

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **MAIDENHILL SCHOOL**

Stonehouse, Gloucestershire

LEA area: Gloucestershire

Unique reference number: 115775

Headteacher: Mr Tony Trippett

Reporting inspector: Mr George Knights

Dates of inspection: 21<sup>st</sup> – 24<sup>th</sup> May 2001

Inspection number: 191374

Full inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

© Crown copyright 2001

This report may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that all extracts quoted are reproduced verbatim without adaptation and on condition that the source and date thereof are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the School Inspections Act 1996, the school must provide a copy of this report and/or its summary free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Foundation
Age range of pupils:	11 - 16
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Kings Road Stonehouse Gloucester
Postcode:	GL10 2HA
Telephone number:	01453 822469
Fax number:	01453 825615
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs J Silverwood
Date of previous inspection:	January 1997

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
3268	George Knights	Registered inspector		What sort of school is it? How high are standards? How well are pupils and students taught? How well is the school led and managed? What sort of school is it?
10173	Catherine Hinds	Lay inspector		Attitudes, values and personal development/attendance How well does the school care for its pupils and students? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
11969	John Hardy	Team inspector	Information and communication technology Design and technology	
6044	Roger Perkins	Team inspector	Mathematics	
21971	John Glennon	Team inspector	English	
30596	Jack Brown	Team inspector	Science	
19026	Brian Downes	Team inspector	Geography Special educational needs	
12110	Roger Bailless	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	How good are curricular and other opportunities?
8204	John Sheffield	Team inspector	Art and design	Accommodation
10895	David Wasp	Team inspector	History	Personal development Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development
3534	Ann Braithwaite	Team inspector	Equal opportunities Physical education	
18670	Peter Tidmarsh	Team inspector	Music	Staffing and learning resources

The inspection contractor was:

TWA Inspections Ltd  
5 Lakeside, Werrington  
Peterborough PE4 6QZ

Any concerns or complaints about the inspection or the report should be raised with the inspection contractor. Complaints that are not satisfactorily resolved by the contractor should be raised with OFSTED by writing to:

The Complaints Manager  
Inspection Quality Division  
The Office for Standards in Education  
Alexandra House, 33 Kingsway  
London WC2B 6SE

## REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
<b>PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT</b>	<b>6</b>
Information about the school	
How good the school is	
What the school does well	
What could be improved	
How the school has improved since its last inspection	
Standards	
Pupils' attitudes and values	
Teaching and learning	
Other aspects of the school	
How well the school is led and managed	
Parents' and carers' views of the school	
<b>PART B: COMMENTARY</b>	
<b>HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?</b>	<b>10</b>
The school's results and pupils' achievements	
Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development	
<b>HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS OR STUDENTS?</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES</b>	<b>31</b>

## **PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Maidenhill School is a mixed comprehensive school for pupils aged 11 to 16 years of age. It is located in the town of Stonehouse in Gloucestershire. The vast majority of pupils transfer to the school from six partner primary schools in the local area, with around half coming from the local school. There are 605 pupils on roll, which is lower than the average for secondary schools nationally. The school is larger than at the time of the previous inspection. The overall attainment of pupils on entry to the school is well below average. This is largely because 20 to 25 per cent of more able pupils from the area attend local selective schools. Pupils come from a broad range of socio-economic backgrounds, though many pupils come from areas of some socio-economic deprivation, with significant numbers of parents in low wage employment. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals, at 9 per cent, is below average. Less than 1 per cent of pupils come from minority ethnic backgrounds and only a very small number have English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils on the school's special educational needs register, at 30 per cent, is above the national average, whilst the proportion of pupils with statements of special educational needs, at 5 per cent, is well above the national average. Most pupils transfer, at the end of Year 11, to further education or training, with an average of around 10 per cent of pupils over the last three years entering employment at this stage.

#### **HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS**

Maidenhill is a very effective school, which continues to improve. It is a thriving learning community. Its many strengths far outweigh the areas where further improvement is necessary. Standards are improving, especially among older pupils in the school. Leadership and management are very good and teaching is good overall, enabling and encouraging pupils to achieve well in lessons. The school is very effective, particularly in fully living out what it aims to do. The capacity for further improvement is very good and the school gives very good value for money.

#### **What the school does well**

- It fully lives out its aim that pupils feel valued and respected, and thus feel good about themselves and their learning.
- It inspires pupils to do their best and to make the most of what the school offers.
- It creates a climate in which very good behaviour, good teaching and effective learning are regular features so that all pupils achieve well.
- Very good extra-curricular activities and strong community links enrich pupils' opportunities to develop in many different ways.
- Very good liaison with partner schools and colleges ensure that pupils build effectively on their previous work and are well prepared for future study.
- The determination of leadership and management ensures the strong commitment of all who work in the school to do even better.

#### **What could be improved**

- The level of involvement of all staff and governors in shaping the long-term strategic direction of the school.
- The provision for information and communication technology in the school, especially at Key Stage 4.
- The contribution which the school makes to enhancing pupils' spiritual development.

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

### **HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION**

Overall, the school has made good progress since it was last inspected in January 1997. The overall improvement in standards has been very good, especially at Key Stage 4, mainly as a result of good improvements in the quality of teaching. The mechanisms in place for sustaining further improvement are very good. The school has been successful in meeting the key issues identified in the previous inspection report.

There has been satisfactory progress in improving standards in mathematics, modern foreign languages, design and technology and geography. Good progress has been made in developing systems for monitoring the curriculum and in the sharing of good practice in teaching and learning. Pupils are now given much more responsibility than previously. Unsatisfactory progress has been made toward ensuring that all pupils can study religious education and that information and communication technology commitments are met at Key Stage 4.

## STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 14 and 16 year olds based on average point scores in national tests and GCSE examinations.

Performance in:	compared with				Key
	all schools*			similar schools**	
	1998	1999	2000	2000	
Key Stage 3 tests	D	D	E	D	well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E
GCSE examinations	D	C	D	C	

[\* - These comparisons are made with the averages for all schools. Maidenhill is situated in an area where up to 25 per cent of pupils attend selective schools.

\*\* - Similar school comparisons are usually made with all schools having similar numbers eligible for free school meals. These figures compare the results at Maidenhill with those of schools in areas where selection occurs.]

Results in national tests at the end of Key Stage 3 in 2000 were well below national average for all schools in English and mathematics and below average in science. Overall, results were below the average for schools in similar circumstances, though in line with the similar school average for science. These results were, in English and mathematics, lower than in the previous year. Over the past few years, results have remained broadly static overall, against a small improvement nationally. Pupils currently in Year 9 in the school are achieving well and are likely to achieve better results than those achieved last year.

Pupils make good progress during Key Stage 4. GCSE results in 2000 were below the national average, though those in 1999 were in line with national averages. The decline last year was anticipated, given the prior attainment of these pupils in national tests two years previously. There has been a significant upward trend in GCSE results since 1995. In 2000, results were in line with those for schools in similar circumstances. All pupils leaving the school last summer did so having gained at least five grades at G. This is very high when compared with all schools nationally.

The school sets itself challenging targets. In 2000 it exceeded the target for the number of pupils who would gain at least one grade G in GCSE examinations, but narrowly missed its target for the number gaining five or more A\* to C grades. The school has set itself challenging targets for the coming two years and the work of pupils currently in years 10 and 11 suggests that these targets should be met.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils' attitudes to all aspects of their life at school are good.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Pupils behave very well, both in lessons and around the school. They fully support the school's code of conduct.
Personal development and relationships	The school makes a very good contribution to pupils' personal development. Relationships, both among pupils and between pupils and staff, are very good.
Attendance	Attendance is good overall. Of particular note is the good attendance of pupils in Years 10 and 11.

Pupils are very enthusiastic about all that the school does for them. As a result, they work and play hard. Falling levels of exclusion are an indication of how behaviour and commitment of pupils is

improving. The fact that older pupils maintain good attendance levels is a consequence of them enjoying school life and is also a major factor in the very high numbers gaining five or more grades G or better in GCSE examinations.

### TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Teaching has improved since the previous inspection and is good throughout the school. Teaching is good or better in nearly three quarters of lessons and very good or excellent in over a quarter. It is only very rarely unsatisfactory. The teaching of English, mathematics and science is good and effective measures are being taken to improve pupils' literacy and numeracy skills in many subjects. Teachers cater well for the needs of all pupils, including those with special educational needs. A strength of teaching is the effective use of question and answer techniques which encourage pupils to explain and describe their work, thus improving their understanding. Teachers manage their classrooms well, thus encouraging pupils to be actively involved in lessons. A relative weakness is that homework tasks are not used well as a means of improving pupils' independent study skills.

### OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The school offers its pupils a good range of curriculum experiences.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	The provision made for these pupils, and especially for those with statements of special educational need, is good.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	The school has very few of these pupils. They benefit from the effective language support they receive and thus make good progress.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	This is good overall, with very good provision for pupils' moral development. The contribution which the school makes to pupils' spiritual development is unsatisfactory.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school cares very well for its pupils. Careful attention is paid to the needs of each individual pupil. Procedures for ensuring health and safety and for child protection are very good. Arrangements for monitoring pupils' progress are satisfactory.

The good curriculum is enriched by a wide range of extra-curricular activities, including trips and visits. The curriculum does not currently meet the requirements to include religious education and information and communication technology for all pupils in Key Stage 4. Whilst assessment arrangements are steadily improving, assessment information is not used well to guide curriculum planning. The school does not provide for pupils to take part in a daily act of collective worship.



## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The leadership and management of the headteacher and key staff are very good and have been a major factor in bringing about the improvement in the school.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	While governors know the school well, they are not sufficiently involved in monitoring progress, nor in shaping the future direction of the school.
The school's evaluation of its performance	This is improving. A comprehensive programme of self-evaluation is being developed and this is already being effective.
The strategic use of resources	This is good overall, with improving systems for measuring the cost-effectiveness of many aspects of the school's work.

The school is generally well resourced, though further information and communication technology equipment is required. There is adequate accommodation. Staff of the school are well qualified and are a dedicated team. The nurturing of excellent levels of commitment to improvement among staff is a major strength of management. The school applies the principles of best value well and now operates very effectively.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Eight parents attended a meeting with the Registered Inspector before the inspection took place. One hundred and seventeen parents returned questionnaires and 10 parents added comments to these.

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The school has high expectations of what pupils will achieve.</li> <li>Pupils make good progress at school.</li> <li>The school works closely with parents, keeping them well informed about the progress of their children, and is helpful when parents contact the school with questions or concerns.</li> <li>The school is well led and managed.</li> <li>The school offers a wide range of activities for pupils to take part in outside lessons.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A small number of parents responding felt that they would wish to see an improvement in arrangements for the setting of homework.</li> </ul>

Inspectors agree with the positive comments of parents. They recognise the concern of a small number of parents about homework arrangements. Whilst these are satisfactory overall in the school, not all teachers use homework tasks well, either to link work from one lesson to the next, or to help improve pupils' independent study skills.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

### **HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?**

#### **The school's results and pupils' achievements**

- 1 Pupils enter the school at the beginning of Year 7 with attainment that is, overall, well below the national average. This is mainly because the school is situated in an area where the vast majority of pupils in the highest 20 to 25 per cent of the ability range attend selective schools. For pupils entering the school in 2000, the overall average verbal reasoning score was well below the national average. In national tests at the end of Year 6, these pupils were below average in mathematics and science and well below average in English.
- 2 By the time pupils are 14 years of age, overall attainment in the school is well below the national average. In 2000, pupils' results in national tests were below average in science and well below average in English and mathematics. These comparisons need to be treated with caution, however, because this comparison is being made against all schools nationally, the majority of which are not situated in areas where there are selective schools. The school's results indicate that pupils had made satisfactory progress during Key Stage 3, given their prior attainment levels. Test results in 2000 were below the average for similar schools<sup>1</sup>. The overall trend in end of key stage test results has been little improvement, compared with slow improvement nationally, but again comparisons are unreliable as the overall ability of each intake of pupils varies considerably from year to year. There is secure evidence that, for several years, pupils have made satisfactory progress in their learning during their first three years at the school. In 2000, boys achieved less well than girls in national tests, but there is no pattern from year to year of girls consistently performing better than boys at this key stage.
- 3 Pupils currently studying in Key Stage 3 are, based on work seen during the inspection, achieving well. Although their overall attainment levels are below average, this represents good improvement since they joined the school. This improving pattern of achievement is a direct consequence of improved teaching levels in the school, coupled with positive pupil attitudes to their learning. In English, mathematics and science, pupils approaching the end of the key stage are working at levels which are, overall, below average. Their achievements in lessons are good in English and science and satisfactory in mathematics. Pupils are achieving well in all other subjects, except design and technology and modern foreign languages, where achievements are satisfactory. These good levels of achievement overall mean that pupils are reaching standards which are in line with the average in information and communication technology (ICT), geography, music, physical education and art, though attainment levels remain below average in design and technology, modern languages and history. Standards of work in religious education are below that anticipated in the Agreed Syllabus. The school is aware of the potential for differences in the attainment of boys and girls and takes steps to ensure that boys do not fall behind in their studies. These steps are being successful and there is no significant difference between standards of work being achieved by boys and girls in lessons, other than in design and technology and ICT, where girls achieve higher standards than boys.

---

<sup>1</sup> Conventionally, similar school comparisons are made with schools having the same proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals. Given that this comparison is with all such schools, most of which are not in areas where there are selective schools, it would be unreliable. The comparison here is with schools which have a similar intake profile as Maidenhill.

