work with commitment and respond enthusiastically to the challenges offered in class. Relationships across the school are of high quality and are characterised by warmth and respect.

16. In over four-fifths of the lessons inspected, pupils' attitudes and behaviour were at least good. In just under a half of all lessons they were very good or excellent. This profile of pupils' response to the school and what it provides is maintained across Key Stages 3 and 4 and is particularly strong in the Sixth Form, where in well over two-third of lessons attitudes are very good or excellent. Pupils' display good attitudes in all subjects and very good attitudes in mathematics, science, DT and music.

17. Pupils show interest and enthusiasm in lessons and a willingness to be active participants in their learning. They respond eagerly to opportunities to contribute to lessons through question and answer sessions, group or pair work and show a genuine thirst for knowledge and the development of understanding in keenly conducted discussions. For instance, in a Year 7 science lesson, pupils listened attentively and confidently, and asked well-founded questions in order to clarify knowledge and develop understanding of the fertilisation process in animal and plant reproductive systems. In a Year 13 sociology lesson, pupils worked well in pairs, challenging and debating with each other as they analysed the strengths and weaknesses of theoretical constructs as they were applied to 18th century Calvinism. The results of these discussions showed the high level of interest, enthusiasm and commitment pupils have in their subject.

18. The pupils show great enthusiasm for target setting and the evaluation of their own performances. In discussion they highlighted how helpful written and oral comments assist them to improve their work, and how well defined targets encourage them to try harder to develop their understanding and skills in a subject. Pupils are clear how well they are doing in their work. This is especially the case in subjects where detailed written feedback is provided at the end of their assignments or, for example, in art and DT where artefacts are evaluated against agreed criteria. Even when the work has not reached a sufficiently high standard, pupils respond well to the challenge to improve both the quality and presentation of their work.
19. Many pupils were positive about the benefits to them of the annual academic tutoring day. In many subjects self-evaluation is used well and forms the basis of teacher-pupil discussions as well as for the setting of clearly defined targets. In the Sixth Form, the regular tutorial and guidance interviews enable goals to be set and strategies for their achievement to be agreed. Pupils find this process extremely helpful in planning their work and deciding on further and higher education courses.
20. Pupils who have SEN benefit from the school's ethos and high expectations. They enjoy their work, and are encouraged by the regular monitoring of their attainment and progress. They enjoy school, work very hard in lessons, make good progress and relish the opportunities to improve basic and other skills, as they increase in confidence and independence. Those with Statements of SEN benefit from working with their learning support assistant, and have very positive attitudes to learning: they enjoy being successful in many subjects.
21. Pupils' interest and involvement in the school is very high. Many older pupils act as role models and provide leadership in houses, the major Lent project, fund raising for charity work and in developing relationships between the school and the wider community. Pupils value the numerous opportunities to be involved in school life, through the extensive extra-curricular programme, the school councils and through fieldwork, cultural visits and exchanges. Many pupils benefit from the contribution that these kinds of involvement make to their personal development.
22. Throughout the school week, pupils move responsibly to lessons and between sites. In the upper school they do so with care and thought for others, as they become used to coping with narrow corridors and occasional over-crowding in the new main buildings. Their maturity is apparent as they make every effort to move quickly but carefully to reach their next lesson on time.
23. Behaviour is good. At break and lunch times pupils show great concern for others and relationships are generally good humoured and harmonious. Although at times there is some boisterousness in the lower school play ground, any incidents of bullying or aggressive behaviour are quickly and effectively tackled. There are a few occasions, however, when the behaviour of a small minority of pupils is unsatisfactory, especially when no adult is present, or when pupils become rude and intolerant, as in one Year 9 lesson where teaching was unsatisfactory. These instances are rare and unacceptable: they are dealt with quickly and effectively, using appropriate degrees of severity.
24. Pupils from ethnic minorities report very rare instances of racist behaviour – mainly comments – and feel that they have real opportunities to contribute to learning and benefit from membership of the wider school community. Similarly, sexist behaviour or comments are rare but are not tolerated within the school's inclusive ethos. Exclusion is infrequent and, in the past two years permanent exclusion has never been used. The school aims to help, support and counsel those that infringe

the code of conduct, using carefully managed periods of exclusion as a means of cooling things down and providing a fresh start to those who can benefit from such treatment.

25. Relationships across the school are of high quality. Pupils are well known and valued by their teachers, form tutors and senior members of staff. Parents and their children greatly value the personal commitment that staff members give to the pupils. This interest and concern contributes to many pupils becoming effective learners who are confident in asking questions, seeking clarification and exploring sensitive issues in a secure and well-managed environment. In an extremely well taught Year 11 mathematics lesson, for example, pupils enjoyed the opportunity to revise Pythagoras' Theorem, took part in serious and demanding discussion but were able to use banter and good humour when it was appropriate. Also in a very well taught Year 10 sex education lesson, pupils responded with sensitivity and appropriate technical vocabulary to the explicit material used within this mixed gender group.

26. Attendance is very good and is well above national averages. Authorised absence is well below national averages and unauthorised absence is in line with the average. The authorisation of absence is rigorously and consistently carried out across both lower and upper school. Registration is effectively and efficiently carried out. Given the nature of the site, internal truancy is carefully monitored and occurrences are rare. There were few occasions when pupils were late for lessons during the inspection.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

27. The quality of teaching is good, and has significantly improved since the last inspection. The proportion of unsatisfactory teaching has considerably reduced, and the amount of that which was very good and excellent has substantially increased. Overall, in 5 per cent of lessons teaching was excellent, in 33 per cent it was very good, and in 38 per cent it was good. Altogether, in 97 per cent of lessons the quality of teaching was satisfactory or better, with unsatisfactory teaching in 5 lessons. Teaching quality was slightly better in Key Stage 4 than in Key Stage 3, and the best quality teaching was in the Sixth Form. In the Sixth Form, teaching is very good. Of the lessons seen, in 6 per cent the quality of teaching was excellent, in 51 per cent it was very good, in 26 per cent it was good and in the remainder teaching was satisfactory. In well over half the lessons seen teaching was, therefore, very good or excellent.

28. Teaching is of good quality across most of the curriculum. In the majority of subjects, over 80 per cent of the teaching was good, very good or excellent. All of the teaching seen in social sciences was of very good quality. In English and modern foreign languages teaching was satisfactory. Teaching in personal, social and health education (PSHE) showed more variability than other areas: while the majority of it was good or very good, a very small amount was unsatisfactory.

29. There has been very good progress on the key issue for action reported at the last inspection. Particular improvement is evident in the opportunities for collaborative work and for pupils to take responsibility within their own learning. Pupils have the opportunity to evaluate their work through well-used plenary sessions, and through their contributions to annual reports and the newly introduced academic tutorial day. Assessment is now used well to inform future planning in almost all subject areas. It is also used at a whole-school level to identify pupils in need of extra support or an alternative curriculum, so that action can be taken in good time. The teaching and learning working group has given effective support to improving teaching, by offering a very valuable forum for staff to reflect on their own and others' practice, and by providing specific training.

30. Teachers' subject knowledge is a major strength of the teaching. Because of the grasp that teachers have of their material, they are able to give authoritative expositions, which hold pupils' interest and make them aspire to high standards of knowledge themselves. Teachers are also able to use their depth of subject knowledge to respond effectively to individual pupil queries as they arise, as in a Year 8 mathematics lesson on using the graphical functions of calculators. Very occasionally, exposition is overlong and interest flags.

31. In many lessons, a well-planned variety of activities keep pupils' attention and interest. As the lesson proceeds they systematically and readily acquire knowledge, skills and understanding. Amongst the many good examples of such teaching was a Year 9 geography lesson on soils and climate, where pupils worked very effectively in groups interpreting data sheets, guided by well-directed questions. In the best lessons, the rate of acquisition of knowledge, skills and understanding is very high.

32. A significant strength of teaching is the high expectations that teachers have, in terms of pupils' acquisition of subject knowledge and skills, and their ability to analyse, argue and improve their own understanding and competence. The brisk pace of the vast majority of lessons means that pupils are expected to move on quickly. They respond with a high degree of effort, commitment, concentration and excitement. Particularly good use is therefore made of time. A good example of such a lesson was seen in the teaching of Year 10 art, where the teacher's clear recap, demonstration and emphasis on time management and working quickly ensured that pupils kept up a brisk pace, and all made evident progress.

33. Resources are used well to support learning, with the exception of ICT, which is weak in most subject areas. Although standards in ICT have improved since the last inspection, they still have some way to go, and improvement in this area is not currently supported by cross-curricular use of ICT. It is however, beginning to be included in departmental planning.

34. The teaching of basic skills is good across the school, but it is not part of a coherent strategy for literacy and numeracy. It is better supported in some departments than in others. In DT, particularly good strategies are used to support literacy, well linked to independent learning, whilst in geography pupils are well supported in writing for, and talking to, a variety of specified audiences. In history, pupils make good use of writing frames to shape and structure their writing. Subject-specific terminology is explained by teachers and opportunities for its use carefully planned. In art, lists of key words are displayed in teaching rooms and the quality of reflection in oral and written evaluations was noted. The review each term of pupils' progress sets targets for development in the areas of writing, reading, speaking and listening. The teaching of numeracy is satisfactory, with work in departments supporting the use of numeracy. There were some good examples of the application of measurement and calculation, for example in DT in Key Stage 4, but elsewhere methods are still developing towards those outlined in the national strategy.

35. Most lessons are thoroughly and effectively planned, and this results in good use of time in the 70-minute lessons. Pupils work productively, with sustained interest and concentration, and produce plenty of work of good quality. Infrequently, the pace slows and pupils lose momentum and concentration. When this occurs, it is usually related to planning that is insufficiently detailed, or not focused closely enough on learning objectives. Where planning is less detailed, this also means that teaching, whilst it is satisfactory, does not move pupils' learning on as fast as it might, as was the case in a number of English lessons. In such lessons, pupils' own attitudes and motivation often ensure that learning still proceeds at a good rate.

36. Assessment of pupils, through probing questioning or other methods is well carried out. The weakness in the use of assessment to inform future planning mentioned in the last report has been

addressed well, although there is some work still to do in some subject areas, such as English. The identification of gifted and talented pupils means that they make good progress in their learning, as do pupils who have English as an additional language. The provision for gifted and talented pupils at Key Stage 4 is good and is strong in science. Marking is often helpful in showing pupils how to improve, although it is occasionally insufficiently detailed in English, and lacking in comments supporting improvement in science.

37. Teachers use homework very effectively. The work set follows logically from the lesson, and encourages pupils to undertake tasks independently, which will improve their research and enquiry skills, as well as reinforce learning in class. The monitoring of homework through link books is thorough.

38. The teaching of pupils who have SEN is satisfactory in Years 7 to 11. Teachers are aware of each pupil's needs from the information provided by the school's SEN co-ordinator, and work is generally planned to take into account the learning targets set in individual education plans. SEN pupils are taught mainly in groups of similar attainment. The most effective teaching within these groups occurs where pupils' specific needs are identified as being different from the non-SEN pupils in the set, and when the work they are given is interesting, challenging but within their capability. Teaching is weakest when the set is taught as a whole class - a weakness identified in the previous report - or where the work is uninteresting and uninspiring, or where weak management of pupils' behaviour allows disruptive pupils to disturb the work of the others. Examples of such unsatisfactory teaching were seen in Year 9. Very little use is made of ICT in the teaching of SEN pupils.

39. The quality of teaching is highest in the Sixth Form. Teachers' impressive subject knowledge, combined with their ability to put across complex concepts in an accessible way, help pupils engage with the work. The structure of lessons, in which pupils are expected to analyse, evaluate and make a full contribution, encourages high levels of intellectual and creative effort. The very good relationships that many staff members have with their pupils mean that discussions are very mature. A good example of this was a Sixth Form English lesson on 'The Country Wife' where both pupils and teacher were able to show a frank enjoyment of the subject matter, whilst having a thoughtful and analytical discussion about the play. Sixth Form teaching for students with SEN is good, and they make very good progress.

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

40. The quality and range of opportunities within the curriculum across the school is good. There has been a recent revision to curriculum policy, currently in draft form, which confirms the provision in meeting the needs of pupils across the attainment range, providing a curriculum that is broad and balanced, whilst enabling a measure of individual choice. Courses are designed to be relevant to modern society, including a secure provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. In both Key Stages 3 and 4, the curriculum fulfils the statutory requirements. Overall time allocation is satisfactory and is also made greater in Years 10 to 13 by extending one school day each week by one lesson. The statutory requirement is fully met for religious education (RE) in Key Stages 3 and 4. Currently RE is available for some but not all pupils in the Sixth form: this provision will be reinstated from the beginning of the next academic year.

41. In Key Stage 3, all pupils follow a basic curriculum, which provides courses in all subjects of the National Curriculum and RE. In ICT, there is a mixture of discrete lessons and cross-curricular provision across all subjects. While this enables National Curriculum requirements for ICT to be met, cross-

curricular experiences need to be further developed. Drama is taught within English. All pupils choose one modern foreign language from French, Spanish and German, and enrichment is available once a week after school. National Curriculum requirements for modern languages are met.

42. In Key Stage 4, all pupils follow a core curriculum, including PSHE and PE, and have further choice of three full course and one short course GCSE options. Higher-attaining pupils in Year 10 now have the opportunity to study three separate sciences, sacrificing one option choice, although the majority follow the dual award. A small number of pupils follow the science course leading to a single award. Pupils electing for a short GCSE course in PE may later elect to follow the long course, but with no increase in time. Some pupils are disapplied from areas of National Curriculum, in languages and DT, to attend a work related skills course at a local college or pursue RSA courses in media studies and travel and tourism. This provision enables disapplied pupils to successfully gain accreditation. All pupils follow a course in ICT as part of the PSHE programme, but also can opt for GCSE long or short courses. The requirements for ICT are met but cross-curricular experiences need further development.

