

# **INSPECTION REPORT**

## **ST BEDE'S CATHOLIC SCHOOL**

Lawrence Weston, Bristol

LEA area: City of Bristol

Unique reference number: 109326

Headteacher: Miss C Hughes

Reporting inspector: Mr E Wheatley  
10013

Dates of inspection: 26<sup>th</sup> February – 1<sup>st</sup> March 2001

Inspection number: 193057

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils:	11 to 16
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Long Cross Lawrence Weston Bristol
Postcode:	BS11 0SU
Telephone number:	(0117) 3772200
Fax number:	(0117) 3772201
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr G Nicholas
Date of previous inspection:	20 <sup>th</sup> January 1997

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
10013	Edward Wheatley	Registered inspector		How high are standards? How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed?
19720	Deborah Granville-Hastings	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, behaviour and personal development How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
30941	Keith Brammer	Team inspector	English Drama	
29896	Shân Mullett	Team inspector	Mathematics	
17799	Tony Stoddart	Team inspector	Science	
7084	Jack Haslam	Team inspector	Design and technology Information and communication technology	
8185	Peter Kendall	Team inspector	Art	
12118	Allan Paver	Team inspector	Geography Business studies Equal opportunities	
17530	Mary Cureton	Team inspector	History	
4617	Ros Fox	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	
1340	David Wigley	Team inspector	Music	
22042	John Challands	Team inspector	Physical education Special educational needs	

The inspection contractor was:

PPI Group Ltd  
7 Hill Street  
Bristol  
BS1 5RW

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33 Kingsway  
London  
WC2B 6SE

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

St Bede's is a Catholic voluntary aided school with 805 pupils and is smaller than most other 11-16 comprehensive schools. Pupils come from about 30 primary schools, mostly in Bristol, but also from North Somerset and South Gloucestershire. Ninety-two per cent of pupils are Catholic. The proportion of pupils with statements of special educational needs is above average and the proportion of all pupils who have special needs is broadly average. The school has a small number of pupils for whom English is an additional language, but none of these are in the early stages of English language acquisition. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is below average. Attainment on entry to the school is broadly average.

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

This is a good school with some very good features in which standards achieved by pupils are high and are rising. Teaching is good and often very good and encourages a positive attitude among pupils to their learning. The school is very well managed and has a clear focus on improving the quality of education it provides. The school gives good value for money.

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

- The standards achieved by pupils are high and pupils have a very good understanding of what progress they make.
- The headteacher, senior staff and governors provide strong leadership.
- Teaching is good and in over one quarter of lessons it is very good or excellent.
- Pupils' attitudes to work are good.
- Moral development is very good and the school provides a good level of care for its pupils.
- The school has very good relationships with the community and other schools.

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

- Pupils' numeracy skills across the curriculum.
- Standards in Spanish.
- The curriculum for some pupils in Years 10 and 11.
- The quality of development planning by departments.

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

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

The school was last inspected on 20<sup>th</sup> January 1997 and it has made very good progress on the issues raised at that time. Levels of attendance have improved. The school has reviewed its ways of grouping pupils according to ability and made changes which provide effective arrangements for teaching pupils. Homework is set consistently and is monitored by senior staff. The school works hard at ensuring that all pupils are challenged and supported so that they all achieve well. There are effective arrangements to take care of sick and injured pupils. Delegation of responsibilities is good and the overall cost of staffing is good for a school of this size. In addition, standards achieved by pupils have risen and the quality of teaching has improved.

## STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 16 year olds based on average point scores in GCSE.

Performance in:	compared with				Key
	all schools			Similar schools	
	1998	1999	2000	2000	
GCSE examinations	C	A	A	A	well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E

In end of Key Stage 3 national tests in 2000, results were well above the national average and the average for similar schools in English and above average in mathematics and science. Standards are rising in line with those nationally. Standards of work seen during the inspection reflect the end of Key Stage 3 test results. Standards are well above expectations in geography and are above expectations in design and technology, history, information and communication technology (ICT), French, physical education, religious education and drama. They are in line with expectations for art and music and below expectations in Spanish.