- 4 Results in public examinations have improved considerably since the previous inspection. The proportion of pupils gaining five or more GCSE A\* to C grades has improved from around 15 per cent in 1995 to 34 per cent in 2000, with a high of 51 per cent in 1999. This improvement is a consequence of placing the raising of standards at the centre of the school's aims and of improved teaching since the time of the previous inspection. Results remain below the national average for the number of pupils gaining five or more subjects at grade C or better, but this comparison is with all schools nationally. Given the nature of the school's intake, the improvement in GCSE results is creditable. Most impressively, the number of pupils leaving the school with five or more subjects in which they gained at least a G grade has, for the past three years, been very high when compared with all schools in the country. All pupils leaving school in 2000 achieved this level. A significant factor contributing to this success is the very good attendance patterns of pupils in Years 10 and 11. Whereas, in most schools, attendance rates decline as pupils get older, at Maidenhill they remain at a level which is above the overall national average and significantly above that normally achieved by older pupils.
- 5 In most subjects, the number of pupils gaining at least a C grade in GCSE examinations is below average, though it is above average in geography, food technology, music and in the short course in ICT. In almost all subjects, however, the proportion of pupils gaining at least a grade G is well above the national average. Girls' results in GCSE examinations are better than boys in most subjects, but are broadly similar in mathematics, geography and physical education.
- 6 From evidence of work seen during the inspection, pupils currently studying in Years 10 and 11 are building well on their achievements at the end of Key Stage 3. The overall standard of work is very close to the national average, with pupils generally achieving well in lessons. Work in English, mathematics and science is in line with the national average. In other subjects, standards are above average in geography and music and line in physical education. They are a little below average in other subjects. Here, as at Key Stage 3, the school has taken considerable steps to ensure that the attainment of boys is not significantly lower than that of girls and this is being successful in most subjects. Only in design and technology is there a marked difference in standards of work seen.
- 7 The school is acutely aware that a significant number of pupils have special educational needs and, at any one time, around a third of all pupils will be in the school's register of pupils who require some help with their learning. Through a combination of direct support for those who have the greatest need and sensitive guidance from class teachers for the remainder, all pupils with special needs are helped to make good progress, overall, throughout the school. These pupils make the good progress in English, mathematics, science, geography, art and physical education and satisfactory progress in other subjects. The school has a very small number of pupils for whom English is not their first language. Direct help, matched to specific needs, enables all these pupils to be well integrated into lessons. Most make good progress, with some individuals making outstanding progress during the past year.
- 8 Maidenhill has been a pilot school for the introduction of the national strategies for literacy and numeracy at Key Stage 3. Both of these initiatives have been beneficial in improving standards of literacy and numeracy in the school. In subjects other than English, pupils are able to practise their reading and writing skills successfully in geography, history and religious education, though few structured opportunities exist in other subjects. Teachers of science and a range of other subjects encourage the

use of correct subject vocabulary and spelling. In many subjects, pupils are encouraged to discuss and to answer questions at length, thus improving their speaking skills. Virtually all pupils are attentive listeners.

- 9 The school does not have a policy for the systematic improvement of pupils' literacy or numeracy skills in subjects other than English or mathematics and this is a main reason why the contribution of other subjects to the development of these skills, because of its inconsistency, is only satisfactory. Pupils are able to improve a range of mathematical skills, such as reading graphs, handling statistical data and measurement in several subjects, but the lack of a structured approach means that the contribution of other subjects to developing pupils' numeracy skills is not well developed. Similarly, the lack of a systematic approach means that the development and application of pupils' ICT skills in other subjects is inconsistent. Some good composition work takes place in music, pupils develop tables and graphs using computers in geography, there is some spreadsheet use in mathematics and pupils use word processing skills in some subjects. Recent improvements in resources have helped increase computer use in many subjects, but these developments have not been well coordinated and the school does not have a secure system in place for assessing pupils' progress in ICT applications. Overall, therefore, standards in ICT across the curriculum are below average, especially at Key Stage 4.
- 10 The school sets itself challenging targets for examination results at the end of Key Stage 4. In 2000, it did not quite achieve its target for the number gaining five or more A\* to G grades, but exceeded its target for the number gaining at least one grade G or better. Targets set for the coming two years are once again challenging, but the work of pupils currently approaching the end of their studies suggests that the school is well on the way to achieving them.

### **Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development**

- 11 A significant strength is the positive attitude which pupils have to learning and to school life. These attitudes are almost always good and are often very good. The happy faces of the pupils as they arrive, eagerly joining older and younger friends in the entrance hall, indicate their pleasure in their time at school. Parents value these positive attitudes and recognise how they contribute towards the good progress which pupils are making.
- 12 The school has successfully improved the pupils' attitudes to learning since the previous inspection. Pupils' attitudes to lessons are now good. They enter classrooms quietly and compose themselves well, ready to begin their work. Most pupils listen attentively to teachers comments and instructions and many are prepared to answer questions. These positive attitudes are evident whether pupils find learning easy or difficult. There are some occasions when pupils are totally absorbed in their learning. Pupils in a Year 9 personal and social education lesson attentively watched a video about the dangers of drugs. They were then riveted by the teacher's own examples of peer pressure and cigarette smoking. A group of Year 8 pupils in science were so enjoying their lesson that, as the session finished, they did not want to stop their work on bridges and forces. These positive attitudes help pupils learn well. Many of a class of Year 10 chefs remained in the kitchens throughout break, finishing decorating their cheesecakes and enthusiastically tidying up.
- 13 The pupils' enthusiasm for school life extends beyond the classroom. They talk with relish about the many and varied opportunities available to them. They are particularly enthusiastic about drama, music and sports. Groups of pupils are often

seen musing delightedly over the photos of the recent school production of *Jesus Christ Superstar*. Year 9 athletes proudly shared their tournament achievements in javelin and relay events with rest of their tutor group. When pupils' attitudes are unsatisfactory it is on the rare occasions when teachers do not motivate and stimulate them or clarify expected behaviour.

- 14 The vast majority of pupils at Maidenhill behave very well. Pupils demonstrate a high standard of behaviour, both in lessons and around the school. They are quiet, courteous and controlled in class and are careful as they move from room to room. The behaviour of the pupils in the playground is good and breaks are, therefore, happy occasions where youngsters socialise easily and energetically.
- 15 A few pupils find it difficult to conform to the school's clear code of conduct. The unsatisfactory behaviour of this very small group is contained so that it does not upset the learning of others or spoil the genuinely harmonious atmosphere in the school. The school did not permanently exclude any pupils during the last academic year. The occasions when pupils have been excluded for a fixed period are far fewer than in similar schools and are reducing. The school's response to excluded pupils is particularly caring and supportive. A few pupils permanently excluded from other schools are thriving at Maidenhill School. Pupils respond sensibly to the school's very good arrangements for providing an atmosphere free from oppressive behaviour. Bullying is rare and pupils rightly feel confident that when it does occur it will be dealt with quickly, fairly and sensitively.
- 16 The very good relationships between staff and pupils lie at the heart of education at Maidenhill School. This is a very friendly community where everyone feels valued and respected. Pupils get on well together, whether working in lessons, socialising around the school or taking part in the numerous activities available. Particularly pleasing features are the natural companionship between boys and girls and between older and younger pupils.
- 17 Pupils offer one another very good support in lessons as when, in a Year 9 mathematics lesson, those working in pairs helped each other solve linear equations. Pupils are sensitive to the feelings of others and tolerant of the less able. Pupils stumbling over scripts in a Year 9 drama lesson, for instance, were given the time and encouragement they needed to manage their parts. All pupils also listened attentively to one another's ideas about stage sets. Very good relationships often give lessons a highly collaborative feel, as illustrated in an excellent history lesson for Year 8 pupils. Debate was fierce yet mature and thoughtful as pupils probed each other's opinions on whether the story of *Roots* about the African slave trade was fact or fiction. The feelings, opinions and experiences of others are taken seriously. Very mature responses emerged during a religious education lesson about Buddhism as Year 9 pupils, half of whom have learning difficulties, reflected sensitively on photographic images of starvation and suffering.
- 18 Pupils have very good relationships with all adults. Whilst the pupils are interested and curious about the activities of their elders, they are almost always polite and respectful. Visitors are warmly welcomed and told about life at the school and pupils respond keenly to opportunities to talk about life at the school. Pupils treat staff with courtesy and respect. This community works and plays well together. Pupils were very vocal in support of their various teachers and tutors during a recent *Who wants to be a millionaire* fund-raising event!
- 19 The school places great importance on the development of self-esteem, independence, a sense of personal responsibility and self-discipline. Pupils'

personal development is, therefore, good. The vast majority of pupils take a significant degree of responsibility for their life in school. They manage their belongings and the daily routines of school life with very little prompting from staff. The school provides very good journals for pupils to record their homework, attitude and effort grades and any rewards gained. Pupils use these sensibly and are proud to share the evidence of their efforts.

- 20 The school now provides good opportunities for pupils to take responsibility for particular aspects of school life. This is a significant improvement since the previous inspection. Different tutor groups lead fund-raising activities, such as non-uniform days, which raise large sums of money annually. Year 9 pupils talk responsibly about their role as guides for the school's Open Days. Year 10 help organise induction days for potential pupils in the summer term and then as Year 11 pupils they help the new Year 7 pupils settle in. The Year 7 pupils talked gratefully about the support which these older pupils had given them.
- 21 School attendance levels are good and are significantly higher than in similar schools. Pupils enjoy coming to school so the vast majority attend well. A significant and rather unusual characteristic is that Year 10 and Year 11 pupils attend almost as well as the youngest pupils. This is rarely the case in other schools. Much effort is put into providing a wide range of activities to stimulate pupils' interest and secure their continued commitment to regular attendance. The school is making considerable progress in helping improve the attendance of the tiny minority who experience difficulty in attending regularly.

#### **HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?**

- 22 The overall quality of teaching is good and has improved considerably since the time of the previous inspection. Teaching is very good or excellent in over a quarter of lessons and is good or better in nearly three quarters. Only very rarely is teaching unsatisfactory. The small amount of unsatisfactory teaching occurs in Year 9. There is no significant difference in the teaching from one key stage to another. This consistently good teaching, overall, motivates pupils, encouraging them to have positive attitudes to their studies, and thus helps them to achieve well in most lessons.
- 23 At the time of the previous inspection there was some very good teaching in the school, but the report indicated the need for more consistency in teaching from subject to subject. This was taken seriously, good practice already in the school was identified and training for all staff helped identify where improvements were needed. Subsequently, the school has been involved in a detailed programme of self-evaluation which has included training for all heads of department in classroom observation skills. This has helped them to guide the members of their departments in how to improve their work. These two initiatives, particularly, have helped bring about the significant improvement in teaching, with greater consistency being a marked change.
- 24 The teaching of the core subjects of English, mathematics and science is good throughout the school. Teaching in English and mathematics has been influenced by the school being involved in the introduction of the national strategies for literacy and numeracy. Training associated with these strategies has sharpened teachers' awareness of the importance of a clear lesson structure and planning of lessons has improved as a result. In turn, pupils have a clear understanding of the purposes of their lessons and are thus able to see more clearly the progress they are making. In

all three subjects, teachers have high expectations and this encourages pupils to achieve well in many lessons. In most lessons, teachers provide a stimulating range of activities which help to hold pupils' attention throughout. Occasionally, in some science lessons, teachers are over directive, thus limiting the scope for pupils to develop their skills in managing their own work. The marking of work in all three subjects is conscientiously undertaken, but there is inconsistency, both within and between subjects, in its quality. The best marking gives pupils clear guidance on what they need to do to improve, but this is not always the case.

- 25 Elsewhere in the curriculum, teaching is very good in history and religious education and in physical education at Key Stage 3. It is good in art, geography and music throughout the school, in physical education at Key Stage 4 and in design and technology at Key Stage 3. The teaching of design and technology and ICT at Key Stage 4 is satisfactory, as is the teaching of modern foreign languages throughout the school. Only very rarely is teaching unsatisfactory. This unsatisfactory teaching sometimes occurs when the structure and organisation of the lesson is not good enough to ensure that the pupils are fully engaged in activities. At other times the pace slackens, as in a Year 9 mathematics lesson on the squares and square roots of numbers, or time is not effectively managed, as in a Year 9 design and technology lesson where pupils were making a container for small items. In these situations, pupils do not make satisfactory progress during the lesson.
- 26 The teaching of basic skills is generally satisfactory. In many subjects, teachers are careful to ensure that pupils use the correct vocabulary and many teachers pay close attention to correcting spelling when necessary. A significant improvement in teaching has been in encouraging pupils to talk more about their learning. This has had the dual effect of helping pupils gain an understanding of the subject as they seek to explain and describe their work, but has also improved pupils' skills in speaking and listening. Many subjects make use of pupils' mathematical skills and this helps reinforce these. In neither literacy nor numeracy does the school have a policy to guide the contribution of each subject to developing these skills and thus the contribution of subjects remains inconsistent. There is an expectation that all subjects will provide some contexts in which pupils can develop and apply their ICT skills. Many subjects are doing this, but again practice is inconsistent. This is particularly significant at Key Stage 4 and here pupils' progress in ICT development is unsatisfactory as a result.
- 27 Teachers generally have very good knowledge of their subjects and, more particularly, of how to present them well to pupils. This was very well illustrated in a Year 9 religious education lesson on Buddhism. The teacher, with skilful use of materials and music, created an atmosphere which inspired the pupils to explore their feelings, to write empathetically and to show real sensitivity to complex issues. A good understanding of subject material provides a strong basis for good planning which is also a feature of most lessons. Considerable improvement has been made in careful structuring of lessons since the previous inspection. Teachers set out the purpose of lessons for pupils and many use effective question and answer techniques to set the scene by reviewing with pupils what has been learned previously. This is making a significant difference to pupils who now feel much more involved in their learning than previously. Some teachers use their assessments of pupils' work, including the marking of written work, very successfully to give pupils a clear understanding of the progress they are making and what they need to do to improve. Others are beginning to support pupils in the self assessment of their work. Marking and the encouragement of pupils in assessment of their own work are the aspects of teaching and learning which continue to be inconsistent.