43. The Sixth Form curriculum offers a wide choice of academic and a growing array of vocational courses. It caters well for the vast majority of pupils and allows effective progression from learning in Year 11. Most courses have recruited well and numbers in the vast majority of subjects are viable. A small number of pupils continue their study of modern languages through the local consortium arrangements. About two thirds of pupils in Year 11 choose to stay on at school beyond the age of 16 years and almost all are able to follow a mixture of courses, although none of them includes a combination of vocational and GCE A / AS Level courses. The school has successfully broadened the subject and course programmes of pupils in Year 12 in line with the new curriculum requirements. The vast majority of pupils taking academic courses are taking four GCE AS Level courses. There is a flexible interpretation of requirements for entry to two-year courses in the sixth form. The school is responsive to particular circumstances and through counselling and monitoring tailors course programmes to individual needs. Overall, the curriculum provides a wide range of opportunities for all pupils who receive effective guidance on their choices. A rich environment is provided for Sixth Form pupils' personal development including general studies, individual review of attainment and progress, as well good quality careers guidance and counselling.

44. Pupils who have SEN have full access to the National Curriculum and all statutory requirements are met. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 benefit from a number of initiatives, including the use of a very effectively structured literacy initiative, as well as the 'buddy reading' support and the home-school partnership. In both Years 10 and 11 the curriculum is enhanced by an Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) course, a life-skills course and a link with Uxbridge College. All these courses help pupils gain worthwhile certification as they move through the school.

45. Good provision for literacy and numeracy is made across the curriculum in many subject areas. In every case, provision is an aspect of teaching and learning and is not a discrete aspect of work with pupils. The development of policies for literacy and numeracy are clear priorities in the current school development plan. However, the fact that attainment in both of these aspects of basic

skills is good is incidental. To enable further improvement in standards, a framework for further development of cross-curricular literacy and numeracy would be of assistance in all subjects. Currently the impact of literacy and numeracy strategies on standards in subjects is neither monitored nor evaluated.

46. Extra-curricular provision is very good. A wide range of learning opportunities is offered at lunchtime and after school. These include very active music and drama provision, computer clubs, oversubscribed chess clubs, numerous sports teams and subject workshops and support groups. Revision opportunities are provided after school and a variety of residential opportunities, visits and exchanges are arranged to enhance the pupils' experience. Two activities days are organised when pupils in Years 7 to 9 undertake extra-mural project work in a variety of locations: these extend their learning skills. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 have a concentrated input from careers specialists.

47. Links with the local community are very good. Various organisations, including the police, churches and Samaritans for example, provide a valuable input to assemblies. Charity groups visit and value the support they receive from the school. Sixth Form community service extends to visiting primary schools and elderly peoples' homes. The Friends of Bishop Ramsey, a mixed age group, visit the elderly residents in the area and invite them back to school. Some primary schools send Year 6 pupils for taster sessions, but comprehensive liaison is difficult with so many partner schools. Highly productive links with Uxbridge College are firmly in place and local businesses are beginning to increase their involvement beyond that of providing work experience.

48. The school offers a very good level of careers education and guidance. Much of this comes through timetabled PSHE, interviews with careers advisors and work experience programmes. A very well planned careers programme is firmly established and taught well by a small group of teachers in Years 9 to 11. Subject areas are beginning to contribute more directly to careers education with relevant displays and materials such as those seen in the social sciences department. The careers section of the library in the upper school is not yet fully established but there are very good resources available in the careers room and close links with the careers service ensures that pupils and their parents have access to good careers guidance. The new careers office and interview room provide excellent facilities for pupils to find and receive information. Year 11 pupils spend two weeks on work experience and those on vocational courses in the Sixth Form have further career related work experience in Year 12. Arrangements for these placements are made through the Hillingdon Education and Business Partnership: it provides a high quality service to the school. There is a two-day local industry project for pupils in Year 10 that provides them with the opportunity to link with local businesses and experience interviews and work-related learning.

49. The school has a very good programme of PSHE. Pupils from Years 8 to 11 have a dedicated lesson each week taught by a small team of specialist teachers. There is a comprehensive department handbook and the scheme of work is well planned and monitored. It includes provision for teaching on drugs, relationships, making decisions, first aid, human rights and careers. Sex education is very well and sensitively taught throughout the programme. There are a variety of outside agencies involved in teaching, for example, drugs education. Teachers adopt a good range of teaching styles. These approaches encourage pupils to work together, make the lessons interesting and provide relevance for pupils of all ages and stages of their development. Form tutors continue PSHE teaching during pastoral time, especially in Year 7 and in the Sixth Form, where pupils benefit from a programme of visiting speakers. Links between the pastoral system and the dedicated PSHE programme are good and an improvement from those reported in the previous inspection. Links are also made through subject contributions. During inspection week, for instance, the topic of bullying was thoroughly explored in a Year 8 English lesson.

50. The school has an equal opportunities policy. The school's ethos and the staff concern for individual pupils provide a good environment in which all pupils can succeed. There is an equal opportunities working party led by the SEN co-ordinator and there are associated policies on, for instance, anti-racism, that raise staff awareness to current issues. Raising pupils' awareness to equal opportunities issues forms a major part of the aims of the PSHE programme. Units of work include racism, human rights and gender issues. Gender analysis of examination results is available, with good practice in history and DT, for example. Such data is used well to inform curriculum planning. DT seeks effectively to reduce the traditional gender stereotyping and girls perform very well in 'systems control', an atypical choice for girls.

51. The provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good. The school stresses the Christian ethos in its prospectus and parents are asked to provide pupils with a bible and a hymnbook on entry to the school. There are daily acts of collective worship with a strong spiritual content, including hymns and prayers. There is a regular Eucharist for pupils that marks and celebrates the values that underpin the school and its ethos. Community projects, like helping the elderly in the locality, are seen as part of the school's spiritual commitment. The subjects of the curriculum emphasise spiritual values, for example, the study of symbolism in art is closely linked to developing understanding of Christian values.

52. The school promotes very strong moral values. The importance of good behaviour is stressed in all parts of school life. Moral challenges are prominently displayed on walls round the school, inviting pupils to think about their actions. There are many impressive 'anti-bullying' posters in classrooms. Year and form assemblies often present moral issues, such as the importance of honesty, or the implications for humanity of environmental change. The PSHE programme tackles moral issues, such as sexual conduct, or drug taking. In the curriculum, most subjects pose moral questions such as the notion of fair play in PE and in geography pupils consider the effects of population growth.

53. The provision for the social development of pupils is very good. Within school, relationships are very good. Pupils work well together in lessons. They show respect for the ideas, values and outlook of others. Teachers show high levels of care and commitment and are good role models for their pupils. The pupils are confident that they can approach teachers for help, if they need it. There is a 'drop-in' centre in the lower school where pupils may go for confidential help, often from peer counsellors. Tutor groups elect their own member of the school council and they receive reports on issues raised at meetings. There is a very good range of extra-curricular activities in school, including academic help, sporting and musical activities, two thriving chess clubs and other opportunities to extend learning. There are good links with local industry, which supports pupils' development by coming into school and organising work experience. Many pupils belong to the 'Be our friend' group that is very active in charity work in the local community, organising such activities as helping the elderly at Christmas. In the lower school there is an impressive display of letters from local people thanking the pupils for their efforts. The school has also established good links with a community in Malawi and the pupils have raised money for equipment such as a grain mill, by carrying out sponsored activities.

54. The school has developed cultural activities since the last report and the provision is now good. Schemes of work emphasise equal opportunities and respect for other cultures and this is reflected in the teaching. As examples, there are multi-faith studies in RE and studies of other cultures in geography and history. In music, pupils study traditional culture from Africa, India and Indonesia. There are visits abroad organised by the modern languages, art and PE departments that widen pupils' educational experience and enrich their learning.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

55. This is an area of the school's work that is particularly strong. Practice is of very good quality in the educational and personal support and guidance which pupils are offered, as well as in the strategy and coherent procedures for monitoring their academic performance and personal development. The procedures for the assessment and monitoring of pupils' academic performance have improved considerably since the last inspection, as has the coherence of the pastoral programme to support pupils' personal development. This has culminated in the introduction of a very well thought out and systematic programme of target setting and the introduction of an academic tutoring day that involves staff, pupils and their parents. Procedures are effective for pupil induction and their transfer between lower and upper school and into further and higher education or training.

56. The monitoring and supporting of pupils' personal development is of very good quality. The heads of year have a regular programme of meetings with their tutor teams. This enables an effective monitoring strategy to be planned as part of the twice-weekly pastoral programme. All pupils are well known by their tutors and subject teachers: this results in good liaison between staff and the early identification of, and dealing with, any real concerns. The induction of Year 7 pupils is very effective. Great care is taken by tutors to ensure that each pupil is settling in well, learning their way around the school and is developing the essential organisational and study skills needed to be an effective learner.

57. The monitoring and supporting of academic progress is very good. The heads of year are highly effective in their monitoring role and take a strategic overview of the subject grades that are regularly supplied to them. Trends are analysed and discussed as they relate to groups or individual pupils. Form tutors continually monitor the progress made by pupils in their group. Pupils' link books are regularly scrutinised by form tutors as well as by senior team members as part of the monitoring process. Subject teachers, through their marking and oral feedback to pupils, provide targets to help each of them improve their work.

59. The introduction of an annual academic tutoring day, an innovation that was generally praised by pupils and their parents, has promoted a coherent approach to the analysis of performance data, academic monitoring and to the setting and review of targets. The school evaluates the effectiveness of this important event and its contribution to raising standards.

60. The procedures for identifying pupils who have SEN and for referring those with difficulties to the learning support department are satisfactory. The work of the school's support teachers and assistants is good but there is not enough of it, especially in Years 10 and 11. Support assistants are well qualified, know the pupils well and provide effective support within the classroom. Since the previous inspection, planning between subject teachers and support assistants has improved. There is a need for support teachers and assistants to provide the SEN co-ordinator with written information about the progress pupils make in lessons, so that this can be tracked across all their subjects. Individual education plans (IEPs) have improved since the previous report and now have many good features. They will be improved even further when more short-term attainable targets are incorporated and when specialist teachers use them to develop their own subject-specific learning targets. Parents are not yet consistently involved in the drawing up or review of IEP.

61. Procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour are effective. The code of conduct, written by pupils, the pastoral programme and lessons in personal, social and health education provide clear and effective guidance on the expectations regarding good behaviour. Behaviour is systematically

monitored, including that leading to exclusion. Procedures for monitoring and eliminating oppressive behaviour are very good. Bullying and other aggressive behaviour is rare, but where it occurs it is dealt with swiftly and effectively. In a Year 8 English lesson, pupils defined different types of bullying, the impact it had on victims and suggested strategies for dealing with it. Many of the ideas they explored demonstrated a good understanding of the hurt suffered by victims and the motivation of the perpetrators.

62. Pupils have a wide range of opportunities to benefit from and contribute to the school's work. Their enthusiastic involvement contributes positively to good standards of behaviour. Many pupils benefit from: their role as peer counsellor, 'buddy' reader or membership of the upper or lower school council, or from their involvement in the creative arts, sport and other extra-curricular programmes, as well as in charity fund raising and community work. Pupils have been recently involved in planning the new picnic area in the upper school and in consultation about the use of the school council's budget. All of this participation in school life contributes to the development of pupils' personal skills, to them adopting a more responsible and mature approach to behaviour and relationships with others, and to their concern about the school as a community.

63. Form tutor time, on Monday and Friday morning, is generally well used, encourages a sense of group identity and provides a purposeful start to the day. In many, but not all, tutor groups, pupils experience a brief act of worship. Such occasions are effective in sharing and exploring the religious and moral values that are at the heart of the school's aims and ethos. Where pupils are denied the entitlement to worship or reflect, a significant opportunity is lost to contribute to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Both personal development and attendance are carefully monitored and, when required, targets are set to improve attitudes and individual performances.

64. High standards of attendance are publicly recognised and valued. The school has very well organised administrative procedures for monitoring attendance. Any absence is systematically followed up even though the school's success in achieving high rates of attendance does not currently entitle them to claim a weekly visit from an education welfare officer. In the Sixth Form there is a good balance between the formal registration and the use of signing-in and out. The procedures for monitoring lateness across the school, through the registers and signing-in book, are highly effective. The increase in lateness to school over the past term has been the result of recent disruption to the local railway services. The introduction of computerised registration will enable the rapid transfer of information from one site to the other in order to monitor pupils' attendance in teaching groups.

65. Overall procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress are good. There is a clearly stated school assessment policy that all subject areas take into account when framing their own procedures. Subject departments are at different stages in their development of effective assessment procedures. In most cases good practice exists and, in mathematics for example, pupils' progress is tracked from their entry into the school using regular end of unit and half-term tests, GCSE coursework marks and the outcomes of marking class- and homework. Clear and detailed records are analysed and assist departments to set targets for their work and the pupils. Good use is made of assessment to review the effectiveness of teaching and learning and to plan future curriculum implementation.

66. The school enjoys good relationships with outside agencies and other visiting specialists. Pupils benefit greatly from the positive work of a number of visitors. This is especially apparent for those who share their expertise and work positively with pupils on welfare, health-related and safety issues. Specialists from other agencies offer helpful advice and support to teachers, learning-support assistants, pupils and their parents.