In the GCSE examinations in 2000, the proportion of pupils obtaining five or more A\*-C grades was above average, although lower than in 1999. Nevertheless, compared with similar schools and taking into account these pupils' performance in the end of Key Stage 3 tests in 1998, their results were well above average. Results were well above average for the proportion of pupils obtaining five or more A\*-G grades and for those obtaining one or more A\*-G grade. The school exceeded its realistic targets for these pupils. Results were best in English language, English literature, geography, history and design and technology and were worst in Spanish. The trend over recent years has been upwards overall, in line with the national trend. Inspection evidence generally supports these findings and also shows that in the present Year 11 standards are well above average in geography, history, French and drama. They are above average in English, mathematics and science, design and technology and ICT, and average in art, physical education and business education.

Throughout the school, all pupils generally achieve well whatever their ability, except in Spanish where achievement is unsatisfactory. Literacy skills are good, but numeracy skills are unsatisfactory. However, there is good practice in geography and ICT, for example, and pupils learn well in these instances.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Attitudes are good. Pupils are enthusiastic, interested and involved in their learning and this has a positive effect on the progress they make.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour in lessons and around school is good. Pupils understand the code of conduct and show respect for people and property. There is a very small minority of pupils whose behaviour is disruptive.
Personal development and relationships	Pupils respond well to opportunities to take responsibility and develop independence. Relationships between adults and pupils, and between pupils are good.
Attendance	Attendance is broadly average and has improved since the last inspection. Unauthorised absence is low.



## 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 is good overall. In 28 per cent of lessons, teaching is very good and sometimes excellent. In 44 per cent of lessons it is good, in 24 per cent it is satisfactory and in four per cent of lessons it is unsatisfactory. In English, mathematics and science teaching is good. In all other subjects, teaching is good overall; it is very good in geography and history at Key Stage 4, satisfactory in Spanish at Key Stage 4 and in music, and unsatisfactory in Spanish at Key Stage 3. In particular, teachers' expectations of pupils are usually very good and teachers establish good relationships in lessons which help pupils to learn confidently. The small amount of unsatisfactory teaching seen is mainly because management of pupils is unsatisfactory and occasionally because unsuitable or unchallenging work is set. The teaching of literacy is good and well organised throughout the school. The teaching of numeracy is unsatisfactory overall, although there is good practice in geography and ICT.

Overall, learning is good. Pupils have a good understanding of how well they are doing in school, because there is good feedback from work done so that pupils are aware of what they need to do to make further progress.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum is good at both key stages and in Key Stage 4 there is a comprehensive range of options. However, the Year 11 physical education curriculum requires modification to be covered in the time available. A small number of pupils choose subjects in a way that means they do not have a well-balanced curriculum.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Provision is good and pupils have full access to all subjects. Teaching is good and well planned to meet the targets in pupils' individual education plans.
Provision for pupils' personal development, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Provision is good overall and for moral development is very good. Provision for cultural development is satisfactory; provision is good in art, history and geography, but is underdeveloped elsewhere.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school's care for pupils is good. Staff have a genuine concern for pupils' welfare and progress and good relationships provide the basis for good support. Assessment is good and enables teachers to provide effective guidance for pupils.

The school works hard to involve parents in their children's learning. It provides good quality information for parents, which gives them a flavour of school life and keeps them well informed about their children's progress.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher provides strong leadership and is well supported by senior and other key staff. The school is very well managed with clear responsibilities for all in management positions. There is a sharp focus on providing a good education and raising standards.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors are effective in their work for the school. They work closely with the headteacher to provide the direction for improvements and have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Monitoring and evaluating performance is good. Teaching is observed and evaluated and good practice shared, generally effectively. Planning for development at whole-school level is good, but is in the early stages of development in departments.
The strategic use of resources	The school makes good use of its financial resources. Expenditure is carefully planned with the purpose of providing the best education for pupils.

The staffing, accommodation and resources of the school are satisfactory overall.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pupils like coming to school.</li> <li>• The school has high expectations of pupils and they make good progress.</li> <li>• Teaching is good.</li> <li>• The school deals with problems well and works closely with parents.</li> <li>• Parents are kept well informed about the progress their children make.</li> <li>• The school is well managed and led.</li> <li>• The school helps children become mature and responsible.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some parents are concerned about inconsistency in setting homework.</li> </ul>