- 28 Teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve. As a result, they modify work in order to help pupils of all levels of ability achieve well in lessons. This has been a major factor in bringing about improvement in overall standards in the school since the previous inspection. High expectations of pupils are particular features of teaching in religious education and physical education. The teaching of the many pupils who have learning difficulties pays careful attention to their individual needs. Teachers work very well alongside learning support workers to provide specific help, as in a Year 9 English lesson. Here, direct support for a small number of pupils who have difficulty with their writing helped them to play a full part in the lesson and to improve their skills. Some exceptional support for a pupil who arrived in the school earlier in the year speaking no English has helped her to make outstanding progress in all her lessons.
- 29 Careful planning ensures that the methods teachers choose are well matched to pupils' needs. An excellent opening discussion, for instance, on the lifestyles of professional footballers in a Year 9 geography lesson helped pupils gain clear insights into third world poverty as they contrasted this lifestyle with that of young people in other countries who were employed in stitching footballs. In other lessons, teachers encourage pupils to gain different insights into the topics they are studying. In a Year 8 history lesson, for example, the teacher asked pupils to concentrate, as they watched a video, on the captain of a ship carrying slaves, as a means of gaining a better understanding of different attitudes to slavery in former times.
- 30 Other features of effective teaching are the good use made of both time and resources. In a food technology lesson, for instance, pupils were made very aware of time constraints when preparing their fruit salads. In a Year 9 mathematics lesson, the teacher used an overhead projector display very effectively to help pupils with their key presses as they produced line graphs on their graphic calculators. These are examples, also, of teachers being attentive, in their planning and teaching, to the specific needs of the pupils. The response of pupils to this care is very positive. Pupils show interest in their tasks and concentrate for long periods of time. Teachers have taken seriously the criticism in the previous inspection report that pupils at that time were not given sufficient responsibility for aspects of their learning. Pupils are now encouraged to explore, to experiment and to investigate, to good effect. Many pupils also make good use of the resource centre and gain information from a variety of sources, including the internet, with confidence.
- 31 Most teachers set homework in accordance with the school's timetable and pupils generally respond by undertaking the tasks set seriously and willingly. In subjects such as science, geography, art and religious education, homework is used well to link work from one lesson to the next, to give pupils practice in skills learned in lessons and to develop their skills in independent study. Elsewhere in the curriculum, the use of homework is generally satisfactory, but is not always seen as an integral part of pupils' learning. In modern foreign languages, the use of homework, especially for lower ability pupils, is unsatisfactory.

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

- 32 The school has maintained and extended the curriculum provision commended in the previous inspection report. It now provides a curriculum that encourages all-round achievement, which meets the different needs, aptitudes and interests of all its pupils and is enriched by many of extra-curricular activities. Curricular links with the local community and other schools are also very good. Overall, the school has maintained



and built well on most of the achievements outlined in the report of the previous inspection.

- 33 Pupils successfully follow a common curriculum at Key Stage 3. An enrichment programme in Years 8 and 9 extends the number of subjects pupils are able to study. This programme includes short courses in drama, dance, German, Spanish, media studies and information and communication technology (ICT). The course provided in German, for example, helps pupils decide which language to study at Key Stage 4. This overall pattern enables pupils to make informed choices and helps ensure a wide choice for all.
- 34 The extent of the subject and option choices available at Key Stage 4 is good for a school of this size. Eight subjects are usually studied to GCSE level, some of which pupils are able to choose from the wide selection of subjects on offer. Physical education and catering have been added to the GCSE courses available. This wide range of subjects meets the diverse needs and abilities of different groups of pupils very well.
- 35 Most of the requirements National Curriculum are met. However, insufficient time allocation means that the school does not meet the statutory requirement to provide courses in ICT and religious education for all pupils at Key Stage 4. These issues were identified at the time of the last inspection and have not been fully resolved, in spite of increased resources in ICT, for example.
- 36 The school demonstrates a strong commitment to providing the full range of subjects and activities to its pupils. All, except for a small number in languages, take the eight GCSE courses available. Courses for pupils with special educational needs are good throughout the school. The language and number skills of these pupils are well developed through withdrawal from some lessons to work in small groups or through additional classes. Some departments are making special provision for pupils identified as gifted or talented, but the lack of a whole school policy means that the needs of these pupils are not consistently well catered for.
- 37 The school's strategy for improving standards in literacy across the curriculum is satisfactory and is under review. A pilot of the National Literacy Strategy has been introduced into the English Department. Other departments have contributed by identifying the ways in which their subject teaching impacts on the use of language and by developing strategies for improving the quality of language used. Positive contributions are made in a number of subjects, including geography, history and religious education. The school has taken a similar approach in its drive to improve standards in numeracy. An audit has identified the occasions when pupils can apply their number skills in different subjects. A pilot of the National Numeracy Strategy has begun in Years 7 and 8 and a policy to guide work across the school is under development.
- 38 A very good extra-curricular programme provides a wide choice of high quality activities. These activities are carefully planned and co-ordinated to support and extend the curriculum. They include numerous educational visits, both in this country and abroad, some of which take place during the school's activities week. There are also many activities in art, dance, drama, physical education and other subjects. In music there is a very good provision for extra instrumental and vocal lessons.
- 39 A particular strength of these activities is the way they are organised to meet the individual interests and talents of all pupils in the school. Many activities, such as spelling and handwriting clubs, also support work in lessons. Pupils with special

educational needs have additional support through a before-school breakfast club. Pupil participation rates in all these activities are high, many teachers are involved and, overall, standards are good.

- 40 Personal, social and health education is taught during tutor periods. Time allocation is limited, but coverage of drugs, careers, health issues, and sexual relationships is good. Some topics are based on common planning within partner primary schools which ensures consistency of approach and messages which are given to all pupils. Effective provision is made for work related education. A particular strength is the very good links with external agencies such as the Careers Service, local colleges, companies and the *Learning Partnerships West*. Work experience is structured to provide a positive experience for all pupils. It is well organised to help pupils grow in confidence as they meet new people and situations. Careers education and guidance gives pupils good decision-making skills and they make well informed choices about options and career paths. Pupils with special educational needs are given particularly good support.
- 41 The school has very good, extensive links with the local community which enhance the academic and personal development of pupils. An excellent school newsletter and a website are effective channels of communication. Visitors including police, paramedics, youth and community workers, help pupils learn to prepare for their adult life. The study of catering is enriched by giving pupils the opportunity to work with a local chef. Visiting theatre workshops, local education business partnerships and community dance and arts projects extend the range of pupils' learning and broaden their experiences. The school's recreation centre is used extensively by the local community and there is a sense of communal purpose to many activities.
- 42 The school creates very good and constructive relationships with partner institutions. Local arrangements bring together all phases and types of school in the community. The group of schools is very well organised, helping to put teachers in touch and run working groups. This results in very good school links. Pupils, therefore, build coherently on what they have previously learnt in other schools and are well prepared for their transition into the next phase of education.
- 43 Overall, the school makes very good provision for the moral development of pupils, and good provision for their social and cultural development. Provision for spiritual development, however, is unsatisfactory. Although provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good, overall, it is not monitored closely on a whole school level, so good practice cannot be built upon.
- 44 The contribution which the school makes to pupils' spiritual development is unsatisfactory. Important issues were raised in the previous inspection report on the need to provide a daily act of collective worship and religious education for all pupils at Key Stage 4. Whilst there is a programme of year group assemblies, these rarely provide an element of spirituality and there is little time for personal reflection. Registration times are used mainly for social and administrative purposes and, as a result, the school still fails to comply with the requirements for collective worship. There is still no provision of religious education for all pupils at Key Stage 4. Within the curriculum, the spiritual dimension of life is fostered particularly well in religious education, where pupils are given full opportunity to reflect in depth on spiritual and moral issues. These are also fostered in English, history and geography, but elsewhere there are few opportunities for spiritual growth or reflection on wider issues. The school thus fails to make spirituality an entitlement for all its pupils.

- 45 Very good provision is made for the moral development of pupils. There is an effective system of merits and responsibility awards to celebrate pupil's achievements. There is a commendable emphasis on respect throughout the school and firm but fair disciplinary procedures are in place to help pupils distinguish right from wrong. Issues of bullying and drugs education are dealt with effectively and teachers provide very good role models for pupils throughout the school. There are many initiatives to promote moral development, such as the charity work undertaken by many pupils, *The Stonehouse Millennium Project* and drama work with police on local issues. Moral issues are discussed in religious education, personal, social and health education, history, geography, art, English, mathematics and physical education lessons.
- 46 The provision for social education is good. Pupils from the school are represented on the Stroud Youth Council and there are other openings within the school for pupils to take responsibility. These include the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme, dance projects with local primary schools and the involvement of Year 11 pupils in helping Year 7 pupils to adjust to a new school. In this respect, the school has addressed successfully an issue raised in the previous report. There are also numerous after school activities, including clubs in many subject areas. Relationships are a strength in the school and there is a safe and harmonious atmosphere both in classrooms and throughout the school campus. There is an emphasis on group work and pupils' participation in many subjects. Social development is cultivated particularly well in physical education, religious education, geography and English.
- 47 Provision for the cultural development of pupils is also good. There is a strong programme of visits, exchanges, speakers and extra-curricular activities to widen the horizons of pupils, especially in history, modern foreign languages, physical education and English. Cultural awareness is also fostered through clubs and activities, such as sports clubs, and music and drama productions. In this connection, the school has won an Education Extra award for its extra-curricular provision and has also achieved a Sportsmark award. In the mainstream curriculum, cultural development is fostered well in art, music, history, and modern foreign languages. Pupils celebrate the cultural diversity of British society and that of the wider world in religious education, physical education and history. This area of cultural provision is, however, less well developed.

#### **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?**

- 48 A notable characteristic of the school is the very good care that members of staff take of all the pupils. This was highlighted as a good feature in the previous inspection report and has continued to improve. The school aims to make Maidenhill a place 'where all pupils feel secure and have their right to learn and to develop their particular abilities respected'. In this it is successful. All staff know their pupils very well and significant time and energy are spent identifying and meeting the needs of each individual, thus ensuring very good levels of pastoral support. Parents appreciate and value this aspect of the school's work.
- 49 The genuine and consistently caring attitude of all staff is of particular benefit to the welfare of the pupils. The school is part of the Stroud pyramid of schools and as such has very good liaison with primary schools and local colleges. Year 6 pupils from a local primary school visit weekly and have a science lesson in a laboratory with Maidenhill school teachers. The very good induction and transfer arrangements ensure that pupils' needs are identified and there is careful allocation to tutor groups. Key stage co-ordinators provide good help to their tutor teams, giving sensitive guidance for the handling of difficult situations. The positive rapport between tutors

and pupils means that pupils are confident that help is always available. Pupils' concerns are often anticipated, are heard sympathetically and always followed up with sensitivity and care. Very good relationships between all staff help the very effective formal and informal exchange of information about pupils.

- 50 The quality and value of registration sessions are variable. Pupils are accustomed to reading silently or chatting quietly whilst tutors undertake duties such as marking registers and checking pupils' journals. In too many of these sessions there is little purposeful activity.
- 51 The contribution which all support staff make to ensuring pupil's welfare is very good. The general office runs smoothly and this efficient administration ensures that information about pupils is communicated quickly and effectively. Those who are sick or injured are looked after carefully. Very good child protection arrangements are in place. Even the very newest member of staff is aware of individual responsibilities and procedures. The governing body ensures that arrangements for promoting the health and safety of everyone in the school are thorough and professional.
- 52 The school takes very good care of pupils with special education needs. Good quality individual education plans suited to their needs are prepared for them. The targets in these plans are clear and are suitably specific for each pupil. The learning support workers provide effective help in lessons, enabling these pupils to make similar progress to that being made by other members of the class. When pupils are withdrawn from lessons for additional support, the quality of the help they are given is equally good. Learning support workers make extensive notes of pupils' progress, which are usefully used in discussions and planning. These support workers have very good relationships with all pupils, but particularly those with learning difficulties. These relationships help pupils adopt positive attitudes to themselves and others. The school works well with other agencies to meet the needs of all pupils in the school.
- 53 There are very good arrangements for promoting acceptable behaviour, resulting in the civilised atmosphere in the school. Almost all the pupils are committed to the school's consistently applied system of rules and sanctions, including exclusions. Some pupils have individual education plans for behaviour. These are regularly reviewed and are available to all staff. These pupils are thus supported well. The school makes very careful and limited use of fixed term exclusion as the penultimate sanction. Permanent exclusion, the ultimate sanction, has not been used at all during the last school year. Bullying is rare and there is no racial tension because the school has very good arrangements for preventing such behaviour. A good range of rewards is used carefully to motivate pupils to work hard and behave well. Pupils respond positively to the recognition they or their fellow pupils are given.
- 54 Arrangements to promote regular attendance have improved considerably since the previous inspection and are now very good. Computerised registration procedures are correctly and consistently managed by all staff and immediate follow up of absence is normal practice. Rewards are used well to motivate pupils to attend well and over a hundred pupils received 100 per cent attendance certificates last term.
- 55 Good procedures are in place for assessing attainment and progress of all pupils, including all those with special education needs. Comprehensive information about each pupil's attainment is available when pupils start at the school. Regular assessments are undertaken in all departments and the school uses national assessment and examination data effectively to review progress. The assessment

procedures in place in science, history, geography, religious education and physical education are better than in other subjects in the school. Teachers make clear to pupils exactly what is being assessed and they provide effective oral and written feedback to pupils. Procedures for assessing the development of pupils' information and communication technology skills in other subjects have not been developed. The school makes effective use of assessment to guide its curriculum planning.

- 56 Teachers' marking of pupils' work varies in quality within and between subjects. At its best it accurately indicates the standards a pupil has achieved from a piece of work, illustrating strengths against detailed information of National Curriculum requirements. On occasions, however, marking shows no more than an acknowledgement that a piece of work has been completed, with no indication of how the pupil could have improved it. A few departments are successfully developing good self-assessment techniques. In religious education, for example, pupils are required to complete a sheet describing and evaluating their own performance.
- 57 Pupils receive good guidance about their academic and personal development. Teachers carefully encourage pupils to try harder. Some departments make good use of target-setting techniques to help pupils manage their own improvement. Religious education uses the information from the self-assessment sheets to help pupils identify the next step for themselves. The use of target setting is not yet consistent across all departments, nor is it sufficiently well focused on exactly what the pupil needs to do within the subject to improve.
- 58 Annual reports are good and usually give parents a clear picture of their children's strengths and weaknesses in each subject. Departments are expected to identify distinct targets for improvement, but there is still some inconsistency in the precision of target setting in their reports, mainly owing to teachers not following guidance sufficiently carefully. Pupils are helped by their tutors to consider their targets and record these in their journals.
- 59 The internal reporting system is very good. Reports are gathered each half term for every pupil and these grade the pupils' attitude and effort for every subject. Every department uses the same system and criteria for the grades have been very carefully identified and described to staff, pupils and parents. These reports supply a very clear picture of how pupils are progressing and identify any under-performing pupil or department. Pupils record their grades in their journals and are required to share these with their parents. Action is taken not only to plan for improvement, but also to congratulate pupils where good progress has been made. Tutors subsequently help pupils to measure progress against their identified targets. The school is about to implement a programme whereby these targets will be reviewed on a half termly basis.