67. Procedures for child protection and for ensuring pupils' welfare are satisfactory. The policy and procedures for health and safety are generally satisfactory. The introduction, by the newly appointed health and safety officer, of regular termly inspections now enable more effective monitoring of recurrent concerns and the effectiveness of risk assessments. Reports to the governing body are well focused on the effective implementation of their comprehensive health and safety policies. The procedures for child protection are good and are under-pinned by a comprehensive policy and a very thorough knowledge of the pupils. The guidance to all staff is clear and the designated person has been appropriately trained. The policy and procedures are very effectively implemented and known by all staff.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

68. Parents think very well of the school, and expressed a high level of appreciation of the school's work through the parental meeting and questionnaire. Concerns expressed by parents focused on the arrangements for modern foreign languages and a lack of access to ICT in the lower school.

69. Parents believe that staff members have high expectations of their children, and that good quality teaching in lessons results in good progress. The school is seen as responsive, effective in taking action in matters such as bullying and supporting, through its behaviour policies, the values that parents teach at home. Whilst they know behaviour is not perfect, parents believe it is good. Parents think the school is well led and managed, and they appreciate the contribution of governors in improving the premises. They see much improvement in the school since the last inspection.

70. Inspection evidence fully supported the positive views of parents, particularly with regard to the quality of teaching, the strength of leadership and management, the positive attitudes and behaviour of pupils and the degree of improvement since the last inspection. As regards the use of ICT, this is not yet embedded across the curriculum, and parents concerns in this area are justified. It is however, an area on which the school is already actively working to improve. Examination results at Key Stage 4 in modern languages and the quality of teaching are both improving. However, the school is closely monitoring both standards and quality in this curriculum area.

71. The school has an effective partnership with parents, based on the provision of good quality information and effective communication through link books. The regular monitoring of link books by senior staff means that the degree of variation in quality found in many schools is not apparent here. Parents have a reliable source of information on homework, and so are able to support it effectively. They in their turn, give the school a great deal of support, financially by donating to the building fund, and in practical ways, such as providing support for events, matches and fixtures.

72. There is frequent contact with staff when difficulties need to be discussed and parents are ready to approach the school with well-formulated concerns. A high proportion of home-school agreements have been returned, which is evidence of the shared values of home and school expressed by parents. The school also works closely with parents of specific groups of pupils, such as those doing College link courses and, increasingly those with SEN. The newly appointed SEN co-ordinator has recently sent all parents copies of IEPs, and is meeting all those who wish to see him.

73. Written information for parents is of good quality and the prospectus and governors annual report contain almost all the required items of information. They are well-presented documents, and the sections of the prospectus are helpfully linked to school aims. The course booklets produced for each year group are accessible in style and inform parents well about what their children are studying. Annual reports are comprehensive in their coverage of attainment and progress through tabulations and grades, although the written comments are of more variable quality. The involvement of pupils through self-evaluation is a real strength of work in this area, as are the targets for improvement in every subject. The newly introduced academic tutoring day, although not yet fully developed, is a further excellent source of high quality discussion between staff, parents and pupils. Overall, the degree of parental support for the school is a strong aspect of the school's work.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

74. The school has a lucid statement of its aims and objectives. A wide range of regularly reviewed policies, statements of principles and expectations support the achievement of the school's aims. It is these helpful documents that inform the discussions, decisions and detailed work of both the governors and the leadership team.

75. The governors know the school well, are highly committed to its aims and ideals and visit often to see pupils and staff at work. They are fully aware of the school's strengths and weaknesses and take account of these in their discussions about priorities for the annual development and improvement plans. The governing body's high level of commitment to retaining the voluntary aided nature of the school has caused them to make some courageous decisions in order to realise their vision – including rebuilding much of the upper school site following structural failures. They have dedicated themselves to providing a school where high standards are promoted and valued, and the highest possible quality of education is provided for all pupils.

76. The governing body is very effective in organising and managing its business and is assisted by the well-conceived committee structure in fulfilling its responsibilities. The chairman of governors and chairs of committees meet the head teacher regularly to review and move matters forward between meetings and to plan future agendas so that all business is prioritised and appropriately managed. This useful approach to the governors' work ensures that they plan and act strategically and fulfil their statutory responsibilities

77. The head teacher provides thoughtful and determined leadership to the school and wise counsel to the governors. One of his major achievements since the last inspection has been to institute and oversee reform of the leadership team, including redefinition of its members' responsibilities, in conjunction with a major review of the school's procedures and practices. This process has focused attention on the goals set within the school's aims: the achievement of high standards and the provision of high quality education.

78. The new senior management structure ensures that the head teacher and leadership team members have to work closely together. They work hard and well as a team, regularly review progress in fulfilling their individual responsibilities and, through three strategic committees, constantly monitor the curriculum, pastoral care of pupils and the effective use of the school's resources. Their shared understanding of the school's aims, values and priorities, together with their own high commitment to their work, ensures their success in working effectively with teams of colleagues to raise standards.

79. Since the last inspection a number of new middle managers have been appointed. The induction and on-the-job training of middle managers has been instrumental in establishing their contribution to raising standards and ensuring good quality education. The majority of heads of department and heads of year are very effective in their management role and in providing support to their colleagues. A major impact of their work has been to ensure that the school's aims and values are very clearly reflected in both subject and pastoral provision.

80. Another major achievement since the last inspection has been the introduction of a comprehensive and highly effective process for monitoring and evaluating all aspects of the school's work, including teaching. The approach includes monitoring of teaching and learning by heads of subject and members of the leadership team, resulting in carefully defined targets for improvement. This is complemented by a rigorous process for monitoring the attainment and progress of all pupils – the use of baseline assessment, the analysis of results of external tests and examinations and the use of target setting for subject areas and individual pupils. In all teaching and pastoral teams there is a strong commitment to implementing strategies to provide and improve good support for pupils. The introduction of the annual academic tutoring day has formalised target setting for all pupils. A further strand includes the effective monitoring of work across the school. This is undertaken through the strategic committees, the management board and first-hand monitoring. For example, heads of subject and members of the leadership team systematically monitor link books as well as the setting and marking of class and homework. The vast majority of middle managers, but not all, have moved into their role as monitors of standards and quality, regularly observe lessons and share good practice in departmental meetings. However, more attention is needed in science to the analysis and use of data and in English to the monitoring of teaching and learning.

81. The majority of areas of the school are well documented and both subject and pastoral programmes have useful schemes of work and guidance on the implementation of whole school policies. This ensures a high degree of consistency across both of the school's sites in terms of ethos, the operation of policies and the standards expected from pupils regarding, for example, behaviour, attendance and punctuality.

82. The SEN co-ordinator provides good leadership and management to the SEN department. The newly appointed co-ordinator has made significant progress since his appointment and is taking the department forward in the right direction. Areas for development include the need for all SEN staff to meet together with department link teachers to develop monitoring procedures to ensure that teaching and learning meets the needs of SEN pupils at all times. Further consideration should also be given to the deployment of in-class support teachers and their role in one-to-one or small-group withdrawal for the teaching of basic literacy skills. The link governor is well informed and supportive, attends meetings of SEN staff and has observed lessons. The specific grant is well used and the school further supplements the financial allocation to enable adequate provision and support to be available.

83. A very well thought out programme of induction and professional development supports all members of staff. Those that are newly qualified, or newly appointed, benefit from a thorough induction programme. Students in training are well supported during their time in the school. The acquisition of 'Investors in People' status has validated the process of identifying and meeting staff development needs through individual reviews. Those identified needs are carefully matched to priorities in the school's development plan.

84. A well-defined strategy, that takes account of planning for major aspects of the school's work, and the clear identification of educational priorities, ensure that the governors' approach to financial planning is of outstanding quality. Resources, including finance, are clearly targeted to achieve those educational objectives identified in the school's development and improvement plans. This outstanding approach to financial planning has ensured that the budget has not subsidised the major rebuilding programme. It has also, for example, secured investment to provide furnishings and equipment for new building projects, increased the provision of hardware for ICT and has extended learning resources in both upper and lower school libraries. The governors' prudence in planning and decision-making has ensured that, for example, the implications of Curriculum 2000 can be appropriately funded and implemented for pupils in the current Year 12. The school's internal finance committee contributes to both the planning and implementation of the strategy.

85. The governing body's finance committee are fully involved in all resources discussions and decisions. They monitor carefully the operation of the budget against agreed principles and priorities. The operation of the school's financial systems is good. It takes account of the recommendations of the most recent audit report. The quality of financial information is good. In particular, budget reports are made more accessible to governors who lack a financial background by the use of an illuminating commentary. As a result, all governors are able to monitor carefully the impact of finance on the achievement of the school's educational objectives. The school's administration benefits from the good use of information technology to operate the financial systems, undertake routine tasks, analyse a range of data, including that for assessment, and to monitor pupils' attainment and progress.

86. Overall, the staffing, learning resources and accommodation are satisfactory. There is a very good match of teaching and support staff to their current deployment. Teachers are well matched to the needs of the current curriculum. Learning support staff and technicians are well qualified and work well in their curriculum areas. The administration team of staff work hard to support their colleagues and to meet the deadlines of a range of competing priorities. Resources to support pupils' learning are satisfactory overall. The provision of equipment and books is sufficient to support the curriculum but the majority of departments have inadequate facilities for the use of ICT with Internet access. Where the provision and use of learning resources is good, this is because priorities for spending are clearly identified in financial plans and the rationale for purchase of books, materials and equipment is clearly justified in terms of their positive impact on learning. The links between subject department priorities and financial planning is less well demonstrated in areas such as English, science, music and PE.

87. Over the last six years the upper school site has been completely rebuilt, an initiative funded completely by the school. This has provided some very good quality accommodation: most subjects areas are now of good quality and provide a positive learning environment. In science, however, one further laboratory is needed on each site; and in PE there is no gymnasium to complement the sports hall. Work is in progress to improve the lower-school site where accommodation has character but, in a number of respects, is unsatisfactory. However, refurbishment of a 'Horsa' hut has improved facilities for technology and the library, and an additional laboratory is currently under construction. Inadequate accommodation in some subjects does not support good learning in, for example, drama and in music, where there are no practice rooms or adequate storage. Unlike provision at the upper school, the lower school site lacks a lift to enable wheelchair bound pupils and adults access to the upper floor. On both sites, areas are well maintained, free of graffiti and mainly free of litter. The quality of display, celebrating pupils' achievements, is good.

88. The principles of best value are very well applied by the governing body and the school's internal finance committee. Practice is strong in each of the four areas. The governing body's approach to planning and the identification of financial priorities includes the identification, through close and challenging questions, of the benefits of any spending and its impact on pupils' learning. Governors are available to parents at consultation evenings and the annual academic tutoring day, and receive feedback from staff, pupils and the diocese regarding the established priorities and possible areas for major expenditure. The governors and internal finance committee make cost comparisons and use market testing to ensure that spending secures the best provision for the keenest price. The application of best value principles has been used successfully in awarding contracts for the rebuilding of the upper school site. Challenge and competition are used well in making post 16 provision with the local consortium and with a technical college for the extension of the Key Stage 4 curriculum. The school constantly compares itself with others nationally. The governing body makes considerable use of national benchmarking, measures against similar schools and other comparative data in relation to the standards pupils reach in external tests and examinations, for example. These not only help to analyse results but also to identify strengths and weaknesses in the school's performance. Pupils are consulted about a range of matters through regular tutorials and the making of curriculum choices for GCSE and post-16 courses. The head of Sixth Form and the leadership team take account of views raised by the Sixth Form. These applications of best value principles ensure that governors and their advisers adopt a coherent approach to the spending their scarce resources.

89. This is a very good school. It provides a good quality of education for all its pupils and enables them to reach high standards and make good progress. Taking account of the school's costs, the achievement of its identified educational priorities, the standards pupils achieve, the cost effectiveness of the sixth form and its social context, the school provides good value for money.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

90. In the context of the school's many strengths the following areas for growth, development and improvement should be considered in the action plan:

- to devise and implement a systematic approach to literacy across the curriculum that: takes account of the learning needs of all pupils; draws on the principles of the National Literacy Strategy; is monitored and evaluated in terms of its impact on pupils' attainment and progress;
(*Paragraphs: 9; 34; 101*)
- to devise and implement a systematic approach to numeracy across the curriculum that: takes account of the learning needs of all pupils; draws on the principles of the National Numeracy Strategy; is monitored and evaluated in terms of its impact on pupils' attainment and progress;
(*Paragraphs: 9; 34; 116*)
- to further develop and implement a systematic approach to the use of information and communications technology to support pupils' learning across the curriculum;
(*Paragraphs: 33; 38; 41; 42; 68; 70; 93*)
- to disseminate good practice in teaching and learning across the curriculum to enable all teachers to reflect on and improve their own practice.
(*Paragraphs: 27; 28; 39; 80; 95 - 97*)

THE SIXTH FORM

91. The very large sixth form is well led and managed with attention to detail and great energy. The head of Sixth Form is highly accessible for pupils and staff and she provides a good link to leadership team. The school's development plan includes a detailed section on the Sixth Form, in which improved standards, through a central commitment to fostering high quality teaching and learning, is a central theme. The headteacher works closely with the head of Sixth Form and the heads of Years 12 and 13 to develop and monitor the introduction of the new GCE Advanced Subsidiary (AS) courses and target setting for pupils. There are good links between senior Sixth Form staff and heads of department. Pupils are overwhelmingly positive about what the Sixth Form provides for them but they are constructively questioning and offer support for improvement. They appreciate the quality of support and guidance offered by tutors. Although account is taken of their views on a range of matters, they feel that the Sixth Form council is underdeveloped as a vehicle for enabling them to understand wider school issues.