## **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?**

- 60 Maidenhill school is totally committed to working with parents to ensure the most effective education of all its pupils. This commitment is set out in the foreword to an extremely good *Standards Booklet* which the school has carefully prepared for parents. This booklet identifies clearly the aims and expectations of the school and exemplifies the positive attitude which the school has to including and involving parents. It is not surprising, therefore, that the vast majority of parents are exceptionally supportive of the school. Parents recognise and applaud the school's many strengths, particularly the high expectations it has for the pupils, and have no major concerns about any aspects of school life.

- 61 The school has maintained the very good relationships with parents identified in the previous inspection report. The school welcomes parents and all members of staff are open in their approach to them. Staff willingly commit time and energy to communicating with parents, listening carefully to their queries and diligently following up concerns. The school operates an immediate response policy which parents recognise and value. Each September, parents are sent a curriculum booklet to advise them of the content of the courses for the year ahead and how they can support their children's work. The interesting and invigorating displays in the entrance hall and corridors are evidence of the time and energy that the school devotes to ensuring that all visitors and parents feel welcome in the community.
- 62 The needs of parents are carefully considered, as instanced by the very good induction information and procedures. Parents of Year 7 pupils are given a settling-in report and an evening meeting is arranged for them in the autumn term to meet their child's tutor and key stage co-ordinator. Governors regularly attend parent consultation evenings to canvas the views of parents, seeking their views on matters such as the home-school agreement or homework.
- 63 The school produces very good general information for parents. The most distinctive feature is the excellent termly newsletter. Its information-packed pages are beautifully presented and give a wonderfully full and vibrant picture of life at Maidenhill School. The community is committed to helping in its production. All opportunities to enrich this publication are taken. The next edition will feature a rather different article – an interview of the Registered Inspector by a group of pupils. In stark contrast, the annual governors' report for parents, while fulfilling legal requirements, does little to encourage parents to read it or to attend the annual meeting.
- 64 Information about individual pupils is good. Annual reporting systems are efficiently organised and staff readily make themselves available at times other than advertised consultation evenings. Teachers provide good annual reports, containing full information about what pupils can do in each subject area. Some subjects include explanations of the difficulties which pupils are experiencing, but this is not a feature of all reports. There is inconsistency in the use of descriptions of exactly what the child needs to do next to improve. The reporting of personal development is very good, enhanced by the half termly attitude and effort grades in the journals. Parents rightly appreciate how well teachers know their children.
- 65 Arrangements for the reporting on the progress of pupils with special education needs are good; any concerns are immediately conveyed to parents. Teachers hold consultations regularly and they regard parents' perceptions highly. Learning support workers often visit homes before annual reviews are due in order to check that parents are comfortable with the procedures. If parents experience major difficulties in attending a review at the school, the school will organise one at the pupil's home.
- 66 A small number of parents actively respond to the school's encouragement to them to be involved in the life of the school. A few parents offer help transporting pupils to extra-curricular activities. Parents help support their children's work in school by providing materials for practical lessons when asked. The school also helps parents to be involved in the partnership by encouraging and supporting the pupils to make good use of their journals for recording homework, merits and half-termly attitude and effort grades. This scheme engages more parents, ensuring that they are able to understand and participate in their child's education.

## **HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?**

- 67 The very good leadership of the headteacher during the period since the previous inspection has been a major factor in bringing about significant improvement in many aspects of the life and work of the school. This leadership ensures that there is a clear direction for the life and work of the school. The aims provide a very effective description of what happens in the school and this is a direct consequence of the high levels of commitment of all who work therein to achieving them.
- 68 The school's main focus since the previous inspection has been to improve the standards of work and to enable pupils to achieve well. In this it has been very successful. Results in national tests and examinations are improving and pupils currently in the school indicate that this improvement will be maintained. Alongside this determination to improve standards, there is a strong level of commitment to good relationships and to the equality of access and opportunity for all pupils. This is particularly significant in a school where almost a third of pupils are on the register of special educational needs. All pupils are valued as individuals and, as a result, they respond very positively to their time in the school.
- 69 The headteacher is ably supported by his staff team. The senior management team is progressively becoming more effective in its management roles, especially with regard to monitoring aspects of school life in order to bring about further improvements. In turn, it is working closely with heads of department and other middle managers. Considerable training has been provided for these staff in order that they become more skilled in the evaluation of the quality of work in their departmental and pastoral teams. The application of these skills is beginning to have a positive effect, for instance, in improved teaching techniques. Similarly, tutors are beginning to become more skilled in working with pupils in their groups to set targets for improvement. Middle managers provide good leadership for their teams and a strong team spirit underpins all of the work in the school.
- 70 Following the previous inspection the school drew up an effective action plan. This provided strong guidance for improvements in the school in the years immediately following the inspection. Subsequently the school has produced detailed plans for development on an annual basis, with departmental plans for a similar period. Priorities for development have largely been generated by the headteacher who has taken careful note of a range of national initiatives which needed the school's attention. The headteacher and senior staff have a clear vision and are able to describe the long-term direction for the school. This vision is not, however, set out in a long-term plan for the strategic development of the school. Over the past two years teachers have been able to make, through a range of working groups, a greater contribution to the direction the school is moving in, but the lack of a documented long-term plan has meant that they have not been able to identify a clear context for their work. As a result, there remains an over-dependence on the headteacher to guide and stimulate developments. Nevertheless, the general targets for improvement, especially those pertaining to raising standards, are well articulated.
- 71 Much greater emphasis is now paid to the importance of evaluation of how well different aspects of the school are working. Led by an assistant headteacher, the school has committed considerable energy and resources to improving skills of self-evaluation among staff. An extensive programme of staff training has given many teachers a wide range of skills and review is now an integral feature of all aspects of the school. Policy implementation is reviewed and policies are modified where necessary in order to make sure that the needs of pupils are being served well. Teachers are more self-critical of their work and are constantly seeking to improve what they do. Senior managers compare the performance of the school with that in

similar schools with a view to what could be improved. One outcome of this has been to identify some under-achievement of boys in public examinations and tests. This led to steps being taken to help improve boys' attainment. Progress on the annual plans for development is checked and information from this helps to guide the next annual plan. This culture of questioning is central to the excellent commitment of all to improvement and to the very good capacity of the school to succeed in doing so.

- 72 Governors are very supportive of the school. They have a clear understanding of its strengths and of what needs to be done to bring about further improvement. They are interested in school activities and in the views of pupils and parents. Governors are, however, very dependent on the headteacher and currently do not fulfil several of their roles well. They do not play a significant part in helping to shape the long-term strategic direction and are not sufficiently questioning of what happens in the school. Although they have a committee structure, involvement in major decision-making is limited, as evidenced in the records of many very brief meetings over the past year. The governors do not fulfil all their statutory duties. They do not ensure that the school provides adequate courses in religious education and information and communication technology (ICT) at Key Stage 4, both of which were identified as weaknesses at the time of the previous inspection. Nor do they ensure that all pupils are able to participate in a daily act of collective worship.
- 73 Overall management of the resources available to the school is good. The budget, set on an annual basis and agreed by the governing body, allocates financial resources in line with the priorities identified for the current year. The lack of a documented framework for long-term improvement hampers budget setting, however, since governors are not clear about how to allocate finances in the short term in ways which will not compromise future commitments. Financial control is good and administration of finances is efficient. The headteacher and governors are kept well informed of spending patterns on a regular basis and can thus monitor spending patterns. Governors do not, however, have any mechanisms for evaluating the impact of their budget decisions of standards or provision in the school. The headteacher has made good strides, however, toward applying the principles of best value in the school. Comparisons with other schools, coupled with an improving climate of review among staff, all contribute to this movement.
- 74 The school benefits from a well-qualified and highly motivated staff team. There is a good balance of younger and more experienced teachers who work very well together and teachers generally teach subjects for which they were trained. Arrangements for performance management have built on appraisal systems already in the school and training programmes for teachers are carefully linked to their own priorities and targets. The school hosts students who are training to be teachers and the high levels of commitment and good skills of staff make this a very good provider of placements for future teachers. Teachers are helped well by a strong and dedicated team of learning support workers who provide valuable help for pupils with special educational needs. Technician support is of good quality but is insufficient to meet needs in science, design and technology and ICT. Administrative staff function very effectively and the smooth running of the school on a day-to-day basis is testament to their efficiency.
- 75 Accommodation in the school is good. The interior of the school is very clean and tidy and this is to the credit of a dedicated team of premises staff. A wide variety of minor modifications are undertaken to a high quality by this staff team. Teachers appreciate the attractive environment and further enrich it with stimulating displays of pupils' work. In turn, pupils respect the way in which the buildings are presented and



this contributes to fostering good attitudes to their school life in general. The outside of the school is in urgent need of re-decoration, but the grounds are attractive, well maintained and litter-free.

- 76 Careful management over time has ensured that resources for learning are generally good throughout the school. Resources for ICT have improved since the previous inspection and further improvements are planned. The resource centre, used well by pupils, is a good development. The book stock in the centre is generally satisfactory, though limited in mathematics and music books. Pupils use the ICT facilities in the centre well and websites are in the course of preparation for all departments in the school. Financial resources received by the school as specific grants are used well for their purpose, especially regarding staff training and support for pupils with special educational needs. The school is making progressively better use of the new technologies, both in the curriculum and in aspects of school administration. Soon to be put in place, for instance, is a system which will be accessible to all staff, for the management of pupils' assessment records.
- 77 Given the background of pupils and their attainment on entry, pupils' achievements are good. This is a direct result of a strong commitment to improving standards, to improving teaching and to providing a rich range of experiences for pupils. The school has been very effective in the extent to which it has improved and is very well placed to sustain further improvement. The school gives very good value for money.

## **WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?**

- 78 In order to further raise levels of attainment of all pupils in the school and to improve the overall provision, attention should be given to the following issues:
- enhance the processes for long-term strategic planning in the school, by:
    - engaging all staff in identifying key priorities for long-term development;
    - ensuring that members of the governing body are fully engaged at all stages in strategic planning;documenting a long-term strategic framework as a guide to annual development, management and budget planning cycles;  
*(paragraphs 70, 72, 73, 106 and 158)*
  - improve provision for information and communication technology (ICT) in the school, by:
    - effectively mapping the contribution of all subjects to ICT at both key stages;
    - co-ordinating ICT content to ensure equitable and appropriate provision for all pupils;
    - developing and implementing secure assessment, recording and reporting systems for ICT in all subjects;
    - allocating sufficient time at Key Stage 4 to meet statutory requirements;Providing adequate time to manage the co-ordination role;  
*(paragraphs 9, 26, 35, 113, 128, 130-136, 149, 158 and 161)*

- improve the spiritual development of pupils within the school, by:
  - providing all pupils with a course in religious education at Key Stage 4;
  - ensuring that assemblies and form (registration) periods give pupils an opportunity to reflect on wider issues;
  - meeting the statutory requirements for a daily act of collective worship;monitoring the provision of spiritual development more effectively at a whole school level.  
*(paragraphs 35, 43, 44, 50, 159 and 162)*

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

### Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	117
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	67

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
4	23	44	27	2	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
Number of pupils on the school's roll	605
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	53

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	30
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	188

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	4

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	16
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	12

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

	%
School data	6.5
National comparative data	7.7

#### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.2
National comparative data	1.1

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

### Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	58	60	118

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	17	32	29
	Girls	37	36	32
	Total	54	68	61
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	46 (61)	58 (58)	52 (51)
	National	63 (63)	65 (62)	59 (55)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	11 (13)	25 (27)	20 (13)
	National	28 (28)	42 (38)	30 (23)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	28	39	33
	Girls	43	50	36
	Total	71	89	69
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	60 (71)	76 (81)	58 (51)
	National	64 (64)	66 (64)	62 (60)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	25 (34)	32 (36)	25 (17)
	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	61	55	116

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	17	61	61
	Girls	22	54	54
	Total	39	115	115
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	34 (51)	99 (100)	99 (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	34
	National	38.4

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

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

### ***Ethnic background of pupils***

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	3
White	602
Any other minority ethnic group	0

### ***Exclusions in the last school year***

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	2	0
White	27	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

### ***Teachers and classes***

#### **Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y11**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	37.5
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	16.1

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

#### **Education support staff: Y7 – Y11**

Total number of education support staff	4
Total aggregate hours worked per week	157

#### **Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y11**

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	76.6
---	------

#### **Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11**

Key Stage 3	22.2
Key Stage 4	20.4

### ***Financial information***

Financial year	1999 - 2000
----------------	-------------

	£
Total income	1,374,305
Total expenditure	1,364,020
Expenditure per pupil	2,398
Balance brought forward from previous year	23,371
Balance carried forward to next year	33,656

## Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate 19.3%

Number of questionnaires sent out	605
Number of questionnaires returned	117

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	36	56	5	2	1
My child is making good progress in school.	49	47	3	0	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	32	56	3	1	8
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	22	61	12	2	3
The teaching is good.	33	57	4	0	6
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	50	40	8	1	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	56	40	2	0	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	66	31	2	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	45	46	6	0	3
The school is well led and managed.	53	39	1	0	7
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	44	50	3	0	3
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	49	37	10	0	4