92. Pupils speak very highly of their courses, the teaching and the guidance offered to them, and the opportunities provided by the Sixth Form. Many were attracted to the Sixth Form by the wide range of courses, their knowledge of the teachers and the respect they had for them, the very good results achieved and the school's ethos as a church school. Their comments showed great loyalty and affection for the school. An annual surveys of pupils' views, about guidance onto courses, the teaching and support they receive and what has gone well or not so well for them, is taken into account by the head of Sixth Form and the leadership team when reviewing the aims, values, procedures and practices for this area of the school.

93. In view of the range of courses offered, the financial input, the quality of provision and the results achieved, the sixth form demonstrates cost-effectiveness. The sixth form curriculum offers a wide choice of academic and a growing array of vocational courses. It caters well for the vast majority of students. The school is responding positively and effectively to the new post-16 arrangements from September 2000 for pupils to strengthen their skills of communication, application of number and the use of ICT, and to work towards a qualification in these areas. However, due to the lack of Internet access, pupils can only proceed to Level 2, of 3, in the use of ICT. There are insufficient dedicated Sixth Form computers for pupils' use during their individual study time but there are further facilities in the library.

94. The degree of pupils' participation in school life is good. The opportunities open to them include sport, music, social work and activities related to curriculum areas. The good range of opportunities provided for them to work within the school and wider community is used well to enhance their life skills. Good quality support and guidance are maintained throughout Years 12 and 13. There is good induction into the Sixth Form and the school keeps a very good record of the progress and effort pupils make in their courses. Well co-ordinated arrangements involve both year tutors and subject departments. There is a common review record that is easy to use and is effective in helping staff retrieve information. Regular oversight of progress by subject departments takes place and this information is fed back to students to help them improve quickly. Target setting is a regular feature of the dialogue staff have with students. This procedure is well informed by good information on prior attainment, which is analysed effectively. This is supplemented by perceptive comments on pupils' attitudes to their work, including the effort they make. Pupils are well

motivated by this process as the regular review of their work helps to keep them well focussed and raises expectations. The tutorial programme includes moral and ethical issues as well as topics such as study skills. Tutor group sessions are generally effective, but do not always present the stimulating learning opportunities that pupils experience elsewhere in their curriculum. Membership of the Sixth Form is a rich and rewarding experience.

95. The quality of teaching in the Sixth Form is very good. Pupils benefit greatly from the considerable reservoir of subject knowledge and pedagogical skills that reside with the teaching staff. In addition to observation of lessons in National Curriculum subjects, the work of three other subjects was inspected. The business education department makes a significant contribution to the Sixth Form, offering a range of successful and well-subscribed advanced level courses. Examination results in GNVQ Advanced Business and GCE A Level Business Studies are well above the course averages. Attainment in GCE A Level Economics is above the course average. On all courses, attainment in lessons is good or very good. The quality of teaching in all courses is of a very good standard. Thorough preparation and planning, very well produced resources, a detailed knowledge of pupils and a wide variety of teaching strategies elicit an excellent response from pupils who make informed, articulate and lively contributions to lessons. Assessment is very thorough. Pupils' performance is analysed in detail and used to inform planning.

96. Standards achieved by pupils in GCE A Level psychology in external examinations and in class are impressive. In the last three years, all pupils entered for GCE A Level examinations have gained a grade in the A to E range, many of them in 1999 gaining the highest grades A and B. All pupils in both Years 12 and 13 are very well organised, with standards being reached in their essays and long assignments being good or very good. Most pupils in the current Year 12 have already reached good levels of achievement in relation to the course objectives, although they have still to master fully the higher-order evaluative skills. Their knowledge and understanding of basic theory, including the methodology and contribution of empirical research, is very good. Pupils' course and homework and their work in lessons show high levels of motivation and commitment to the subject and the standards reached are closely related to the good and very good quality of the teaching. The subject knowledge of the teacher is very good, and her ability to engage and challenge the pupils enables all of them to actively participate in the learning. Marking and assessment are very thorough and inform the planning of further teaching and learning.

97. The GCE A Level sociology course is popular and well established. In 2000, all pupils entered gained grades in the A to E range, and just over half achieved A or B grades. In work seen during the inspection, at least a third of pupils achieved very high standards, and overall attainment is above the GCE A Level course average. Pupils' files are well organised and presented: they take a pride in their work. In Year 12, pupils' work shows interest and flare but evaluative skills are not yet fully developed. Year 13 pupils' work is innovative with some outstanding features. Teaching is consistently very good. The pace of teaching ensures pupils have high levels of concentration and commitment to their learning, for example in the making of full notes. The teacher has excellent up to date subject knowledge, is able to deal with pupils' responses very effectively and uses discussion and open-ended questions to stimulate and motivate pupils. The sociology student handbook is outstandingly good: it has an extensive reading list, essay record sheet, mark schemes and programmes of study. The assessment procedures are thorough, constructive and clear to all pupils. The department has a wide variety of sociology textbooks in the teaching base and the school library holds a good supply of supplementary texts.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	160
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	68

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
5	33	38	21	3	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11	Sixth Form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	913	253
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	38	0

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11	Sixth Form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	17	3
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	152	10

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	15

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	9
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	9

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	5.0
National comparative data	5.9

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.4
National comparative data	0.4

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year:	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	85	97	182

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 5 and above	Boys	73	77	69
	Girls	94	86	80
	Total	167	163	145
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	School	92 (92)	90 (86)	82 (78)
	National	63 (63)	65 (62)	59 (55)
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 6 or above	School	46 (41)	67 (59)	43 (41)
	National	28 (28)	42 (38)	30 (23)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 5 and above	Boys	79	72	71
	Girls	96	86	81
	Total	175	158	152
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	School	96 (88)	87 (91)	84 (82)
	National	64 (64)	66 (64)	62 (60)
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 6 or above	School	55 (31)	57 (60)	84 (82)
	National	31 (31)	39 (37)	29 (28)

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4

Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year:	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	95	88	183

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	73	93	96
	Girls	72	86	87
	Total	145	179	183
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	79 (72)	98 (98)	100 (100)
	National	47.4 (46.6)	90.6 (90.9)	95.6 (95.8)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	49 (47.5)
	National	38.4 (38.0)

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

Attainment at the end of the sixth form

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A-Level or AS-Level examinations:	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	64	74	138

Average A/AS points score per candidate	For candidates entered for 2 or more A-Levels or equivalent			For candidates entered for fewer than 2 A-Levels or equivalent		
	Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
School	18.1	23.6	20.8	2.9	3.6	3.4
National	17.7	18.6	18.2	2.6	2.9	2.7

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

Vocational qualifications		Number	% success rate
Number in their final year of studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	11	100
	National	N/A	76.5

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	22
Black – African heritage	11
Black – other	54
Indian	10
Pakistani	3
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	2
White	811

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	1	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	19	0

Any other minority ethnic group	0
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Other minority ethnic groups	0	0
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This table gives the number of exclusions, which may be different from the number of pupils excluded.

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes:

Y7-Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	71
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	16.4

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff:

Y7-Y13

Total number of education support staff	13
Total aggregate hours worked per week	350.75

Deployment of teachers:

Y7-Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	72.2
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Average teaching group size:

Y7-Y13

Key Stage 3	24.79
Key Stage 4	22.89

Financial information

Financial year	1999 - 2000
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	£
Total income	3,264.848,00
Total expenditure	3,143.083,00
Expenditure per pupil	2,791,00
Balance brought forward from previous year	102,346,00
Balance carried forward to next year	121,765,00

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	1166
Number of questionnaires returned	281

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	42	47	9	1	0
My child is making good progress in school.	49	46	6	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	31	54	10	1	4
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	25	60	12	1	1
The teaching is good.	35	59	2	1	3
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	35	53	10	0	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	51	41	5	0	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	71	27	1	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	36	50	11	0	2
The school is well led and managed.	52	42	4	0	1
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	45	49	4	1	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	33	45	12	1	8

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

ENGLISH

98. Key Stage 3 English results in the 2000 Standard Assessment Tests were above the national average and above average for schools in similar contexts. The trend of improvement is broadly in line with the national picture. In the 2000 GCSE examinations, the proportion of pupils gaining A*-C grades in English was well above the national average. Both boys and girls performed much better than their peers nationally. In GCSE English literature performance was very well above the national average – just over nine-tenths of those entered gained a grade in the A*-C range. As in GCSE English language, both boys and girls performed very much better than their peers nationally. The improvement trend in English GCSE results over the past five years is above the national trend. However, within-school comparison shows that both boys and girls entered for English language performed significantly worse compared to their performance in the average of their other subjects. By the same comparison, in English literature girls did worse, boys slightly better.

99. In drama, the trend is also well above that nationally. In the GCSE examinations in 2000, the proportion of pupils gaining grades in the A*-C range was well above the national average. At GCE A Level in English literature, nearly half of the pupils gained A or B grades, well above the course average nationally. Of five pupils entered for GCE A Level drama, an equal number gained grades A and B and the other gained a C grade. Numbers there are too small for valid national comparisons.

100. The standards of pupils' work seen during the inspection were similar to these results. Pupils achieve well and make good progress. Their attitude to the school generally and to their work in English in particular is positive and co-operative. Teachers are respected. Pupils expect to work hard, and they are serious about their learning.

101. A language policy operates within the department but it has yet to develop into a whole school literacy strategy. However, the standard of writing is good across all key stages. Pupils, including those who have SEN, or those for whom English is an additional language, write for a range of purposes and audiences and have a secure grasp of matters of style and technique. A pupil in Year 7 for instance, in 'Describing the Dark', used repetition, evocative vocabulary and direct speech to achieve an atmospheric and convincing effect. By the end of Key Stage 3, the lower-attaining pupils can sustain and develop ideas. Grammatical conventions are generally understood. The higher-attaining pupils are accurate and fluent in a range of forms and have developed a confident style of their own. By the end of Key Stage 4, further progress is evident. By this stage, pupils are showing increased awareness of purpose and effect, both in their own writing and in their analyses of a wide variety of texts. The lower-attaining pupils plan their work carefully and write structured and fairly extended pieces. The higher-attaining pupils show, in a range of writing and comment, developing skills and critical intelligence. For example they analyse the appeal of *The Sun*, they write autobiographies, they produce imagined diaries of Curly's wife from *Of Mice and Men*: all in ways which invite and sustain the interest of a reader. The standard of pupils' writing post-16 is also impressive. Critical assessments of *King Lear* and Tennyson's poetry, for instance, were exemplary in presentation and understanding.

102. Similar qualities, across the key stages, were to be noted in pupils' capabilities in speaking and listening, and in reading. Pupils read widely and confidently, and are well supported through the 'wide reading programme' in Key Stage 3, and in the departmental library of critical and other texts related to examination courses in Key Stage 4 and GCE A Level. Pupils read aloud with good expression and intonation. When given opportunities to use talk for learning, as in a low-attaining group in Year 8 discussing bullying, or a Year 10 higher-attaining group presenting analyses of Macbeth's motives for his actions, pupils showed themselves well able to take them. On occasions, because of too much teacher talk, or a failure to adequately set up and direct purposeful group work, pupils' opportunities for development were constrained.

103. There is a high correlation between quality of teaching and the quality of learning. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall. In just over two-fifths of lessons teaching was good, very good or excellent in just over half it was satisfactory and in one lesson it was unsatisfactory. Teaching overall was good in Key Stage 3, at Key Stage 4 it was satisfactory, and satisfactory too in the Sixth Form. In each key stage examples of very good teaching were seen.

104. Where pupils were presented with clear learning objectives they did well. For instance, an ambitious lesson had a Year 8 class develop their knowledge of Chaucer. Pupils, of whom ten were on the SEN register, were taken through a well-judged and carefully timed series of activities. They read aloud from Chaucer's original text, listened to a recording of a translation, annotated a picture of the Miller from the description, and described a character of their own choice using Chaucer's technique as a model. The teaching had pace, purpose and structure. Pupils were led to substantial achievement in reading, writing and speaking. By contrast, a Year 7 lesson led to few discernible gains for pupils. They read silently for the first part, and then engaged in a set of exercises on syllables and homophones. The lesson was well controlled and orderly but failed to capitalise on pupils' prior knowledge. Many pupils were familiar with this material from the literacy work they had done in Key Stage 2.

105. A related point concerns the degree to which pupils are given planned opportunities to demonstrate what they know, understand and can do. A number of lessons in Key Stage 4 and post-16 did not, for example, sufficiently require pupils to discuss and present their own perceptions and developing insights concerning the texts they were studying. The teaching smacked of efficient instruction rather than guided discovery and may partially account for the comparative underachievement in English compared to pupils' attainment in other subjects. Where autonomy in learning is encouraged and provided for, many pupils are well able to show it.

106. Currently, in the marking of pupils' work, there is inconsistency in following the requirements laid down in the departmental handbook and the school's language policy. At its best, marking is clear, detailed, and written comment gives targets for improvement and development. At its worst, it is a series of ticks and a numerical mark with little or no comment. At its best, lesson planning is explicit concerning learning outcomes and the structure and timing of activities. The materials to support learning are differentiated according to need. Pupils' prior knowledge and attainment is properly taken into account. At its worst planning does not make the purposes of teaching explicit. Rather it appears to be a series of rough notes outlining the content of a lesson in terms too general to answer the legitimate question 'What are we doing this for?' Again, explicitness concerning what is to be learned, the means by which the learning is to go forward, and the criteria by which learning is to be evaluated will enhance the likelihood of pupils' high achievement.