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

### ENGLISH

- 79 Pupils enter the school with standards in English which are well below the national average. By the time they are 14 they have made good progress, which is maintained into Key Stage 4 so that, by the time they leave school, pupils are reaching standards in line with the national average. This shows pupils are now doing better than they did in the national tests at the end of Key Stage 3 and in GCSE in 2000. This improvement is due to the good teaching and management of the subject and the pupils' good attitudes.
- 80 In the national tests at the end of Key Stage 3 in 2000, results were well below the national average. The average points score which pupils achieved was well below the national average and below the average for similar schools. Girls did better than boys, but by less than in most schools. Results in English were similar to those in mathematics, but worse than those in science.
- 81 The standard of work seen from pupils at the end of Key Stage 3 is below the national average, but better than indicated by the results of the national tests in 2000. This represents good progress by pupils, as their attainment on entry to the school is well below the national average. Low ability pupils at this stage speak confidently but their vocabulary is very limited. They do not sustain their speech at any length. They read simple texts fairly competently and with understanding. They are able to read parts of a play in class accurately, although sometimes without much expression. They write simply and make many errors, although the reader can understand what they mean. Typical examples of their writing are: *I brok the window* and *On Wensday I drop the cup on the floor* (sic). More able pupils are beginning to organise their speech well. They were seen accurately summarising newspaper articles about bullying so that the rest of their group could take notes. The most able pupils read with good depth of understanding. For example, they were able to explain the structure of the first chapter of *Of Mice and Men*. When writing they use words sensitively, as when one pupil wrote in a description of a forest: *A crooked path wove in between the roots of the trees*. However, they make too many spelling and punctuation mistakes.
- 82 The proportion of pupils gaining A\* to C grades in GCSE English in 2000 was below the national average. It should be noted, however, that all pupils were entered for the examination, which is unusual for comprehensive schools. The proportion gaining A\* to G grades was above the national average with girls performing better than boys. Pupils' results in English were better than those in mathematics and only slightly worse than those in science. GCSE results in English have varied over the past three years, having peaked in 1999.
- 83 Standards of work seen at the end of Key Stage 4 are in line with the national average, an improvement on the 2000 GCSE results. When speaking, most pupils can explain their thoughts about school and their work confidently and engagingly. They analyse poems skilfully. For example, in a study of a poem about a West Indian living in London, they understood the juxtaposition of ideas and the contrast between the *emerald island* and the *dull North Circular roar* and saw the monotony suggested by the final line: *Another London day*. In a study of first World War poetry they show understanding of the use of satire and irony. In their writing there are plenty of examples of well controlled sentences and a wide vocabulary. Even the least able write sufficiently well to be understood, in spite of poor spelling and

missing full stops. Many of all abilities make good use of computers to present their work well.

- 84 Pupils with special educational needs make good progress. In 2000 all gained a GCSE grade. Those who go to booster groups gain from a structured programme in a pleasant and focused environment. In their planning, teachers make sure that work is provided that suits their abilities. The help given by learning support workers in lessons is effective. The very few pupils for whom English is an additional language make very good progress as a result of the help provided by the school and staff from the Local Education Authority.
- 85 The quality of teaching and learning are good. Teachers have good knowledge of the subject. This is particularly apparent in lessons on literature, where their good knowledge of the techniques of poets and novelists helps pupils to gain understanding. Very good lesson plans are based closely on the department's detailed schemes of work. These, along with appropriate resources, play a large part in ensuring successful teaching. In most lessons the level of challenge to pupils and the expected pace of learning are good. For example, a lesson with a lower ability set in Year 9 was very successful because the teacher was at pains to ensure that all pupils knew exactly what was expected of them before they started on a diary writing exercise. As a result, the pupils used their time very well and made very good progress, helped by a simple writing framework. By contrast a higher ability group in the same year needed less detailed guidance before starting on a more complex piece of writing. There were, however, a couple of occasions when teachers talked too much and pupils began to lose interest.
- 86 The departmental policy of allowing a short reading session at the beginning of every lesson is playing a part in improving standards. Most pupils enjoy reading. They can talk with enthusiasm about their favourite authors and have good strategies for deciding which books to select. Their reading logs are well kept. Trusting pupils to go unsupervised to the library helps them to learn to act responsibly. The policy works well. In many lessons, teachers require pupils to perform a number of different tasks. A Year 9 lesson, for example, began with revision of a spelling rule in which various pupils came out to write on the board. They then had to listen as the teacher explained a writing task, which the pupils then spent time doing. Finally the class read a play with pupils taking different parts. The result was that pupils maintained interest right until the end of the lesson as well as making very good progress in a number of skills. The good use made of drafting helps pupils to improve their writing.
- 87 Teachers' class management skills are very good and are based on good relationships with pupils. The result is orderly lessons in which pupils behave very well. Lessons were seen which required pupils to do a lot of changing places so that they could work in different groups and this was accomplished without any disruption. When working in groups, they stay on task. Homework is regularly given and is used to consolidate what pupils have been learning in class. Teachers mark work conscientiously. The comments that they write on pupils' books are often aimed at explaining how they can improve. This practice is, however, not used consistently by all teachers so the value to pupils is variable.
- 88 The leadership and management of the department are good. The head of department has a clear idea about future developments and priorities, based on values shared with the rest of the department. For example, top priority at the beginning of this school year was correctly given to rewriting the schemes of work for Year 7 to fit in with the pilot National Literacy Project. The department handbook is a



very useful document for anyone teaching English. However, teaching is currently not being monitored and evaluated rigorously enough. In addition, the present system of assessing pupils' performance does not make enough use of the data available in order to track pupils' progress and set targets. Good progress has been made since the previous inspection. Pupils are now making better progress and reaching higher standards. The good standards of teaching have been maintained. The department has good capacity to improve further.

## **Drama**

- 89 Standards in drama by the time pupils are 14 years old are in line with national expectations. Performance skills are satisfactory. Pupils are beginning to become aware of how to develop a scene for an audience, including the use of lighting. They use expression, gesture and intonation to a satisfactory standard in the development of a character. They show good critical skills in watching others perceptively and offering constructive suggestions about how they can improve their performance. Pupils continue to make satisfactory progress and, by the end of Key Stage 4, are still in line with national expectations. This shows very good improvement over last year's GCSE results and is explained by good teaching and the good attitude of pupils.
- 90 The percentage of pupils gaining GCSE grades A\* to C in drama in 2000 was very low compared with the national average. It should be noted, however, that proportionately more pupils were entered than in most schools. All those entered gained at least a G grade. The results dropped very significantly from the previous two years, when they were close to the national average. The steep decline was due mainly to the very poor performance of boys, who formed a big majority of that class. The department has recognised this and has taken steps to improve boys' attainment in drama.
- 91 It was possible during the inspection to see only one lesson at Key Stage 4. In this, pupils' standards were below what is expected of pupils following the GCSE course. However, it is known that this was a relatively weak group. Other indications, particularly the marks that are already known for components of this year's GCSE, suggest that standards, overall, are at the nationally expected level. In the lesson seen, pupils were developing the performance and critical skills learned at Key Stage 3. A number of pupils showed good understanding of detail such as how to make an entrance more effective in order to increase tension. There was some good voice projection. However, some pupils could not keep concentration in a mirror-imaging exercise and spoiled their work by giggling.
- 92 Teaching is good. Teachers' practical knowledge enables them to make perceptive comments to help pupils improve. They plan lessons well, explaining the objectives to pupils so that they know what is expected of them. At the end of lessons, however, they sometimes do not review what pupils have learned and thus miss the opportunity to consolidate pupils' learning. Teachers' class management is good and they succeed in creating an atmosphere where pupils enjoy what they are doing. This is shown by the high proportion who choose to follow the drama course at Key Stage 4. However, there are occasions where the atmosphere becomes too relaxed and pupils lose focus. Pupils with special educational needs gain by being fully included in lessons, sometimes with the effective help of a learning support worker. Teachers make good use of pupils' own performances to highlight good practice and also to suggest ways of improving. They develop the critical faculties of pupils by including all the class in reviewing the performances they have seen. In a Year 7 lesson, for instance, pupils were able to point out that in the work of one group the

actors were too far upstage and that they were unaware of poor sight-lines. Teachers are sensitive in pointing out weaknesses in performance. As a consequence, pupils also ensure that their comments are constructive. Thus, criticism is accepted in the right spirit.

- 93 Drama is well led and managed as part of the expressive arts department. The teacher in charge of drama has developed a well-organised course with good schemes of work, many of which are designed to improve pupils' personal and social development. There is a good system of assessment, with regular reviews of pupils' progress. Drama makes a very significant contribution to the social and cultural life of the school. There is an extensive programme of extra-curricular activities with an annual musical, which receives excellent reviews in the local press, and cabaret evenings. The Stonehouse Community Theatre provides pupils with excellent community links and deals with social issues. Accommodation is satisfactory, but the drama room needs some redecoration and refurbishment.

## **MATHEMATICS**

- 94 When they come to the school pupils' standards in mathematics are below average. They make good progress as they move through the school and by the end of Key Stage 4 are working at levels in line with the national average. Pupils with special educational needs make particularly good headway, with all pupils achieving at least a grade G in 2000 examinations.
- 95 Pupils' attainment in mathematics tests at the end of Key Stage 3 is well below the national average. Results have improved since 1996, but not as fast as those nationally. Pupils' performance in tests is below that for those in similar schools. There is little difference in the results achieved by boys and girls. Inspection evidence shows that attainment is below the national average overall. Pupils in the top set in Year 9 reach a standard above the national average while those in other sets are at lower levels. More able pupils can solve linear equations with whole number coefficients and understand and use the formulae for finding the circumference and area of circles. They construct and interpret scatter-graphs in practical contexts, such as negatively correlating time spent watching television and that taken on homework. Lower ability pupils investigate different patterns of red and white tiles to make rectangular floors, presenting their results in an organised way and beginning to suggest simple conclusions. They add decimals in straightforward examples, but are inconsistent in their work on percentages. They lack confidence in their algebraic ability, but make very good progress when teaching is patient, well organised and attention is given to pupils with special educational needs. For example, Year 9 pupils improved their algebraic skills significantly in a very good lesson where they used graphic calculators to show a series of straight-line graphs through the origin. The teacher made sure all were in step, incorporated appropriate vocabulary at each stage and encouraged pupils by using their suggestions creatively to develop the lesson further.
- 96 The percentage of pupils attaining GCSE grades A\* to C is below the national average. Results improved rapidly between 1997 and 1999, but fell slightly in 2000. There is little difference in the grades attained by boys and girls. The percentage of pupils attaining grades A\* to G is far above the national average. All pupils attained a GCSE grade for mathematics in 2000. These very good results occur because teachers have high expectations of all pupils. Inspection evidence indicates that attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 is around the national average. More able pupils can, for example, present their conclusions to an investigation of opposite corners of number squares in algebraic form and clearly explain their reasoning.

Lower ability pupils, including those with special educational needs, understand and simplify fractions. They collect and record data in numeric and graphical form.

- 97 Pupils' attitudes to work and their behaviour are good in both key stages. In most cases they are keen to learn, respond well in whole class discussions and listen quietly to their teacher. Their moral development is significantly enhanced by topics in the mathematics course. For example, in Year 8, pupils focus on the mathematics of water usage. Pupils find out how much water is required for different activities, appreciate how little is available in other parts of the world and investigate how they can cut back on their own usage. Girls are sometimes more conscientious than boys and work on joint tasks more productively. In a small minority of lessons, pupils' concentration dips and behaviour deteriorates towards the end.
- 98 Teaching and learning are good in mathematics lessons. Teachers have a secure knowledge and understanding of how to teach mathematics effectively, thus enabling pupils to make steady progress in their grasp of the subject. Teaching of the basic skills of literacy and numeracy is well established and encourages pupils to use the correct terminology and complete calculations accurately. Teachers frequently emphasise the precise meaning of key mathematical terms, such as equilateral, reflect and parallelogram, so that pupils begin to use these correctly. They use a variety of starter activities from the National Numeracy Strategy to improve pupils' mental agility and confidence effectively. Teachers sometimes do not, toward the end, draw together ideas generated in the lesson and thus do not help reinforce the learning. In most lessons, teachers have high expectations of what pupils across the ability range know, understand and can do, and set tasks suited to their needs. However, the department is too reliant on worksheets as the main focus of pupils' activities in Key Stage 3. Teachers are sensitive to the needs of pupils with special educational needs. For example, in a very good Year 7 lesson on rotational symmetry, the teacher made sure a partially sighted pupil sat at the front table and helped a short pupil sit on a raised chair. In the course of the lesson, more able pupils were successfully challenged to rotate more complex shapes, some about a centre of rotation outside the shape.
- 99 In nearly all lessons, teachers manage pupils' behaviour competently, but on a very few occasions, with a more unruly class, are less effective. Most lessons move at a brisk pace, teachers use resources well and support staff play a key role in helping pupils with special educational needs make good progress. For example, in a very good Year 10 lesson in the computer room, pupils set up and interpreted spreadsheets successfully to investigate maximum volumes of cuboids constructed from given rectangular sheets. The teacher created a busy working atmosphere, demonstrated very competent knowledge of information and communication technology, skilfully using an overhead projector and clearly explaining the task. Support staff assisted individual pupils proficiently so that all made significant headway in the course of the lesson. Teachers set mathematics homework on the principle of 'little and often'. This effectively promotes continuity for pupils from lesson to lesson, but it becomes harder for teachers to manage marking of work efficiently. On some occasions teachers provide detailed and constructive comments that help pupils progress, but in other cases these are perfunctory or a series of ticks without comments, grades or scores. Teachers make good use of the merit system to praise those pupils who produce high quality work.
- 100 The department is managed effectively and it shares a commitment to raising pupils' attainment. There has been satisfactory progress, overall, since the previous inspection. Test results at Key Stage 3 have improved slightly. GCSE mathematics results are much better, particularly for grades A\* to G, and attainment at the end of

Key Stage 4 is now near the national average. The introduction of the National Numeracy Strategy in Key Stage 3 is at an early stage, but promises to provide rich mathematics teaching when it is fully in place. The department had developed good procedures for assessment within its scheme of work prior to the introduction of the National Numeracy Strategy and is in the process of renewing these. The quality of marking of pupils' work is satisfactory overall, but its inconsistency remains a concern. The department carefully maintains records of pupils' attainment but does not sufficiently monitor and take action to advance the small, but significant, number of pupils who underachieve. The use of numeracy across the curriculum is much better than previously. The department has provided in-service training for staff and completed an audit of work across other departments. It is planned that this will lead to a whole school numeracy policy. At present, pupils make use of numeracy positively in several subjects, though with a few weaknesses such as unnecessary use of calculators in others.