107. Unfortunately, because of staff illness, it was impossible during the inspection to see any drama teaching. It is clearly a popular and highly successful option in Key Stage 4. Numbers wishing to pursue the subject at Sixth Form Level are increasing substantially. Sixth Form pupils speak highly of the challenge and achievement of their drama work. They are particularly appreciative of the opportunities to work in practical and co-operative ways. Currently, drama is poorly represented in Key Stage 3. Play texts are read in English, and some attention is paid to role-play and other aspects of practical drama. But provision is patchy, and the possibilities of development in the discipline are consequently limited. There is no suitable teaching space for drama in the lower school. In the upper school the hall is available but is not ideally equipped for drama work. Drama contributes substantially to extra-curricular opportunities. There are two main school shows a year, and numerous other events, for example a recent community performance in support of AIDS charities. The head of drama has an inclusive policy for extra-curricular activities. All who are keen to take part can do so. In drama, attention should be given to: increasing drama provision in Key Stage 3; providing suitable teaching accommodation for drama in both lower and upper school.

108. Leadership of the English department is satisfactory. Responsibilities within the department are clearly specified. The mentoring of new staff is done well and much appreciated. Stock is well organised and well managed. The need for greater challenge in some lessons and specificity in schemes of work were signalled in the last report and remain as areas for improvement. The department's work would benefit, therefore, from a focus on: consistency in marking and use of comment related to target-setting; the development of detailed schemes of work; lesson planning that takes account of pupils' prior achievement and states clearly what pupils will know and be able to do on account of the teaching; the use of monitoring to identify and disseminate best practice.

MATHEMATICS

109. Pupils' attainment in mathematics tests at the end of Year 9 is well above the national average. Their results are better in mathematics than in English or science. In comparison with pupils in similar schools their performance in mathematics tests is well above average. Results over the period 1996 to 2000 are on a broadly upward trend but dipped slightly in 1999. There is little difference in the results achieved by boys and girls. Inspection evidence from observation of lessons, scrutiny of work and discussions with pupils shows that attainment by the end of Year 9 is well above average. Pupils in higher-attaining sets are highly competent in their work in algebra and geometry. They solve quadratic equations using the trial and improvement method and successfully complete a cheese-box investigation, comparing and contrasting different shaped boxes. Average pupils understand and use percentage and ratio in practical problems, determine areas of compound shapes and calculate mean, median and mode. Lower-attaining pupils cope well with written calculations involving short multiplication and division and identify symmetry of selected polygons. They lack confidence when tackling mental calculations.

110. The percentage of pupils attaining GCSE grades A*-C is well above the national average. Results have been steadily rising each year from 1997 to 2000. There is little difference in the performance of boys and girls although girls' GCSE results improved more rapidly than boys over this period. Pupils are more successful in mathematics than they are in most of their other GCSE subjects. Inspection evidence from observing lessons, scrutinising work and discussions with pupils indicates that attainment by the end of Year 11 is well above average. Higher-attaining pupils complete an impressive range and amount of work. They understand and use rational and irrational numbers, can solve quadratic equations by a variety of methods, accurately sketch graphs of trigonometric functions and calculate lengths of arcs and areas of sectors of

circles. Average pupils add and subtract fractions using a common denominator and understand and apply Pythagoras' theorem, appreciating the significance of triples such as 3, 4 and 5. Although some lower-attaining pupils are working at an average level, notably in geometry, others, whose skills of retention are weak, are well below average.

111. GCE A Level results in mathematics are better than average. A consistently high percentage of students attain grades A-C each year. Students' attainment by the end of the sixth form in the current GCE A Level course is above average in pure mathematics, mechanics and statistics. They solve simultaneous equations involving logarithms, know and use a variety of methods for differentiation and integration, successfully complete questions on circular motion and momentum and use the binomial theorem appropriately in their GCE A Level statistics course work.

112. Pupils' attitude to work and their behaviour are very good in both key stages and in the sixth form. They are interested in mathematics and work hard and with persistence on tasks that are set. Pupils invariably listen attentively to the teacher and to others when they are responding to a question. They make thoughtful contributions to whole class discussions and co-operate very effectively on joint tasks. There is a very occasional dip in performance towards the end of the one hour ten minute lessons.

113. Teaching and learning are good in both Key Stages 3 and 4 and are very good in the sixth form. In almost nine out of ten lessons teaching was good or better and in almost four out of ten it was very good, including one lesson where teaching was excellent. There was no unsatisfactory teaching. Teachers have a very good knowledge and understanding of mathematics enabling pupils to make very rapid progress in their knowledge and understanding of the subject. For example, the teacher helped Year 13 students make significant headway in learning when and how to use the method of integrating by substitution by very clearly explaining the key factors governing its use. The teaching of the basic skills of literacy and numeracy is satisfactory. In the best lessons teachers make sure pupils calculate mentally, when it is appropriate, rather than rely on calculators. In some other lessons, pupils are not sufficiently discouraged from using calculators for questions that could be attempted in the head. Key mathematical words are displayed in a few classrooms and, on occasions, teachers take trouble to make sure that pupils understand and use the terminology correctly. Teachers plan lessons thoroughly with clear objectives, often relayed to pupils at the start of the session, so that they are prepared for issues that might arise. Sixth form lessons are particularly well planned, skilfully building on previous work to maintain and extend students' understanding.

114. Teachers have very high expectations of what pupils know, understand and can do across the age and range of attainment. For instance, one teacher helped lower-attaining Year 7 pupils to develop a sound knowledge and understanding of probability and another enabled average Year 10 pupils to interpret correctly a series of graphs of grouped data on children's heights around the world. Learning support staff work well with pupils who have special educational needs, often playing an equal part in the lesson with the teacher. Teaching methods are effective and varied with especially adroit and enthusiastic exposition that heightens the interest of pupils and raises their achievement. For example, in an excellent Year 11 lesson on Pythagoras' theorem the teacher's passion for mathematics and sheer enjoyment of teaching captured the pupils' interest and encouraged them to make considerable progress in their knowledge and understanding. Pupils came to the front of the class to show their solutions, the teacher skilfully linked pupils' ideas and, to put the icing on the cake, referred to Egyptian use of Pythagoras' theorem in building the pyramids. In nearly all cases, teachers manage pupils effectively and insist on suitable standards of behaviour. Relationships are very good, especially in the Sixth Form.

115. The pace of lessons is brisk. For instance, Year 9 pupils learnt a considerable amount about significant figures, decimal places, standard form and errors in measurement in a very well paced thirty-five minute lesson where the teacher was determined not to waste any time. On a few occasions, the pace drops towards the end of the more common one hour ten minute lesson, as pupils lose concentration. Teachers use resources effectively to enhance learning. For example, through the use of graphic calculators Year 8 pupils swiftly took on board a raft of ideas relating to straight lines, including formula, gradient and intercept. The teacher ended the lesson with a very effective plenary that summarised what pupils had learnt. Teachers assess pupils' work regularly and conscientiously keeping class records that help to monitor pupils' progress and plan future lessons. Some marking is very good, with well thought out and constructive comments that guide pupils' learning. In other cases marking is conscientious but insufficiently detailed. Teachers regularly set homework of an appropriate quantity and challenge.

116. The department is managed very effectively. The mathematics curriculum meets National Curriculum requirements. Staffing provision is very good. Accommodation on the two sites is satisfactory but mathematics is often taught in rooms designated to other subjects. This is not ideal but it does not directly affect pupils' attainment and progress. The display of pupils' work in the few mathematics rooms that are available is very good. There is a wide range of books and some other resources, but specialist mathematics software in ICT is inadequate, limiting pupils' progress in this aspect of mathematics. The mathematics staff share a commitment to very high standards of attainment and progress for all pupils, including those with SEN. Departmental meetings are well organised and include curriculum issues in depth alongside routine administration matters. The department has made a satisfactory start in incorporating ideas from the National Numeracy Strategy. It is at an early stage in co-ordinating numeracy across the curriculum. Monitoring of teaching is well established.

117. There has been very good progress since the 1996 inspection. There is now little difference between the attainment of boys and girls. GCE A Level results are above average. Pupils reach a high level in their work in using and applying mathematics. Lessons are much less teacher directed, although pupils could contribute more in a few cases. Assessment of pupils is well organised and appropriate information is passed on from year to year. Pupils often collaborate on joint tasks and they use 'test yourself' activities for self-assessment.

SCIENCE

118. The attainment of pupils when they enter the school is somewhat above average. Most have a satisfactory knowledge of basic scientific concepts, and a helpful experience of investigation techniques. In 2000, the performance of pupils, aged 14 years, in the National Curriculum tests was well above the average for all maintained schools. The percentage of pupils gaining Level 5, or higher, and the percentage of pupils gaining Level 6, or higher, were both also well above the national average. Boys' attainment was similar to that of girls. Comparison with similar schools indicates that the proportion of pupils achieving Level 5 or higher was above average, while the proportion achieving Level 6 or higher was below average. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 remains high, although, having risen steadily until 1998, it has fallen again in the last two years. Pupils have made good progress over the three years from entry to the end of Key Stage 3.

119. The standard of the current Year 9 pupils' work in school is above average. For example, most pupils, studying Attainment Target 1 (Scientific Enquiry) have made detailed observations and kept accurate records of their experiments. There is a great deal of evidence of analysis of data to identify progress. Pupils with SEN learn satisfactorily with other pupils, in investigation and written work, where appropriate resources are provided. No difference is found in the work of boys and girls, as was apparent also in tests.

120. By the age of 16 years, in 2000, pupils' average GCSE point score and the percentage of pupils gaining grades A*-C, for double-award combined science, were well above the national averages. The proportion gaining grade A* or A was more than twice the national average. The performance was similar for boys and girls. The percentage of A*-C grades was above the average for schools with pupils of similar attainment at the end of Key Stage 3, and well above that of schools admitting pupils with similar eligibility for free school meals. The average attainment has risen progressively over the past three years. Pupils have achieved well from age 14.

121. Inspection evidence, including lesson observation, discussions with pupils and the analysis of Year 11 pupils' work, shows that the standards at the end of Key Stage 4 are not quite as high as the exceptional examination results of the last year. Nevertheless, the level of knowledge, by most Year 11 pupils in a high-attaining group of the effect of unbalanced forces on moving objects, was clear, detailed and accurate. This is indicative of high GCSE grades.

122. In the Sixth Form, in biology, chemistry and physics GCE Advanced Level in 2000, results were well above course averages, with virtually all pupils gaining a pass grade, and many gaining high grades. In the previous year the pattern was similar. Year 13 physics pupils, for example, have a good knowledge of the principles of electricity and mechanics and apply them well to challenging practical problems.

123. Achievement of the majority of pupils over both Key Stages 3 and 4 and in the Sixth Form is good. That of higher-attaining pupils within a group, especially in Key Stage 3, can be below expectation, due to an insufficient match of work to the level of ability. Progress of pupils with SEN is satisfactory where support assistance has been effective.

124. Standards of literacy in science are good. Pupils use correct terms and express themselves well in describing, for example, the outcomes of investigations. Standards of numeracy are also good. Regular practice is carried out on number calculations and the rearrangement of equations, and detailed graph work is common.

125. Attitudes to science are good. Pupils listen carefully and respond confidently to questions. Care is taken with the presentation of work. Homework is treated seriously. Most pupils are interested in science, even if their aptitudes are elsewhere, and many show considerable enthusiasm. The maturity of commitment of students in the sixth form is exceptional. Good relationships are established in groups when pupils collaborate on experimental investigations. Pupils' behaviour is very good in the great majority of classes.

126. Teaching, overall, is good. In four-fifths of lessons, teaching was good or better and in a tenth it was satisfactory. In one lesson the teaching was unsatisfactory. All teachers have good subject knowledge. Planning, in terms of activities, including frequent practical work, and progression, is good, and based on established schemes of work. However, in some lessons, there is not really sufficient

provision of work that matches the attainment of the range of pupils within a group. Pupils in higher-attaining groups are challenged appropriately, but within the group the

range of degree of challenge is low. Pupils with SEN make good progress in investigation and group work, or when learning support is provided. Opportunities for assessment in class are not always exploited through question and answer techniques. Marking of pupils' work is satisfactory, but is not always sufficiently informative for pupils to know what to do to gain improvement. The management of behaviour is good in most lessons. Very little use is made of ICT to enhance the learning. Overall, expectations for significant achievement are high and this results in a brisk pace and very effective learning.

127. The head of department has appropriate aims and teachers share his commitment to raising standards. The department development plan has appropriate priorities in curriculum issues. Established schemes of work are in place, but those for use in Key Stage 3 are in the process of being revised after changes in the National Curriculum. Staff qualifications match the specialist needs of the curriculum. The laboratory technicians provide good support. A satisfactory approach to in-service training is in place, with particularly good induction for newly qualified teachers. Assessment of pupils' work is carried out regularly, recorded and displayed to aid monitoring. Use of assessment data to measure overall performance and progress, in relation to national averages, is not yet sufficiently well established. Monitoring of teachers work is satisfactory. Lessons have been observed by the head of the department, and group examination and test scores evaluated. The process is not yet sufficiently rigorous. Moderation of sets of books, to review the quality of marking, for example, is carried out as a shared exercise.