## SCIENCE

- 101 The attainment of pupils at the age of 14 is below the national average. In 2000, test results were below the national average as they were in the previous two years. However, results are rising from year to year and are getting closer to the national average. There is no difference in the performance of boys and girls. Inspection evidence confirms the improving standards and shows that attainment is very close to national averages. This improvement is mainly due to an improved system of testing and monitoring of results which helps teachers to respond more quickly by changing teaching methods when required. By the end of Key Stage 3, more able pupils have developed competent investigative skills and can demonstrate good understanding of scientific concepts and apply them to a wide range of tasks. They are, for example, able to use kinetic theory to explain changes of state and use collision theory to explain rates of chemical reactions. They can explain the functioning of air sacs and the differences between inspired and expired air. In physical science they can describe how to make an electromagnet more powerful. Pupils with special educational needs are able to explain how animals are adapted to their environment and how colours are seen in terms of absorbed and reflected light. More able pupils make satisfactory gains in understanding, whilst average and below make good progress.
- 102 Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 is below the national average. Results in 2000 were below the national average for pupils achieving A\* to C grades in GCSE, but well above average for pupils achieving at least a grade G. These results show a slight improvement from the last report with all pupils now achieving at least a grade G in science. However, observations in lessons and scrutiny of work indicate that standards of pupils currently in the school are currently higher than previously achieved and are now up to the national average. This is clearly due to high expectations, well planned lessons, good assessment and very good teacher-pupil rapport. These all combine to produce a positive working ethos. Girls' performance is slightly better than that of boys, which reflects the national pattern. By the end of the key stage, more able pupils have developed good investigative skills and can give clear explanations showing good understanding in all other aspects of science. They can carry out calculations accurately on problems related to velocity and acceleration. They are also able to explain the process and applications of osmosis and can explain exothermic and endothermic reactions in terms of bond breaking and bond making. Less able pupils, including those with special educational needs, can plan fair experiments and make relevant predictions based on their prior learning.

- 103 Teaching and learning in science are good. Over two thirds of lessons observed in Key Stage 3 were good whilst all the lessons in Key Stage 4 were good. This is an improvement from the time of the previous inspection. Most lessons have a clear structure, which includes a definite beginning, in which lesson objectives are shared with the pupils, a development section and a summary to check on learning. In the most successful lessons there is a bright, lively introduction that immediately engages the pupils. Pupils are involved in investigations and have to report and explain their findings to their classmates. Lessons usually end with a final check that learning objectives have been achieved. This was well demonstrated in a Year 8 lesson on building bridges, where pupils were given money and had to plan, build and cost the construction of a bridge. Pupils enthusiastically discussed their aims and continued at a good pace as they met the reality of economics, with a component costing £1000 to buy. The gains in understanding and self-confidence were clear as pupils reported back and explained what they had found and learned. The final check of understanding by the teacher showed that learning had been deep and rapid.
- 104 In the small number of lessons where the teaching is only satisfactory, there is too much teacher direction, low expectations in terms of amount of work required and little input from the pupils. Overall, pupils are very well behaved and persevere with their work, but an inconsistent departmental approach to discipline means that pupils do not remain on task long enough to bring about the maximum improvement in learning and results. There is a tendency to confine scientific method to longer investigations, particularly in Key Stage 3. Pupils would benefit from using the scientific approach in most lessons as soon as they enter the school rather than leaving the main emphasis to the latter part of Key Stage 3. Computers are not well used in the presentation of work and for enhancing learning in science. There is a marked lack of suitable computer equipment. There is good emphasis on the correct use of scientific vocabulary and spelling, but there are few opportunities for extended writing. Numeracy skills are well used to produce, present and analyse results.
- 105 Books are regularly marked and graded, but not helpful enough, subject related and neither are comments included to guide pupils on how to improve. Reports to parents give a good idea of course content, attitudes and the progress being made, but do not give a clear indication of particular weaknesses in science. This lack of a diagnostic approach to marking and reporting prevents pupils becoming more fully involved in their own learning. The monitoring of teaching needs to be more systematic to ensure quality feedback and the sharing of good practice.
- 106 The quality of the documentation is very good and the departmental handbook provides all the necessary information for new teachers to settle in quickly. Policies are particularly well written and unusually, have very clear guidance for applying them. There is a good short-term plan for development in the department, but no documented long-term plan. Data collection and assessment are good and are used effectively to monitor progress. The department makes good use of practical investigations and is ably supported by the overworked part-time technician. The head of department fosters a good spirit of teamwork through leadership and the sharing of responsibilities. This is a well led, progressive department, wherein pupils respond enthusiastically to their science learning.

## **ART AND DESIGN**

- 107 By the time they are 14, pupils' attainment is in line with national expectations. Pupils achieve well in lessons and make good progress over time. This represents an improvement since the time of the previous inspection. The revised, and now

comprehensive, schemes of work and strong emphasis given to the acquisition of skills and knowledge are contributing to this higher achievement and are improving standards, especially considering the low level on entry in many aspects of the art and design curriculum. The proportion of pupils gaining A\*-C grades in GCSE art and design at the end of Key Stage 4 have improved considerably since the previous inspection, but remained below the national average in 2000. The proportion of pupils gaining at least a G grade is above the national average. Inspection evidence indicates that this improvement can be sustained. Differences between boys' and girls' achievement are being successfully reduced with strategies in place including the use of different materials and media covering a number of interests and skill levels.

- 108 During Key Stage 3, pupils are able to demonstrate an increasing knowledge and understanding of art and design. Their confidence in using a wide range and variety of media including paint, coloured and graded pencils, clay and print making and information and communication technology is improving. Observational drawing is given a high priority including the use of natural forms and self-portraits; for example, the Year 8 project of facial expression and the use of line and tone to convey moods and define form. Pupils have knowledge of a large number of artists and designers from many cultures and times, including European and Aboriginal paintings, works by Picasso and textiles by William Morris. This is adding a strong cultural and spiritual dimension to many pupils' work and is evident in many projects. During Key Stage 4, pupils build upon the rich variety of experiences gained in their Key Stage 3 course. They are, in the main, able to sustain themes and develop ideas with imagination and an understanding of colour, line and texture. They achieve well, working with commitment and an increasing confidence in visual decision making.
- 109 The quality of teaching in art and design is good overall and has improved since the previous inspection. The good and sometimes very good teaching has a very positive impact on pupils' learning, attitudes and achievement. Lessons are carefully planned to engage and involve pupils of all abilities, including those with learning difficulties. This is achieved by the use of good visual support material, discussion, directed questions, encouragement and interesting activities. For example, in Year 9 in the project on narrative composition, pupils looked at the skills of cartoonists in the widest context from present day to Hogarth and Michelangelo before producing their own cartoon characters. Pupils in Year 7 used William Morris' prints as a stimulus for designing their own textiles through the use of exciting computer software and inspired use of the interactive white board. Teaching is conducted throughout with flair and imagination in a supportive and friendly atmosphere. Pupils respond very well and adopt positive attitudes to their work. Relationships are good, with good interaction between teachers and pupils.
- 110 The curriculum, which meets statutory requirements, is enriched through visits to museums and art exhibitions, artists in residence, art clubs and projects involving the local community. The number of pupils following a GCSE course in art and design is almost twice the national average for the size of school. Since the previous inspection, assessment, including marking, has improved and is satisfactory overall. Targets are now set for pupils and National Curriculum levels are awarded at the end of Key Stage 3. Staff recognise that further development of ongoing assessment is now required to help pupils further understand their progress, achievement and what they need to do to improve. Leadership of the department continues to be effective. The head of the department works with drive and imagination and continues to develop links with other subjects in the spirit of the new art and design curriculum. Teaching and learning are monitored. Documentation, including departmental plans for development, is well presented and relates well to the schools aims and priorities.

The staff have the expertise and enthusiasm to continue to make significant contributions to the future quality and standards of the department. The high quality displays in the department celebrate and value pupils' achievements across the whole ability range.

## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

- 111 Attainment on entry is well below the national average. Satisfactory progress as pupils move through the school means that attainment at the end of each key stage is also well below average. Girls perform much better than boys. In 2000, pupils' performance in GCSE examinations was below the national average when all design and technology subjects are considered together. Pupils taking food technology, however, achieved results which were well above average whilst performance in the other materials were well below average. Pupils who took GCSE catering or child development achieved results in line with national averages. The better results are in groups where girls are in the majority, thus maintaining the pattern of underachievement for boys.
- 112 At Key Stage 3 the majority of pupils produce practical work which is below the national average. The progress of girls is satisfactory through the key stage, but boys make unsatisfactory progress. This was identified at the time of the last inspection. The department has been slow to put strategies in place to attempt to improve boys' attainment. Pupils explore existing products and carrying out research, but the quality of the written outcomes is below average. Year 7 pupils demonstrate sound practical skills when working with hand tools to gain a well prepared surface for the next stage of production, whilst other Year 7 pupils competently and safely test, through practical work, new designs for a hot snack meal. Pupils' use of hand and machine tools is good. They work with reasonable accuracy, the majority showing a respect for the equipment. They understand the need for safe practice for the benefit of themselves and others. Less able pupils and particularly those with literacy problems have difficulty producing full and accurate evaluations. Research is often a weakness. Some pupils find it difficult to explain the purpose of the activity and the process they are going through. Given the level of knowledge and understanding pupils have in the area of design and technology when they enter the school, their achievement is generally satisfactory.
- 113 Progress continues to be satisfactory for girls at Key Stage 4, but remains unsatisfactory for boys. Some pupils achieve outcomes of high quality, particularly in food technology. The practical outcomes are of a higher standard than the supporting evidence of research and evaluation. Too often pupils do not research in sufficient depth to gain the higher grades. The quality of design work and written content lacks detail and, in some instances, there is not enough use of information and communication technology. Catering pupils have a sound understanding of the needs of the customer, their development through the course being well supported by catering professionals.
- 114 Pupils who take textiles in Year 10 have a sound knowledge of sewing techniques when using machines and are able to speak with confidence about the design and make process. Those pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress and have full access to all aspects of the design and technology curriculum. Final outcomes in resistant materials illustrate the limited range of construction techniques familiar to pupils.

- 115 Teaching and learning in the department are good. Almost all lessons observed were satisfactory with half being good or very good. Strengths include the organisation of the lessons and the management of pupils. Staff are now aware of the need to raise boys' achievement through strategies that include pairing boys with the more motivated girls. Pupils are able to apply previous knowledge and to integrate the new learning effectively. For example, pupils in Year 8 working in control technology used equipment effectively to programme mechanisms. Teachers' have good knowledge in their specialist areas and use time efficiently. In the better lessons, planning takes account of the need to support pupils with special educational needs through increased teacher attention. Where objectives are specific and clearly explained, pupils of all abilities are able to become fully involved in the tasks. In those lessons where teaching is less effective, teachers tend to be over-directive, work is not stimulating for pupils and the pace is ponderous. In some instances pupils are asked to use worksheets pitched at a level that does not match their ability. There is sometimes an over emphasis on skill development, at the expense of producing outcomes. There is an inconsistency in the quality of the written comments teachers make on pupils' work, which is also evident in reports to parents.
- 116 Pupils' attitudes towards design and technology are usually good. Across Key Stages 3 and 4, pupils have access to materials, including graphics, food, textiles, electronics, control and resistant materials. The additions of catering and child development are positive changes since the time of the previous inspection. The department is aware of some variations in the time allocated to the different materials and is considering ways in which specialist staff may develop their expertise in other materials to enable a more equitable spread of design and technology experiences for pupils.
- 117 The day to day management and administration of the department is generally effective, but has still not fully dealt with the under-achievement of boys in the subject. A capable second in department successfully manages catering and child development courses. Relationships and commitment to providing effective design and technology are good. Planning for the future development of the department does not extend beyond one year. The subject has the benefit of good accommodation, adequate resources, but has limited technician support which adds pressure to the teaching staff in terms of preparation of materials.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

- 118 In the 2000 GCSE examinations, the number of pupils gaining A\* to C grades in geography was well above the national average. All pupils who were entered for the examination gained at least a grade G. The high level of A\* to G grades is an indicator of the very good progress made by pupils with special educational needs. Results in 2000 were above those for all other subjects in the school. The numbers of pupils opting to study geography in Years 10 and 11 have been rather low, but there is an encouraging rise in numbers in the present Year 10.
- 119 In general, pupils' attainment in geography is below average when they come to the school. In work seen during the inspection, standards are close to the average at the end of Key Stage 3 and above average at the end of Key Stage 4. Overall, pupils achieve very well. Teachers set specific targets for pupils with special educational needs. These pupils achieve very well and make very good progress towards these targets. Inspection evidence suggests that there is no gap in attainment between boys and girls. Attainment is rising over time. A key issue from the last inspection was to raise attainment at Key Stage 4 and this has clearly been achieved.