128. Accommodation is satisfactory overall. Laboratories on the upper school site are large and well furnished, but there are insufficient to prevent several lessons taking place in classrooms. Laboratories on the lower site are old and in need of refurbishment. However, a building programme is in hand to provide a new laboratory and storage. Resources are adequate to provide a varied curriculum, but there are few resources for ICT within the department.

129. Since the last inspection, standards in Key Stage 3 have improved, with some decline again in the past year; GCSE results have improved greatly over the last three years; and Sixth Form results continue to flourish. Teaching has improved, but some marking lacks formative detail. Insufficient use is made of ICT. The accommodation is being further developed and the problem of transferring materials and chemicals between laboratories has been resolved.

ART

131. Attainment on entry is just above the national expectation. Standards by the age of 14 are above the expected level according to teacher assessments, which are supported by inspection evidence. By the age of 16 standards are well above the national average for those taking the long course and above the national average for those taking the short course. Pupils achieve better in art than in the majority of other subjects in the curriculum, due to the effect of high expectations and the good quality of teaching. Results have been stable over the last three years for the long course and have improved for the short course. Standards at age 18 are good: all pupils entered gained pass grades in GCSE photography, GCE AS / A Level and GNVQ courses. Results improved by about 20 per cent from last year in photography, GCE AS and GNVQ courses. Generally, the proportion of pupils gaining higher grades has varied over the past four years but in 2000 five of the seven GCE A Level pupils gained A or B grades. Achievement during Key Stage 3 is satisfactory, whilst it is good throughout Key Stage 4 and in the Sixth Form.

132. By the end of Key Stage 3, pupils of all levels of attainment appreciate the work of artists and craftspeople and relate it to their own work. For example, pupils look at the work of Roy Lichtenstein and make colourful and careful paintings in the Pop Art style. Other Year 9 pupils understand surrealism and relate the work of Salvador Dali and Rene Magritte to their work on 'Dreamscapes.' By the end of Key Stage 4, most pupils are capable of a high level of enquiry into the work of artists and present a personal written response in the form of a critical studies project. Projects are well presented and reflect the care and pride of pupils in their work. Sketchbooks are well used and show a variety of research methods and experimentation in the process of developing a GCSE theme. For instance, pupils show how they can use pencil to draw effective self-portraits; can develop these into collages and develop them further, using textiles, to produce final pieces that are padded and appliquéd by hand and by using a sewing machine. By the end of the Sixth Form, pupils demonstrate very good technical skills in the use of a variety of two-dimensional media. One high-attaining pupil shows how his own style has developed by looking at the work of artists such as Matisse and Picasso, and displays a confident use of vibrant colour and the skilful use of line. Another pupil shows her excellent ability to draw from observation and use of pencil to create strong tonal compositions.

133. Attitudes and behaviour are good throughout the key stages. Pupils are polite and well mannered. They listen attentively and answer questions eagerly. High standards of presentation show in sketchbooks, journals and finished pieces of practical work in a variety of media.

134. Teaching is good at all key stages. The quality of teaching is excellent in 11 per cent of lessons, very good also in 11 per cent, good in 56 per cent and satisfactory in the remainder. Teaching in the department has a number of strong features. These include good subject knowledge that ensures that pupils are taught correctly. Teachers also have high expectations and make sure that pupils reach their potential. The consistency in teaching quality means that all pupils have a similar grounding in the basic principles of the enquiry process. There are good relationships between staff and pupils and this helps to maintain a good working atmosphere. In the vast majority of lessons, effective class management ensures that all pupils are given the opportunity to learn. The good quality lesson planning allows lessons to run smoothly and enables pupils with SEN, and those for whom English is not their first language, to be clear about lesson objectives and to make good progress. There is an effective use of resources to support pupils' learning. Visual aids, including the use of an overhead projector, slide projector, pictures and reproductions, as well as examples of work and practical demonstrations, all ensure that pupils are well informed and clear about expectations. In a class where Year 8 pupils were being taught how to do mono printing, the good planning, a clear demonstration of the technique, good classroom management and high expectations ensured that all pupils achieved good results and enjoyed this excellent lesson.

135. Good leadership and management of the art department have been responsible for improvements since the last inspection. The head of department provides schemes of work that fulfil the requirements of the national curriculum. The programmes of study allow for the individual strengths of the members of the department and pupils benefit from expertise in a wide range of media including photography, ceramics, textiles and fine art. Programmes of study have been improved to include more opportunities for drawing from observation by, for instance, taking pupils out to draw the local church or providing objects from which to draw. The use of references to artists' styles and cultural references have been included in, for example, making totem poles in Key Stage 3 and in the 'customs and cultures' theme at GCSE Level. Moderating work as a

department has established consistent standards and consistency in marking at all levels through, for instance, the moderation of Key Stage 3 drawing tests, and provides a context for carrying out the teacher assessments at the end of Year 9. Regular monitoring of classroom teaching standards across the department, with feedback and evaluation, ensures the maintenance of high standards, consistency across the department and the sharing of good practice.

136. Progress since the last inspection is very good. Further points for development should include further developing the use of ICT. Currently, the equipment is insufficient for the requirements of a department where the staff have good expertise and know how to use ICT in lessons. The department should also consider how to make the short GCSE course more rewarding for both pupils and teachers by extending the timetabled time.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

137. Attainment is well above the national average because teachers place high priority on the design process, giving pupils very good opportunities to follow highly relevant assignments that stimulate their interest and imagination. Pupils achieve very well because they are highly motivated and learn to take commendable initiative in planning, researching and carrying out projects. The school has maintained very good standards since the last inspection, further improving the commercial and social emphasis in project design.

138. Teacher assessments at the end of Key Stage 3 indicate that attainment is below average. This is not a true reflection of standards seen during the inspection. The difference arises because teachers make assessments of some modules early in the year, but do not take full account of the progress pupils make which has the effect of understating attainment by the end of Key Stage 3. Attainment is well above average at the end of Key Stage 4. In the examination results in 2000, the percentage of pupils gaining A*-C grades was well above average. The percentage gaining A*-G grades was average. Boys and girls perform well above the national average. Girls perform better than average when compared with other subjects within the school and boys do slightly less well. Such very good results have been consistent during the last three years. Results in systems and control are high and a tribute to the school. Over time, there has been some variation between different modules but current work shows greater consistency between courses for pupils of similar levels of attainment as a result of the department's work to improve standards in design. The number of students taking GCE A Level is small. In 2000 one student took the course and achieved a good pass grade. In the current Year 13, there are five students and they meet the requirements of the course, with a good proportion reaching high standards.

139. Standards in lessons are very good overall. In Year 9 pupils produce a good range of design drawings for building a strong model bridge and higher attaining pupils have very good design ideas, quickly calculating the quantities of materials needed and demonstrating good application of number. Standards would have been higher for average pupils if they had had good visual demonstration of a range of structures from which they could make decisions for their own ideas. In food technology, pupils show they have a good grasp of how to calculate energy levels in food because the teacher gives time for good discussion of their work.

140. In Year 11, standards are very good. They are particularly good in the design element, an improvement since the last inspection. This is attributable to very good teaching that fosters pupils' imagination and to the quality of response from pupils, who value the chance to be creative. Those with highest attainment are particularly articulate in explaining the challenges they find in the subject, because teachers expect them to seek solutions to design problems for much of the time. This view is well supported by the high quality of pupils course work. In systems and control, a girl has designed a temperature sensor for a cot mattress, based on very good research into causes of cot deaths. Another is completing an attractive device for crushing cans as a result of her commitment to conservation of materials through recycling. In resistant materials pupils have excellent folders to show designs for gardens that will reduce stress. Standards of literacy are good, with examples of outstanding presentation and reporting of research findings. Pupils have good skills in presentation of numerical information, using the computer to present graphs and charts of research findings. They have equally good ability in interpreting such information. Standards are good in ICT in Key Stage 4, with some very good computer aided designs, for projects such as clock faces. They are less secure in Key Stage 3 because of insufficient use.

141. Achievement is very good because pupils of all levels of attainment make consistently good progress through the school. Year 7 and 8 pupils use tools productively in food technology and resistant materials, working with improving precision as they repeat the methods shown to them by the teacher. Year 10 have good graphics techniques, with examples of very good drawing as they design packaging for manufacturing products. Year 12 make very good use of computers in seeking information for a range of assignments on the treatment of metal. They have a very good sense of their strengths and weaknesses as a result of very good assessment with the teacher. A small number are finding that the course is very challenging and does not fully match their needs. Pupils with SEN, and those whose first language is not English, achieve as well as their peers in all key stages, as a result of good curriculum planning

142. Teaching and learning are very good. The quality of teaching is very good in more than half of the lessons and in the remainder it was good. Teachers know pupils very well and work closely with them, generating relationships of high quality to which pupils respond. Pupils are trusted to work independently. As a result, they have a strong sense of personal responsibility and are confident to take the initiative. By Year 13, the capacity of pupils to work independently is outstanding. Adults offer themselves as a resource to guide them as needs arise.

143. Teachers plan effectively. Improvement in the scheme in Key Stage 3 is offering more challenging work and is raising standards of work in Year 7, because teachers are building successfully on earlier learning. They manage and organise lessons very well. The use of resources is very good, but in some modules in Key Stage 3, better quality visual materials are required to help pupils find solutions to difficult technical problems. An extremely able and well-qualified technician takes full responsibility for monitoring safe practices by sixth formers and works closely with them on their projects. Teachers use assessment very well in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form, taking great care to monitor progress whilst pupils are working in groups and taking time to explain terminology further. In Key Stage 3 pupils do not have such good information about their strengths and weaknesses as they complete a module and transfer to the next.

144. The management and leadership provided by the head of department is good. The department has sustained its effectiveness under new leadership since the last inspection. Team commitment to pupils' achievements fully reflects the aims and ethos of the school in their high expectations of pupils. The department is effective in monitoring the standards pupils achieve in their work and they are very well placed to use such skills in making assessments in Key Stage 3 more cohesive across the department, ensuring that they reflect pupils' real standards at the end of the key stage.

GEOGRAPHY

145. This subject department is very effective and serves its pupils well. By the age of 14, pupils' attainment is very high. Inspection evidence, including lesson observation, scrutiny of work and discussions with pupils, supports the school's teacher assessments. Standards attained by the vast majority of pupils at the end of Key Stage 3 are well above those expected nationally. GCSE results are well above average when compared to similar schools, and have been for the last four years. The standard of work seen in Year 11 suggests that this very high attainment is continuing. The achievement by all pupils at the end of Key Stage 4 is very good: for higher-attaining pupils it is excellent. Standards attained by pupils in the Sixth Form are significantly well above the averages for similar schools for GCE A Level at all grades. These very high standards have been maintained for the last four years. Work in Year 13 shows that standards are well above those expected nationally.

146. Pupils achieve highly by age 14 in comparison with similar schools. By age 16, their achievement is very good and they continue to learn very effectively. These very good levels of achievement are continued into the Sixth Form, where pupils are motivated to work at full pace. Most pupils have a very good knowledge and understanding of geographic processes and patterns, and of environment themes. For instance in a Year 9 class, pupils are confidently using appropriate geographic terms and have a good understanding of processes such as coastal erosion and deposition. In Year 11 and the Sixth Form the vast majority of pupils are able to interpret geographic complex information and make reasoned judgements. This was well shown in a Year 12 lesson on the rural economy, where students were searching for information in secondary sources, making reasoned evaluations and then presenting their findings to the group.

147. Pupils with SEN and higher-attaining pupils make equally good progress, as a result of a skilful match of classroom tasks to the needs of individual pupils. This is well shown in a Year 9 lesson on soils, where very good progress was made as a result of the teacher's skilful use of carefully constructed tasks that both supported the slower learners and also allowed those who learn at a faster pace to move forward.

148. In nearly all lessons, pupils' learning is very good. Excellent relationships and behaviour, fostered by enthusiastic and stimulating teaching, contribute strongly to the positive attitude to learning. The vast majority of pupils respond well. They are eager, enthusiastic learners who readily engage in productive group and pair work, helping each other to search for information and solve problems. However, a small minority of pupils, especially in Year 10, has a low attention span and lose interest if teacher exposition is over long. They are sometimes too ready to spend time on low-level tasks and need prompting to move onto more challenging activities such as interpreting information and offering explanations.

149. Teaching overall is very good. The quality of teaching is excellent or very good in just under two-thirds of lessons, is good in about a quarter and satisfactory in the remainder. Teaching is most effective in the Sixth Form. In the overwhelming majority of lessons, the very good subject knowledge of teachers is skilfully transmitted to pupils through lively teacher exposition. It is invariably clear, stimulating and authoritative, drawing on many topical examples to illustrate and bring to life geographic themes. In a very small minority of lessons, however, progress is slowed by over-long teacher talk that results in pupils losing interest and becoming passive.

150. Learning is accelerated in nearly all lessons by the very skilful management of pupils through high expectations of behaviour. Teachers create a relaxed yet productive atmosphere that is highly conducive to learning. They expect much of their pupils. For instance, Sixth Form pupils are frequently exposed to topics that are more usually found in higher education. In Year 9, pupils successfully study soil processes, a topic that is more commonly found at GCSE Level. Teachers encourage pupils to persevere when faced with difficulty and, as a result, they readily engage in classroom activities, working with diligence and enthusiasm. Higher-attaining pupils especially are gaining a deep understanding of complex geographical issues, such as the environmental conflict arising from urban development.

151. Questioning is often used effectively to challenge and develop students' understanding. Teachers skilfully use a wide range of learning activities that are challenging, interesting and usually well matched to the needs of individual pupils. These are having a positive impact on the attainment, particularly that of higher-attaining pupils. Group work, role-play and simulations are very well used in enabling students to challenge and support each other in their learning. This was well demonstrated in a Year 13 lesson on agriculture, where pupils researched a topic and then shared their findings with the class.

152. In almost all of the 70-minute lessons, very good levels of concentration and interest are well fostered by a brisk and purposeful pace. Time is used to the full, with teachers fully engaging pupils in productive and interesting tasks. These are invariably well matched to pupils' prior attainment, resulting in them maintaining interest and becoming active learners. Pupils' progress in most lessons is greatly assisted by careful and detailed planning using activities that encourage pupils to 'find out' rather than be 'told'. The confidence of teachers not to over direct pupils in this way is rewarded by the pupils' sense of achievement at their discovery of knowledge, as in a Year 13 lesson on pollution, where the sequence of tasks led pupils to 'discovering' the link between the atmosphere / ocean and the activities of humans.

153. Homework is used well to support pupils' interest and understanding of their work. Many tasks are set which encourage pupils to develop research skills, particularly the use of computers to search for and present information. This is inhibited, however, by the current absence of the Internet in the school. Nearly all pupils are keen to succeed and most understand how well they are achieving. Pupils' work in most classes is regularly and accurately marked, with many helpful and supportive comments that encourage them to learn from their mistakes and make progress. The quality of marking does vary among teachers, however, and the department needs to find ways of ensuring that good practice is uniform and consistent.

154. The subject is well led and managed. Subject management is shared: this novel approach is working well. The joint heads of department complement each other in terms of experience and expertise and work very effectively with a team of enthusiastic geographers. All have a shared commitment to raise standards. The department identifies clear, quantified targets for improvements and devises strategies to reach them. The shared vision of the department fully matches that of the school. The geography staff complement each other in terms of their range of experience, and the heads of department have a strong

impact on creating a culture of self-evaluation in the subject. Leadership would be enhanced by a more systematic approach to monitoring the work of the department through lesson observation, and by the greater use of performance data to monitor individual pupils' attainment and progress and help identify under-performance. Progress since the last inspection has been good and the very high standards previously attained have been maintained. The department must build on this progress, by continuing to develop consistent teaching strategies that maintain and improve the attainment of all pupils, and by making greater use of assessments to monitor pupil progress and intervene when under-achievement is identified.

HISTORY

155. The standards of work in history are above national averages. Most pupils enter the school with attainment in history that is above that expected for pupils of a similar age nationally. Teacher assessments at age 14 years in 1999 and 2000 showed pupils performing well above national averages. The GCSE results in 1999 and 2000 similarly showed pupils performing well above average. This has been the trend since the last inspection. At GCE A Level, results are well above course averages, with all pupils obtaining grades in the A-C range in 1998, 1999 and 2000. As in the national picture, girls outperformed boys.

156. The achievement of pupils in work seen across both key stages is good and is very good in the Sixth Form. Pupils develop good skills in history by Year 9. They have a good grasp of chronology and how the past relates to the present. For example, in Year 8 pupils effectively developed an outline of the main changes, which occurred in Britain between 1750 and 1900. They can evaluate historical sources well, as shown in a Year 10 lesson where pupils came to valid conclusions based on differing accounts of 19th century emigration from Britain. Historical enquiry skills are well developed as shown by the in-depth enquiry in Year 9 on World War I. Many pupils carried out valid research, including private visits to the Imperial War Museum, which led to impressive pieces of extended writing. In the Sixth Form, pupils construct historical arguments from source material well, as was shown in a Year 13 debate on Napoleon's Continental System. The progress of pupils with special educational needs and of those with English as an additional language is at least satisfactory and often good. Tasks are well matched to their attainment and there is good teacher support for these pupils, but limited classroom assistance.

157. The attitudes of the pupils towards history are good, and very good in the Sixth Form. They have a genuine interest in history. A good example of this was seen in a Year 7 lesson when pupils were divided into groups to support one of the three claimants to the English throne in 1066 and then make a presentation, supported by posters, to the rest of the class. This involved skills in source work, chronology, cause and effect, art and literacy. The pupils worked enthusiastically and produced good results. Behaviour in lessons is good and pupils concentrate well and remain on task for long periods. Relationships are good, with pupils working together well and showing real respect for the teacher and the subject.

158. The quality of teaching and learning is good and is very good in the Sixth Form. This is having a significant impact on standards. The quality of teaching was very good in nearly half of the lessons, good also in nearly half and satisfactory in the remaining few. Teachers have good subject knowledge and lessons are well planned. Pupils understand clearly the aims of the lesson and most can link cause and effect well, as was shown in a Year 11 lesson when pupils considered such factors as war and religion and their role in helping or hindering the development of medicine. There are very high expectations of pupils, who respond with interest and enthusiasm. A good example of this was seen in a Year 12 lesson, when pupils studied excerpts from the writings of George Orwell, on the Depression of the 1930s in Britain and

then compared this effectively with the official view and statistics of the period. There is very good classroom control and pupils mostly work at a good pace, with effective teacher support. Learning is consolidated by good summary sessions at the end of lessons. There is a good literacy strategy, including the effective use of pupils reading aloud and extended writing tasks. Frequent checks are made for the understanding of historical terms, such as 'hindsight'. Little use of ICT was seen, although improvement is under way as part of the department development plan: this includes the recent creation of a school history website, that pupils consult. Books are marked regularly, with constructive comments added. The marking is closely linked to GCSE and GCE A Level examination grades and helps pupils, for instance, in Key Stage 4 and in the Sixth Form to improve their standards. The use of homework is good overall, with pupils often set appropriate research tasks to support their learning.

159. The leadership and management of the subject are good. There are frequent staff consultations, both formal and informal. Documentation is thorough and comprehensive. Schemes of work have been revised effectively and now meet the requirements of the National Curriculum. As part of the strategy to tackle the underachievement of boys, the department is moving away from the previous grouping by prior attainment, which led to an over representation of girls in the higher sets. Classes now have a balance between genders and a range of attainment within them. This provides good support for boys' learning.

160. Strong moral values underpin the teaching of history. A good example of this was seen in Year 9, when the pupils had to explain the issues involved in dealing with Hitler's aggression. There are limited opportunities for curriculum visits, but use is made of the remains of Ruislip castle, and Year 10 pupils, as part of their 'History around us' work, produce good examples of fieldwork based on Welsh castles. There are good arrangements to monitor the teaching of history, followed by staff feedback and discussion. A satisfactory scheme of assessment is being developed, and appropriate targets are set. The provision of staffing and learning resources is satisfactory. The accommodation, mostly in huts, is just adequate.

161. The department has improved well since the last inspection. Schemes of work now match more closely the needs of pupils, the range of resources to support learning has been increased and enquiry work has been developed, particularly in Key Stage 3. The department continues to build on the good practices commended in the last report, producing good, and often very good, results.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

162. Attainment overall in Key Stage 3 is in line with the national average. The progress made by pupils in Year 7 is very good and more marked than that for pupils in the other two years at Key Stage 3. Pupils in a Year 7 lesson had used a word processor to construct a questionnaire and a spreadsheet to sort and analyse the data, and the results were explained in detail, using text as well as a variety of charts to illustrate key points. National Curriculum requirements are fully met at this key stage.

163. In Key Stage 4, the GCSE information technology course has not yet been examined. Attainment overall in Key Stage 4 is in line with the average. Pupils on the full GCSE course make the most progress and attainment is mostly good. As part of their coursework, pupils have created spreadsheets using a range of formulae, they are able to explain clearly, and in detail, how they have achieved the required result. The attainment of the majority of those following the GCSE short course is satisfactory. Although there is some cross-curricular ICT in all subjects, those not taking an information technology examination rely mostly upon a short module in PSHE to develop their ICT skills. Consequently they make less progress than those on the examination courses. Where ICT is used in the Sixth Form attainment overall is above average. Pupils on GNVQ courses are able to use a range of software to enhance individual or group presentations. There is much autonomous use of ICT in Key Stage 4 and in the Sixth Form. A significant amount of computer work is undertaken at home. National Curriculum requirements are met at Key Stage 4.

164. The majority of pupils in all years have a very positive attitude to the use of ICT and are keen to play a full part in lessons, although a small minority at Key Stage 4 found it difficult to maintain appropriate levels of concentration throughout lessons. In all years, but particularly Year 7 and the Sixth Form, pupils were keen to share knowledge and skills with other members of the class. Sixth Form pupils also provide valuable support in ICT lessons for younger pupils in the lower school.

165. Teaching in discrete ICT lessons in Key Stages 3 and 4 is mostly good or very good. The quality of teaching in half of the lessons was very good and in a further third it was good. There was no unsatisfactory teaching. Lessons are well planned and learning is enhanced by the use of well-produced, differentiated resources. Homework is an integral aspect of learning in each course. Across the curriculum there is considerable variation in the commitment of teachers to the use of ICT in their lessons.

166. There are insufficient opportunities for all pupils in Key Stages 3 and 4 to use computers 'to measure, record, and respond to events' using data-logging resources. The current absence of any access to the Internet and e-mail is depriving teachers and pupils, in all years, of an essential learning tool. There are, however, plans for access throughout the upper school by the summer term. The number of computers has recently increased significantly and the number of pupils per computer now matches the national average. However, some subject departments are not yet taking full advantage of the new resources to support pupils' learning. In some departments there is a lack of subject specific ICT software and these deficiencies have been recognised. A detailed development plan is now in place and the new ICT co-ordinator is working with colleagues to ensure that shortcomings in resources and staff ICT skills are addressed. This should enable the school to continue with the improvements that have taken place since the last inspection.

167. The ICT department is well led and an effective programme for monitoring teaching and the impact of provision is in place. However, in order to improve standards further, the school should extend the range of ICT experiences that are provided across the curriculum. This is particularly pertinent for those in Years 10 and 11 who do not have discrete ICT lessons. In addition, all pupils should have access to the Internet, e-mail and data-logging resources.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

168. Since the last inspection, there has been an improvement in Key Stage 3 and GCSE modern language results. In the 2000 end of Key Stage 3 National Curriculum teacher assessments, standards were above average with over three-quarters of the pupils achieving the expected National Curriculum Level 4 or above. Standards at the end of Key Stage 4 are above average. In 2000, the proportion of Key Stage 4 pupils gaining grades in the A*-C range in Spanish and French was well above average and above average in German. There is a disparity between the standards reached by boys and girls, especially in Key Stage 4 in GCSE Spanish. Results show that while those for boys were lower than those for girls, both were above the national average for their gender and the disparity between them was no greater than that found nationally.

169. Overall standards in Key Stage 3 are above average. There are no significant differences in standards across the three languages. In one Year 9 lesson, however, examples of limited achievement in spoken French were seen. In Key Stage 4, with pupils grouped to study either a short or a full GCSE language course, the standards of their work are broadly average. Nevertheless, standards of pronunciation as well as of grammar observed in some lessons in Key Stage 4 are clearly below those required to gain the highest GCSE grades.

170. Pupils' attitudes to languages and their associated cultures are generally positive in both Key Stages 3 and 4 and in the Sixth Form. They apply themselves well to tasks, take care of their work, participate in learning willingly and usually have very good relationships with each other and with their teachers. There is a significant difference in pupils' motivation between Key Stages 3 and 4, with pupils in the latter displaying less commitment and perseverance. Sixth Form pupils are well motivated and fully involved in learning. While pupils' behaviour was satisfactory in lessons, significant numbers of them were not fully engaged in, or challenged by, their studies. These pupils included some who have SEN as well as higher-attaining pupils and those in need of specific support.

171. At Key Stage 3, pupils are developing a feel for their chosen modern languages; they understand a range of familiar, simple questions and commands and usually follow classroom instructions in the language being taught. Pupils conduct short dialogues with their teachers and with each other; they repeat words and phrases with reasonable accuracy; and generally show an enjoyment for their subject. Most pupils can respond to short simple questions in their chosen language, with many attempting fluency and accuracy in their pronunciation. Their writing is developing well, with most pupils undertaking sustained and consistent writing tasks in the languages of their choice. Many pupils are steadily acquiring skills to learn a modern language either independently or with other pupils in the class. At Key Stage 4 pupils are working well. Their written work is substantial, shows considerable effort and progress and evidence of homework based on relevant tasks involving short texts and dialogues in the languages they study. Many have developed independent language learning skills, with the use of dictionaries, audio and visual materials, and other extra reading and listening materials. Speaking in the target language with fluency and confidence still remains a challenge to many pupils. In the Sixth Form pupils are well organised and show marked skills for language learning. They have produced consistent and substantial written work to meet the course requirements. Their speaking and responding in the target language is becoming confident.

172. Teaching in modern languages is generally satisfactory at both Key Stages 3 and 4 and in the Sixth Form. The quality of teaching is good in a quarter of lessons and satisfactory in almost all of the rest. Teaching was unsatisfactory in one lesson. Teachers employ effectively a variety of activities and techniques to motivate all pupils and to raise the levels of their commitment to language learning. Through both planning and teaching, including schemes of work, the designing of activities and use of resources, teachers strive to challenge all pupils to their best performance in the four major skills in language learning - reading, writing, speaking and listening. Classroom management is generally conducive to language learning. Assessment, record keeping and monitoring of pupils' performance are consistent and integrated to the teaching-learning process. Teachers include activities to promote independent language learning skills. Good language teaching, as witnessed in a Year 11 German short course lesson, is characterised by positive and purposeful relationships that sustain a brisk pace, an enthusiastic but grammatically-constrained use of the target language, an interweaving of familiar words and structures with new language, written work naturally arising from spoken work and the use of consolidation to involve all pupils. Again, in a Year 8 German lesson, good teaching was the result of the teacher's planning for the differing needs of this large class that contained a wide range of attainment. Accordingly, a variety of equipment and activities, as well as support to individuals working in groups, promoted interest and independent learning skills, which enabled and encouraged all pupils to practise and to experiment with German. The use of ICT, employed by all teachers to good effect, provides a framework for individual and independent work, as well as extension of class work and homework.