- 120 By the end of Key Stage 3, pupils have acquired a good geographical vocabulary that they use with confidence. Pupils in Year 8, for example, use terms such as plate tectonics and continental drift when they learn about earthquakes and volcanoes. They also develop good skills in drawing maps and diagrams. Pupils understand geographical patterns and can explain the links between human activity and its effects on the environment. This was demonstrated by pupils in Year 9, who produced good work on the effects of global warming and acid rain. Pupils are developing the important geographical skills of looking for evidence and interpreting it. More able pupils in particular are able to research and produce work of very good quality and detail. This was seen in their work on rural migration and the effects on the cities as a result. By the end of Key Stage 4, the skills learned in previous years have been further extended. Pupils develop a very good knowledge of geographical patterns on the world scale. Pupils in Year 10 are, for example, able to link industrial development and demographic patterns in various parts of the world. Skills of research continue to develop and many add great detail in their individual work. More able pupils write in some depth and produce good individual work on such topics as the M4 corridor and Cambridge Science Parks. Pupils in Year 11 put forward questions for research and then carry out the investigation needed to test their ideas. When they complete their field course in Pembrokeshire they raise questions about the level of tourism in Tenby and decide on a method of testing by checking on the origins of car number plates found in the area.
- 121 The quality of teaching and the learning it promotes are consistently good across both key stages. There is good teaching in just over a half of the lessons and very good or excellent teaching in slightly under half. A significant feature of all of the teaching is very good class control, which is achieved with good humour and without fuss. Pupils and teachers have a high level of respect for each other and this leads to a relaxed and purposeful working atmosphere in lessons. Pupils respond to this with good behaviour in class and with very good attitudes to work. They are very conscientious, make good contributions to discussions and they show a high level of concentration and interest in lessons. These are strong contributory factors in the rise in standards since the last inspection. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour in lessons were criticised in that inspection and have shown a vast improvement since then. Relevant homework is regularly set. The teachers have very good subject knowledge, not only of the factual content, but also of the techniques for improving performance in tests and examinations so pupils learn how to maximise their results. This is the case with pupils of all levels of attainment. Pupils with special educational needs receive a high level of effective support that helps them to achieve well in GCSE examinations. Where learning support workers provide extra support in class, it is highly effective. This is coupled with good teaching methods that include the use of assessment to identify pupils' needs and taking steps to correct any weaknesses that may be apparent. In lessons, activities move on quickly to keep pupils busy and maintain the pace of learning. A variety of methods were used, including video presentations, use of the overhead projector and skilled use of question and answer sessions to encourage pupils to think about links and connections as well as learning factual content.
- 122 The subject makes a good contribution to teaching basic skills. There is a good contribution to pupils' literacy development through the emphasis on key words in lessons and on the use of geographical terms. Pupils' work is regularly marked and punctuation and spelling errors are corrected. There is a good numeracy element in many lessons where pupils routinely use graphs and tables to present evidence and for finding information. They also frequently use scales to interpret maps and measure distances. At the time of the last inspection, pupils were given few

opportunities to use maps and interpret information. This weakness has been fully addressed. The use of information and communication technology is good and pupils use computers to edit and produce their work as well as for finding information. Pupils in Year 9 and in Year 11 make particularly good use of information and communication technology to research and produce the results of their coursework and field studies programmes.

- 123 A number of field courses and trips each year help to enrich the curriculum and raise pupils' attainment. The subject makes a good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. In most lessons pupils reflect on their environment and appreciate the power and wonders of nature and of the world. This is clear, for example, in work done on earthquakes and volcanoes. A very strong moral dimension is found in lessons where pupils are taught right from wrong and to respect the views of others. A very good example of this was in the study of Global Football by Year 9 pupils, where the richness of top professional football players is contrasted with the poverty and exploitation of young children who are employed to sew footballs. There are good opportunities for social development when pupils are out of school on trips and field courses and when they work together in pairs and groups. Learning about people from other countries contributes to improving pupils' good cultural awareness. This was seen in Year 11 work on China as part of their studies into population growth.
- 124 The head of department provides strong leadership and management. The quality of teaching has improved. Standards have risen considerably since the last inspection. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour have improved and numbers of pupils opting to study geography in Key Stage 4 are rising. The scheme of work is good and provides a progressive and comprehensive course for pupils. Effective assessment procedures are in place. Good use is made of the data provided to track pupils' attainment and progress, to check for differences between groups of pupils and to set targets both for the subject and for individual pupils. The teachers work well as a team to share best practice in teaching methods and this has contributed to the significant improvements noted in teaching. The accommodation provides a clean, pleasant working environment.

## **HISTORY**

- 125 In recent GCSE examinations, results in the A\* to C range have been below the national average, but, in the A\* to G range, they have been in line with the average. In lessons seen and in work analysed during the inspection, attainment levels are mostly below average at both key stages. A major contributory factor to this is the pupils' very low levels of literacy, many of whom also begin Year 7 with a very limited knowledge and understanding of history. Despite this, most pupils acquire historical skills rapidly in lessons. They soon develop an understanding of how to use source material and an ability to organise historical information. This was illustrated in some impressive extended writing by Year 7 pupils on the causes and effects of the Black Death. By the time they are 14, higher attaining pupils, in particular, are able to produce structured arguments and show a clear understanding of historical techniques. Low levels of literacy, however, still inhibit attainment for many pupils, who find difficulty in writing. The department is addressing this issue through effective classroom support and the development of more suitable learning materials. At Key Stage 4, pupils studying history have a firmer grasp of historical skills and are able to examine sources in depth. They also show the ability to write extended answers and there is a commendable emphasis on the development of literacy skills, such as the use of paragraphs and subject terminology. A particularly good example of this was seen in a Year 10 lesson, during which pupils critically examined different

model answers to an examination question before constructing a paragraph using their own knowledge of the topic.

- 126 The quality of teaching and learning in the subject are very good. Teaching is never less than satisfactory and occasionally is excellent. Teachers have a very sound and secure subject knowledge and the criticisms of the previous report on lack of subject expertise, slow pace and some unsatisfactory teaching no longer apply. History lessons are planned meticulously, with clear aims and objectives. A notable feature of teaching is that pupils are also given time at the end of lessons to reflect on their achievements. Classroom organisation is strong and this is used well to give pupils the confidence to express their opinions and develop their historical skills. This was demonstrated very well in a Year 10 lesson, during which pupils examined the short and long term causes of the decline in canal use in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Effective methods are used to promote learning, including group work, paired work and class discussion. Praise and encouragement are used to good effect and, in particular, teacher comments in exercise books give pupils valuable advice on how to improve their work. A brisk pace is maintained in lessons and all pupils are fully involved in the learning process. More able pupils do not have enough opportunities to develop their historical skills through individual research and more extension work. Lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs make good progress and are given good help in lessons by teachers and learning support workers, who use a wide range of materials.
- 127 The high quality of teaching has a positive effect on the attitudes and behaviour of pupils. They display commendable levels of commitment and show respect for their teachers. Behaviour is very good in most classes and the vast majority of pupils clearly enjoy their history lessons. This was seen to excellent effect in a Year 8 lesson, during which pupils demonstrated a very keen interest in the slave trade. Their oral contributions to the lesson were very mature and thoughtful.
- 128 The department is managed very well and the addition of a new subject specialist has been of considerable benefit to the school. The monitoring of pupils' performance is rigorous and pupils themselves are encouraged to reflect on their progress regularly and to suggest individual targets for improvement. Departmental documentation is very thorough and history makes a significant contribution to whole school issues such as literacy and the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils. There is an increasing use of information and communication technology in the subject, but there have been problems recently over the use of computer rooms which has hindered further development. There is a thriving history club and a many visits to enhance work in lessons.
- 129 Overall, the history department has made very good progress since the previous inspection. Particularly improved are the quality of teaching, the development of more suitable learning materials for lower attaining pupils and the development of historical skills throughout the age range. This is a very strong department with a highly committed teaching team. There is the undoubted potential now to tackle the major challenges of raising attainment levels and improving GCSE results, particularly in terms of the higher grades.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

- 130 Pupils enter the school with attainment below expected levels and by the time they are 14, they achieve standards in line with national expectations. By the end of Key Stage 4 pupils' attainment is below national expectations, as it was at the time of the

previous inspection. A small number of pupils took a short course GCSE in 2000 and achieved a higher than average number of A\* to C grades.

- 131 Pupils make good progress throughout Years 7, 8 and 9. They are confident users of information and communication (ICT) having developed skills in the main software packages. They are able to construct spreadsheets, inserting formulae to carry out modelling and can research topics using the internet and information held on CD-ROM. They use e-mail and aspects of control technology. Their skills develop well through the key stage, both in discrete lessons in Years 8 and 9 and in work carried out in other subjects. ICT is well represented in all subjects and planning for its inclusion in all subjects is good. Pupils prepare graphs and tables in geography, compose in music, extend their skills in art and develop their understanding of control technology through design and technology lessons. Across these subjects standards are variable, for although the level of staff expertise is good there is still a need to develop teaching confidence.
- 132 The teaching of ICT, both in ICT lessons and within other subject areas, is satisfactory. Lessons that encourage the best learning are planned to build on previous knowledge and ensured that pupils are challenged. ICT teachers demonstrate a good subject knowledge and made good use of support staff. Teaching takes account of the need to develop basic literacy and numeracy skills, recognising opportunities and exploiting them as in spreadsheet work with Year 8 pupils. A variety of teaching methodology ensures that a level of independence is encouraged and expected, but within a supportive environment. Where lessons are less effective, the pace of learning is slow so that pupils tend to become lethargic. The use of ICT in other subjects is good and presents a positive picture. The progress of many pupils is further developed by access to the computer facilities outside normal lesson times. In lessons, pupils show good recall and are able to apply their knowledge to known or new situations. Good examples of this were when pupils used spreadsheets or created web pages. Pupils with special educational needs were equally successful during this session, being helped by a learning support worker. The teacher, through her awareness of their needs, was able to ensure full participation of these pupils. Overall, pupils have an enthusiasm for the subject, enjoying the work and rarely become frustrated. They have good working relationships with the teachers, support staff and peers, providing assistance to one another if required.
- 133 Key Stage 3 pupils receive a good grounding in ICT from the beginning of their time in the school. Year 7 benefit from a design and technology curriculum that makes good use of computer technology in one aspect of their course. This is in addition to the uncoordinated opportunities across other subjects. Pupils in Years 8 and 9 receive good skills development through ICT lessons. All groups of pupils have equal access to ICT with the exception of those taking German in Year 9. Pupils with special educational needs are able to play a full part in lessons and, in some instances, they exceed expectations.
- 134 Key Stage 4 provision is unsatisfactory since it does not provide an ICT course for all pupils. It, therefore, does not meet statutory requirements. Year 10 pupils do have ICT for one hour per fortnight which, when supplemented with after-school lessons, enables some to take the GCSE short course. The current arrangements, relying on cross subject support, are inadequate and do not enable pupils to make satisfactory progress through the key stage.
- 135 Records are kept on Key Stage 3 performance, although these are not extensive. Some self-assessment is in place for Year 8 pupils. However, this is relatively new

and as yet has not gone through a complete cycle. Pupils receive good oral feedback during lessons and some work is annotated, but insufficient written feedback is given in either key stage. The absence of a cohesive co-ordinated approach to the cross-curricular provision means that monitoring of academic achievement is unsatisfactory at Key Stage 4. Reports to parents are generally presented well, with useful comments to indicate what has been achieved and what is necessary in order to improve further.

- 136 Responsibility for the subject rests primarily with the co-ordinator who is effective in maintaining the provision currently in place. However, overall co-ordination of ICT is unsatisfactory. There is no mapping of the cross-curricular activities and no whole school approach to the work being done in subject areas. Technician support is of very good quality, but technician time allocated to the subject is inadequate.

## **MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES**

- 137 Teacher assessments and evidence from the inspection indicate that pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is below national expectations in both French and German. Spanish is provided as a modular 10 week course. This time allocation provides insufficient evidence to make an evaluation of standards.

- 138 By the end of Key Stage 3, more able pupils give short personal opinions in French with confidence and acceptable pronunciation. They express preferences about different clothes and colours guided by pictures presented by their teacher on the overhead projector. When the whole class is speaking in French they give good accurate responses. This is the result of systematic practice and regular insistence on correct pronunciation. Many pupils develop a good understanding of their teachers' rapid spoken French. They follow instructions and orders with little hesitation. This is the direct outcome of teaching where French is used for the whole of the lesson and where there are high expectations of pupils. Pupils recognise that they have to listen carefully as they cannot rely on an English translation. In a Year 8 class, for instance, pupils learned how to give directions and find their way around a town. By the end of this lesson pupils of all abilities gave and received accurate instructions in French while guiding each other between different points in the class. The teacher involved pupils actively and this resulted in good achievement by both boys and girls.

- 139 In most other lessons in French at Key Stage 3 the attainment of the majority of pupils is often limited to short answers with pronunciation that is influenced by English. Pupils with special educational needs read and recognise single words or a few familiar phrases, but have difficulty in using them in longer oral answers. In a lesson on the environment, for example, these pupils listed and classified different categories of words, but required guidance from worksheets. Analysis of pupils' work indicates that, with the exception of some more able pupils, writing is limited to short sentences on personal topics. The majority of pupils do not develop their writing in the form of short prose items such as letters or descriptions of daily routines.

- 140 Pupils learn German for less time than French. Attainment is similar to that in French and below the national expectation. In German, for instance, more able pupils can ask each other about their favourite food, likes and dislikes. Most remember a satisfactory range of key words, but need support from sentences written on the board. Pupils with special educational needs answer only in single words and need English to help their understanding. This is partly a result of teaching that does not insist on longer answers. Best achievement in German, as in French, is in recognition skills in reading and listening to the language.