173. However, in some teaching, there is an inadequate focus on meeting the learning needs of pupils, including those who have SEN, the higher-attaining pupils and those who need sustained support. Where there were low teacher expectations and unclear learning targets many pupils lacked concentration, did not make enough progress or achieve sufficiently well, as seen in one Year 9 and two Year 11 French groups.

174. Modern languages provision significantly extends equality of opportunity to all pupils and offers choice. From age 11 years, pupils have a choice of three languages: French, German or Spanish. They are also offered the possibility of studying two languages from Year 8. In Key Stage 4, pupils are offered full or short GCSE courses. This provision creates a framework of inclusion for pupils to learn a modern language. The department also maintains a Sixth Form programme in French, German and Spanish within a local consortium. Such an ambitious programme of modern languages across Key Stages 3 and 4 and in the Sixth Form poses management issues: for instance, time tabling priorities and methods of grouping pupils for teaching and learning; the level of resources needed for pupils of differing levels of attainment; and, to a lesser extent, the sharing of good teaching practice. Currently some of this provision has a low take up by pupils, especially for the three pupils in Key Stage 4 studying two languages.

175. The department is managed effectively. The committed and well-qualified teaching team is well supported by two foreign language assistants. The departmental development plan includes specific targets and strategies for achieving them. Assessment is satisfactory. Monitoring is frequent and effective in improving teaching. Since the last inspection, there has been an increase in support from senior managers. This has resulted in greater pace of development and change, especially in raising the standards and profile of modern languages and in increasing the range of its learning resources.

MUSIC

176. Pupils enter the school with a wide range of attainment, although for most it is below average. By the end of Year 9, standards are broadly in line with the national expectation, representing good progress through the Key Stage. Standards of singing are variable but improve throughout Years 7, 8 and 9. Pupils can sing with appropriate volume, clear diction and good posture. They can perform songs expressively, with a sense of enjoyment and communication, as for example when they performed *Lazybones* in jazz style. However, they do not have sufficient opportunities to develop a broad repertoire or to sing in parts. When pupils compose, they often show imaginative ideas in creating moods or effects, but most show limited understanding of the ways in which pieces can be developed. Pupils who play instruments can name notes and recognise common signs from their musical experience and most pupils show a competent understanding of notation. Pupils' instrumental work is often focussed on the keyboard. Good numbers receive instrumental tuition and almost all pupils have their own instruments, but they do not use them regularly in lessons to support instrumental tuition and strengthen the quality of music making in the classroom. Pupils listen respectfully to recorded extracts and sympathetically to each other's performances, and when they appraise music they use appropriate vocabulary. Sometimes, performance skills are underdeveloped. General musical knowledge is good, for example of artists, instruments, forms, styles, composers and well-known pieces.

177. In recent years, GCSE examination results have been above the national average. Music is a popular subject and high numbers opt for it. Standards in the current Year 11 group are above average. Performing skills are well above the expected levels. Most GCSE pupils sing in the school choirs. This helps to compensate for infrequent singing in lessons. The average performing grade in Year 11 is approaching grade VI, well above the average. Pupils compose competently showing imagination and technical understanding; some make good use of computers at home to develop and rotate their work but pupils are disadvantaged by the lack of machines in the department. Pupils show good general musical knowledge, especially of styles, forms, instruments and contemporary artists; they appraise well showing good technical vocabulary. Standards in Year 10 are well above average, supported by pupil attitudes that are particularly mature.

178. In recent years, examination results at GCE A Level have been in line with national results with only a few students opting for the subject, but now numbers are very healthy and improving. Standards are showing a slight upward trend. Practical skills in the Year 13 group average about grade VII. Compositions show good understanding of harmony and compositional devices; work in musical history shows good coverage of the syllabus and students show good general musical knowledge. Standards in the Year 12 group are well above average; the group contains talented and dedicated musicians who intend to pursue careers in music.

179. All pupils achieve well. Those who play instruments and read music make the best progress, building on their previous knowledge, wider experiences and their personal interests. Gifted and talented pupils are challenged and stretched most of the time, especially in the examination years. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress; they are well integrated.

180. Teaching is good. It is good at Key Stages 3 and 4 and in the Sixth Form it was very good. In 10 per cent of lessons teaching was excellent, in 40 per cent it was very good, in 35 per cent it was good and in 10 per cent it was satisfactory. Teaching was unsatisfactory in one lesson. Teaching in instrumental work is of high quality and teaching of extra-curricular groups is often excellent. Teachers show very good knowledge and prepare their lessons well. They are fine musicians who accompany, arrange, direct and

conduct competently. In most lessons, teachers communicate well; they give clear instructions and present information confidently, so pupils know what they have to do. In a lessons where teaching was unsatisfactory the teacher talked too much and there was not enough music making. Lessons always have a brisk start and make full use of the time. The best planning ensures that pupils are engaged in musical activity and develop skills to realise their potential. In one room, unsuitable desks prevent a wide range of musical activities and affect standards. Teaching is energetic, encouraging, sometimes humorous and charismatic; expectations are high so that pupils are interested, challenged and stimulated in most lessons. Class management is usually very good; relationships are often excellent. Pupils rate music highly and their enthusiastic attitudes and mature behaviour support their learning. They use equipment very sensibly and enjoy taking responsibility for their learning, for example when composing or performing in groups. Keyboards are used well but more use could be made of other classroom instruments. Teachers make good use of musical terminology, but visual aids are not always used to explain or illustrate. Assessment is constructive and questioning skilfully draws out responses from shy pupils. A major strength in the best lessons is the technical help given to show pupils on how to improve, for example when singing, playing or composing. Homework is used well, set regularly but not always for the younger pupils. This is a lost opportunity to extend practical work.

181. The management of the department is good and promotes high standards. Teachers are most enthusiastic, very hardworking and highly committed. Appropriate assessment schemes and schemes of work are in place and are being further improved. There are good links with other schools and the community. Accommodation is just adequate, with deficiencies at lower school where there is a lack of practice rooms for group work, and storage is insufficient. Although resources are satisfactory overall, shortages include classroom instruments, audio recording equipment, ICT resources and music resources for the library. Music makes a valuable contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils reflect and experience the joy of music when performing and listening; relate to moral messages, for example in songs; take responsibility for their learning in group work; appreciate our own cultural traditions and those of others, including the music of Africa, India and Indonesia. Since the last report there have been improvements in standards, especially in sixth form work, and in the teaching and management of the subject. There have been improvements to accommodation and resources, although some deficiencies still remain.

182. Eight visiting teachers provide a good range of instrumental and vocal lessons involving about 120 pupils. Also 48 more advanced pupils receive lessons in their own time as part of an local education authority scheme. The total involvement in instrumental playing is very high when compared with most schools. Standards are above average and achievement is good. Pupils' attitudes are very good but attendance varies. Teaching is of good quality: some very good woodwind teaching was observed. A wide range of extra-curricular musical activities supports instrumental lessons. These include a wide range of instrumental and choral ensembles. These groups involve about 20 per cent of the pupils, including good numbers in Key Stage 4 and the Sixth Form. Exemplary attitudes in these groups support the high standards. Regular visits to concerts include those to London. Visits into school include workshops given by the instrumental teachers organised by the local education authority. Annual musical events and concerts regularly involve several hundred pupils. The school is proud of its musical tradition and reputation. The quality of these activities reflects the dedication of staff, the support of parents and the enthusiasm of the competent and talented musicians whose performances and successes bring great credit to their school.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

183. On entry to the school, attainment in PE is in line with the national expectation. Pupils have some experience of games and gymnastics activities. By the end of Year 9, the attainment of the majority of boys and girls is above the national expectation. Good teaching and the positive attitude of pupils are responsible for the good progress made. Inspection evidence, including lesson observation and discussions with pupils reflect the recent end of Key Stage 3 teacher assessments. When playing badminton for the first time the majority of pupils are able to serve and clear the shuttle consistently. Boys and girls in Year 8 produce interesting paired balances in gymnastics. The majority of pupils in Year 9 have a good standard of fitness and are able to warm up and stretch out effectively.

184. Attainment in the GCSE PE course in 2000 was just above the national average for the proportion of pupils achieving A*-C grades. Results were, however, below other subjects in the school. The 1999 results were better than those achieved in 2000. Pupils in GCSE groups in Years 10 and 11 maintain these above-average standards but the achievement of the majority of pupils is only satisfactory because time is inadequate to enable high proportions of pupils to gain grades in the A*-C range. Some pupils have to pursue their chosen practical activity at lunchtime and all pupils miss their statutory PE lesson to undertake the theoretical aspect of the course. Pupils' written work is well presented and files are organised to provide a very good future learning resource. Pupils are able to express themselves confidently and fluently with good specialist vocabulary when discussing factors affecting participation in sport. The majority of girls have good fielding skills in rounders but they lack consistency when batting because the time on the activity is insufficient to raise the standard of their performance. The majority of non-examination pupils in Years 10 and 11 are attaining below the national expectation in basketball and volleyball. Boys and girls have low-level basic skills that limit the opportunity for them to take on the role of coach or referee. These standards reflect a lack of depth and a recreational element in the Key Stage 4 curriculum. This issue was raised in the previous report and remains an area for review.

185. Pupils will be entered for GCE A Level examinations for the first time in 2001. The pupils in Year 13, mainly boys, are currently reaching standards well above the course average. They have a very good knowledge of the social perspectives of sport and leisure, give extensive well-reasoned answers and take full useful notes. Year 12 pupils are reaching standards in line with the course average. They contribute well orally but they lack research skills and a deeper understanding of anatomy and physiology. Overall standards in the Sixth Form are above average in spite of the expectation that pupils from both years will undertake the practical aspects of the course as one teaching group in their lunchtime. This arrangement is having a detrimental effect on the standards that pupils in both year groups could achieve.

186. Several individual pupils and teams achieve high standards in district and county competitions in athletics, football, cross country, netball, hockey, swimming and basketball. The attainment of these pupils is well above that for pupils of a similar age nationally. They benefit considerably from the number and wide range of extracurricular opportunities offered by the department. These activities are a strong feature of the department and include not only competitive games but also outdoor activity visits.

187. Teaching is good overall and very good in the Sixth Form. The quality of teaching is very good in just over two-fifths of lessons, good in a quarter and satisfactory in the remainder. Pupils' learning benefits greatly from the very good subject knowledge of their teachers. The very good relationships that teachers have with their pupils contribute positively to the teaching and learning in lessons. Sixth Form lessons are very well planned and there are good strategies for highlighting examination questions and revision cues in pupils' files. Teachers' marking, assessment and recording procedures are thorough for GCE A Level and

GCSE courses. Very good teaching in Years 7 to 11 involves pupils in all strands of the National Curriculum. The teaching gives pupils the opportunity to acquire and use new skills, plan practices and sequences, and evaluate their own performance and that of others. Satisfactory teaching concentrates mostly on the acquisition of new skills and gives pupils fewer independent learning opportunities. The emphasis on performance skills in some teaching reflects the lack of teaching strategies outlined in the units of work. All teachers review previous learning with pupils and share with them the objectives at the beginning of the lesson. This particularly successful strategy increases pupils' understanding of the activity and quickly builds on their existing skills. The equal progress of pupils, regardless of their physical capabilities, is well supported by teaching in gender and ability groups, wherever the timetable allows, and by the use of appropriate equipment, for example the use of short rackets in a badminton lesson. ICT is not used sufficiently at present. The very good relationships and behaviour together with enthusiasm for the subject, enables pupils' learning to be effective. Large numbers of pupils attend the range of extra-curricular activities. Good provision is provided equally for boys and girls and a high proportion opt to take the GCSE examination at Key Stage 4.

188. The upper school has adequate facilities for PE. The consistent use of a classroom room to teach the theoretical aspects of GCSE and GCE A Level would allow teachers to use audio-visual equipment and ICT more frequently. The accommodation at lower school is unsatisfactory. The hall is the only indoor facility. It is old and is used as a dining hall and social area at break and lunchtimes: lessons have to finish early in order to allow sufficient time for furniture to be set up. These unsatisfactory facilities prevent the implementation of a broad and balanced curriculum and limit the progress of pupils in their planned activity when the weather is inclement. If National Curriculum requirements at Key Stage 3 are to be met, it is necessary for all Year 9 lessons to be taught at the upper school. This is not always the case at present. Work is planned to enable assessment to reflect the new National Curriculum levels. Currently they are not linked to the units of work and pupils are not aware of the activity criteria. However, the department does provide opportunities for pupils to assess their own work at the end of each activity module.

189. The head of department has been working with significant timetabling difficulties over several years and this has limited his effectiveness in providing clear educational direction for the subject. He supports the two newest members of staff well. The head of PE and members of the senior management team systematically monitor teaching and learning. There have been some positive developments including the extension of the Year 9 curriculum, the links made with the local leisure agency and the implementation of examination courses at GCSE and GCE A Level. However, the time allocated to these courses is insufficient for pupils to reach their full potential. The department will move forwards when these issues are resolved and pupils are regularly assessed and provided with clear levels of attainment for their work.