- 141 At Key Stage 4, the numbers of pupils gaining A\* to C grades in the past two years has been below the national average. There is a gender imbalance with boys' standards in French below those of girls. However, there is now evidence of a clear trend to improvement of results in French when compared to earlier years. Results in German show significant variation from year to year with overall attainment below national averages. This is due to the wide differences in the ability range of groups taking German and the small numbers involved. In 1999 results were better and in 2000 were significantly worse than national averages.
- 142 In both French and German pupils have, by the end of Key Stage 4, acquired a wider range of vocabulary and knowledge of different topic areas. This is also true for pupils with special educational needs. However, only the more able pupils develop the ability to use a range of structures and tenses. These pupils were, for instance, able to use the past tense to answer simple questions about what they did yesterday. In a lesson on shops and shopping, pupils gained confidence in matching pictures to short sentences about shops in French. This was as a result of careful revision of key words guided by the teacher and pupils' independent work with dictionaries. Other less able pupils recognise and list single words. Their spelling is inaccurate, although the content is drawn from familiar topics. They do not progress to giving longer answers. This is a result of too much emphasis on copying and drawing which does not give sufficient active practice of the language.
- 143 Most pupils have satisfactory attitudes to the subject and their behaviour is usually good. In classes where they are actively involved they volunteer answers and maintain interest. When this is not the case they are passive rather than enthusiastic. Most concentrate for the full lesson and work co-operatively with each other in paired work dialogues. They also act responsibly when giving out resources for their teachers.
- 144 The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall, with some examples of very good or excellent lessons. In these lessons rapid and fluent French is spoken by the teachers for most of the class. Pupils are expected to do the same, and most do. Lessons start promptly, with objectives explained in order to focus pupils' attention. Pupils' work is regularly monitored and careful support is given to individuals. Most lessons are planned to build on pupils' previous work. However, there are also some weaknesses in teaching. In a number of lessons, expectations of pupils of lower ability and with special educational needs are too low. Time is spent on activities such as copying, passive listening and drawing. Some work involves only single individuals in the class. This results in the other pupils becoming increasingly passive. The setting of homework is inconsistent, especially for classes for less able pupils and those with special educational needs.
- 145 The department benefits from new and very good leadership. Planning is now taking place in order to provide support and guidance on consistent approaches to teaching. A range of worthwhile initiatives is in place and these are beginning to raise the profile of the languages department. Educational visits to France, correspondence links with a French school and extra curricular activities all give positive messages to pupils.
- 146 Since the last inspection there has been a good improvement in attainment, albeit from a low level. Resources have been extended and there have been positive developments in the use of information and communication technology. The use of spoken French and German, both by pupils and teachers, is inconsistent.

## MUSIC

- 147 The school supports music well by providing good opportunities for increasing numbers of pupils to be involved in practical music making. Enthusiastic teaching promotes good standards of vocal and instrumental performance. The tuition provided by nine visiting specialist teachers, and financially supported by the school, is a major strength. At the time of the inspection, at least one in five pupils was having extra instrumental or vocal lessons.
- 148 By the end of Key Stage 3, pupils attain the standards expected for their age. They achieve well in their individual musical skills as a result of skilful teaching that matches pupils' musical needs. Pupils are eager to learn and readily enjoy performing to each other the short pieces they improvise on keyboards and tuned percussion instruments. They are taught from the outset to respond to music in the correct terminology and to structure their improvisations in a coherent musical way. This was seen in a Year 9 class where pupils shared melodic and rhythmic ideas to create pentatonic ensembles, many of which were confidently performed at the end of the lesson. A few made selective use of the more subtle elements of musical expression. Pupils with special educational needs do well by participating fully in these group activities and some take advantage of the extra instrumental lessons that are available to all. Whilst the practical tasks provided in class lessons are suitably challenging, they are not, at present, sufficiently supported with written information or work sheets that would give pupils objective evidence of the tasks in which they are involved and a clear picture of their progress.
- 149 Standards, by the end of Key Stage 4, are above average. GCSE examination results compare favourably with national subject averages. The percentage of those gaining A\* to C grades in music in 2000 was higher than in most of the other subjects in the school. Music is a popular subject and numbers choosing to do GCSE have increased since the previous inspection. More pupils are involved in this school than in most similar schools. Many of them take advantage of the free instrumental and vocal lessons to which they are entitled and several attain the higher grades of performance in Associated Board or equivalent examinations. Several examples were heard of accomplished solo singing and instrumental playing. Most composing is improvised and it is unusual to find such confident use of 20<sup>th</sup> Century techniques being applied so effectively. Examples of minimalist and serial styles were heard in compositions by pupils in Year 11, constructed with the help of keyboard technology. Their use of sequencing and multi-tracking of musical phrases enables most pupils to compose quite sophisticated music that they could not otherwise play themselves. At the time of the inspection, two computers had just been installed in the department. There are plans to use these facilities to enhance composing skills, as well as to provide musical access for those for whom traditional methods are not appropriate.
- 150 The quality of teaching is good. Lessons are efficiently taught by an experienced musician and the level of musical quality insisted upon matches the pupils' abilities. Music that appeals to people of this age is effectively used to exemplify the skills being learned. The pace is rigorous in its demands on the pupils' concentration. The impact of this was evident in a Year 8 lesson where pupils were learning to use a chord sequence. A series of short sharp practice sessions was interspersed with crisp teaching using pupils as role models, so that they quickly began to understand not only the make-up of chords but also the relationship of different chords to each other. Pupils are well behaved and have very good working relationships with their teacher and with each other. This creates a positive working atmosphere in which they are prepared to practise without undue supervision. Most pupils have a clear understanding of what they are trying to achieve musically.

- 151 Since the previous inspection, an enthusiastic young music specialist has been appointed as head of department and good musical standards have been maintained. The department is capably administered as part of the school's commitment to expressive arts. Extra-curricular activities continue to thrive. There are regular cabaret evenings that provide opportunities for choirs and soloists to perform. Particularly impressive performances of the musical *Jesus Christ Superstar* have recently involved large numbers of pupils.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

- 152 Attainment in physical education is average across the school. Pupils make good progress in the subject. In both physical education and dance lessons, some pupils reach standards above the expected level. Pupils taking examination courses in physical education do well. The extra-curricular activities programme is very good and popular with pupils and parents. The school has achieved the national Sportsmark award. Very good leadership and good teaching have brought about good improvement since the last inspection.
- 153 Pupils enter the school with a wide range of experiences of physical education. By the end of Key Stage 3, school assessments show pupils attaining average standards and inspection evidence supports these assessments. Pupils know how to prepare for activity and do this thoroughly and safely. They have a sound knowledge of athletic events and demonstrate this when throwing and running. In a Year 8 lesson on sprinting, the pupils had a good understanding of the techniques involved and how to work out for themselves an effective starting position. Pupils observe carefully and this helps them when learning a new skill or improving their work. In a Year 9 dance lesson, for instance, pupils built up a complex sequence through accurate observation and repetition of movements created by the teacher. Pupils work well together when practising skills and playing games. They are aware of the safety factors involved in physical activities and when handling equipment. Pupils achieve well as they progress through Key Stage 3.
- 154 In 2000, GCSE results were below average for A\* to C grades and above average for A\* to G grades. The school's overall results dropped in this year, but relative to most other subjects pupils did well in physical education. Pupils of all abilities at Maidenhill do well in physical education examinations because of the very good subject knowledge of the teachers and the good teaching. In the previous three years, results were above the national average for both A\* to C and A\* to G grades. The A\* to G grades are particularly strong, with all pupils entered since the course started gaining at least a G grade. The proportion of pupils entering the examination is higher than in most schools, particularly for girls. Pupils with special educational needs frequently attain their highest grades in this subject. There is no significant difference in the performance of boys and girls.
- 155 No work was seen with pupils in Year 11. In general physical education lessons in Year 10, pupils attain the expected standard. They have progressed to planning and preparing their own warm up sessions and can use the correct technical terms as they lead others in this preparation. They have a deeper understanding of the activities started in Key Stage 3 and quickly acquire new skills, for example girls starting cricket this term. They have well established skills in games such as rounders and softball, but the team tactics involved in the game are a relative weakness. They continue to use their skills of observation and can now analyse and comment on what they see and how it can be improved. Pupils confidently act as officials and know and apply the rules fairly. Overall, pupils make good progress



from Key Stage 3 to Key Stage 4. No practical work was seen with examination groups. Examples of written work and lessons on theoretical aspects show a sound understanding of the required areas of the course, such as sponsorship in sport. Folders of written work are mostly well presented, with some longer pieces of written work of a good standard from more able pupils. A few folders are not well organised and presented, particularly those of the less able. In lessons, pupils are keen to contribute to class discussions and show a thorough understanding of current issues in sport. This makes a good contribution to pupils' speaking and listening skills.

- 156 The quality of teaching is good overall. It is better in Key Stage 3 where there is a greater proportion of very good teaching. This is an improvement since the last inspection when there was a small proportion of unsatisfactory teaching. A strong feature of the teaching is the consistent approach taken by teachers. Lessons have a brisk start and teachers skilfully draw from previous lessons as they outline the new work to be covered. In a very good Year 7 lesson on throwing, the teacher linked the new event of throwing a javelin to previous work on throwing a rounders ball and, consequently, pupils immediately knew what to do. Teachers have very good subject knowledge. They give clear demonstrations of new skills and add to this with explanations of key points. They ensure at the start of lessons that pupils know what to do and why. Pupils of all abilities make good progress because of this clear picture of how to tackle new skills. Pupils with special education needs, in particular, benefit from these clear guidelines and also from the good individual support and feedback they receive.
- 157 Teachers plan interesting and varied tasks so pupils are keen to practise and improve. In the best lessons, teachers match the tasks and methods very carefully to pupils' abilities so all make good progress. Occasionally the tasks do not challenge the most able in the class. Teachers have high expectations that pupils will behave well and be active in lessons and pupils respond positively to this. They organise pupils and equipment so lessons run smoothly and efficiently. Behaviour is very good and those pupils with identified behaviour problems make good progress in this good learning environment. In a very few lessons in Key Stage 4, some pupils were more passive, not enough was demanded of them. When pupils are challenged they respond with energy and enthusiasm. In the best lessons, teachers make very good judgements about when to intervene and when to let pupils work independently. In an excellent gymnastics lesson in Year 10, the Maidenhill pupils worked with pupils from a nearby special school. The Year 10 pupils had responsibility for much of the lesson, but the teacher made well timed points that ensured the lesson progressed quickly. Both sets of pupils gained from the partnership. Lessons always end in a review with the pupils of the work covered and what needs to be improved.
- 158 Leadership and management of the department are very good. Staff work well as a team with a clear sense of purpose. Curriculum planning, and particularly schemes of work, have improved since the last inspection. The enrichment programme in Years 8 and 9 makes a very good contribution to pupils' physical and creative development. The department plans carefully and generally achieves what it sets out for itself. Where this is not the case, as with the use of information and communications technology (ICT), it is because of lack of suitable equipment. Planning is on a one year basis and mirrors the lack of a school long-term plan. Teachers and pupils work well together and physical education is popular. The proportion of pupils taking the examination course in Key Stage 4 is well above the national average. The very well planned curriculum and very good extra-curricular programme provide plenty of opportunities for pupils to take part and enjoy physical activity. The extra-curricular programme provides clubs which encourage all to participate and gives the more able pupils a chance to compete at a higher level.

## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

- 159 In recent years, GCSE results have been well below national averages in both the A\* to C and A\* to G ranges, although there was a significant improvement in these results in 1999. Pupils currently in the school are making good progress throughout the age range, despite the fact that many enter the school with very low levels of literacy and subject knowledge. During their first year in secondary school, they acquire a sound grasp of the basic tenets of Christianity and other major world religions, as outlined in the Agreed Syllabus. In this context, some very thoughtful work was seen in Year 8 exercise books on comparisons between Christian and Muslim beliefs in Britain today. As a result of these advances, the criticisms of the previous report on the teaching of comparative religions no longer apply. By the end of Key Stage 3, most pupils are also able to debate spiritual and moral issues with confidence and higher attaining pupils are able to replicate this progress in their writing. This was evident in some very impressive extended essays on the Holocaust and reactions to the film *Schindler's Ark* from Year 9 pupils. Written work, however, present difficulties for many pupils and, in this respect, most pupils are operating below national standards at this stage. At Key Stage 4, there are few pupils studying religious education to GCSE level at present, but most are developing an ability to examine moral issues such as racism, euthanasia and pollution in depth. It is heartening to note that half the current Year 9 pupils have chosen to study the subject next year and a new syllabus is being introduced. This will allow pupils to study for a short course or certificate as an alternative to the full GCSE course and will provide a much richer curriculum at Key Stage 4. There is no provision, however, for all pupils to study religious education beyond Key Stage 3 and the subject does not meet statutory requirements in this respect.
- 160 The quality of teaching is very good. One excellent lesson was seen during the inspection. The specialist teacher has a very high level of subject knowledge and uses this very well to enthuse pupils. Lessons are planned thoroughly so that pupils know precisely what they are expected to do and a particularly commendable feature of teaching is that all pupils leave lessons with a very clear idea of what has been achieved. A wide variety of techniques are used to support pupils' learning, including group work, class discussion, written tasks and artefacts. This was seen to excellent effect in a Year 9 lesson, in which pupils examined the life of Siddhartha through a highly effective combination of video, music, visual images and empathetic writing. Enthusiastic teaching and high expectations lend an air of rigour and purpose to lessons and pupils are encouraged to become active learners through discussion and debate. Above all, there is a sense of enjoyment in lessons and, as a result, pupils show very positive attitudes to the subject. They behave very well and are willing to listen to the opinions of others. There is a very good rapport in all classrooms and pupils show considerable respect for differing religious practices. This was demonstrated very well in a Year 8 lesson, during which pupils examined artefacts of Islamic faith and reflected in a very mature way on the practices involved in Muslim prayer. Higher attaining pupils show considerable maturity in debate, but do not have enough opportunities to develop their writing skills in depth. Lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs are supported well in the classroom, but their written work is often hampered by low literacy levels. The department has clear plans to work on this through a wider variety of materials to suit individual needs.
- 161 The management of the religious education department is excellent. Documentation is very thorough and assessment procedures are used very well to monitor pupils' progress. In particular, there is an admirable emphasis on self-assessment and

marking procedures give pupils a very clear idea of how to improve their work. This very successfully deals with an issue arising from the previous inspection report. The department makes a very significant contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils in the school and there is a strong emphasis on multi-faith issues, particularly in the excellent use of display in the classroom. At present, pupils do not visit enough sites of religious interest to enrich their learning. They are not currently able to use their skills in the field of information and communication technology in religious education lessons.

- 162 Overall, the department has made very good progress since the previous inspection, especially in terms of teaching, assessment and planning. There is still work to be done, however, most particularly in the provision for a new GCSE course and in the entitlement of all pupils at Key Stage 4 to religious education. There is no doubt that the department has the potential and determination to address these issues and to raise standards significantly within the subject area.