At the meeting for parents held before the inspection, parents said that they were pleased with the school, the standards achieved by pupils and the quality of education and care provided. Some expressed concern at the inconsistency and sometimes infrequency of homework. There was also concern that the way in which pupils are grouped for lessons is inflexible, that marking by some teachers is irregular and that the school does not provide enough opportunities for pupils to use their initiative. Inspectors are in agreement with the strengths parents recognise. Inspectors consider that homework is generally good and that marking is effective and used well to guide pupils' further learning. Inspectors judged opportunities for pupils to use their initiative to be good. However, there are some grouping difficulties, but only for a very small number of pupils.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

1. Attainment on entry to the school is broadly average. National tests taken in the feeder primary schools indicate that attainment is above average overall, but inspection evidence and standardised tests carried out by the school show that pupils are not secure in the high levels of knowledge and understanding shown by the tests.
2. In end of Key Stage 3 national tests in 2000, results were well above the national average in English and above average in mathematics and science. In English and mathematics, well above average proportions of pupils obtained the higher levels and in science above average proportions obtained the higher levels. Compared with similar schools, standards were well above average in English and mathematics and above average in science. The trend in results over recent years has been upwards, in line with standards rising nationally.
3. Inspection evidence shows that standards are above average overall in Year 9, in English, mathematics and science. In English, pupils are articulate and have good listening skills. They read well and write fluently and accurately. They read with good understanding. In mathematics, pupils have a good grasp of fractions, decimals and percentages. In science, pupils have above average understanding of the properties of materials and the characteristics of living things. Practical skills are also good. Progress made by pupils is good. In geography, standards are well above expectations and pupils make very good progress. Standards of work seen exceed expectations in design and technology, history, information and communication technology (ICT) where it is taught separately, French, physical education and drama. Standards are in line with expectations in music and pupils make satisfactory progress. Overall, the progress made by pupils is good and is a reflection of the enthusiastic, good teaching they experience. In art, standards are in line with expectations and they are below expectations in Spanish. In Spanish, progress is unsatisfactory because pupils are not challenged enough.
4. Results were good in the 2000 GCSE examinations. The proportion of pupils obtaining five or more A\*-C grades was above the national average and well above the average of similar schools. Results were lower than in 1999, but, taking into account this year group's results in the 1998 end of Key Stage 3 tests, results were well above what was expected. The proportions of pupils obtaining five or more A\*-G grades and one or more A\*-G grades at GCSE were also well above average. The school exceeded its targets. There was some variation between subjects. The best results were in English language, English literature, geography, history and design and technology and, in these subjects, good teaching was a critical factor in pupils achieving well. Performance was worst in Spanish, because teaching was not effective. Overall, standards are rising in line with the national trend of rising standards.
5. Evidence from the inspection supports the good GCSE results; standards of work seen are good overall and confirm the fact the standards in the current Year 11 are higher than in the previous year. Standards in English are well above average, with good progress being made from Year 9 in the quality of spoken and written work, and the range of vocabulary used in spoken and written work. In mathematics, standards are above average and the highest attaining pupils perform well when attempting to solve algebraic problems. Most pupils draw graphs well and use them to solve a wide range of mathematical problems. Pupils make good progress in developing their mathematical knowledge and understanding. Standards in science are above average. The highest attaining pupils have very good understanding and knowledge and all pupils have good investigational skills. Lower attainers do not have detailed theoretical knowledge, but they can explain most scientific work they do in general terms. Progress made by all pupils is good.
6. Standards are well above average in geography and history; attainment extends to skills in handling historical and geographical data in mathematical form and using computers well to interpret

information acquired. In French and drama, standards are above average and pupils make good progress in the work they do. Standards are above average in design and technology, ICT and physical education, and in art and business studies standards are average. Pupils make good progress in art, design and technology, ICT and physical education, and in business studies progress is generally satisfactory.

7. Throughout the school, pupils generally achieve well, whatever their ability, except in Spanish where achievement is unsatisfactory and this is the result of undemanding work and unsatisfactory classroom control.
8. The standard of literacy throughout the school is good. Higher-attaining pupils have a wide vocabulary and write fluently and accurately in a range of styles, and middle- and lower-ability pupils generally express themselves clearly, usually use paragraphs to link their ideas coherently and take pride in the presentation of their work. Pupils plan and draft their work, many using word processing skills, to produce pieces of extended writing, especially in those subjects in which there is coursework. All pupils produce very good creative writing and also produce good quality factual and argumentative writing in most subjects. Many pupils also make effective notes to help both their planning and their learning. The majority of pupils read confidently and well, both for pleasure and to obtain information. The highest attaining pupils in all years make deductions from and select appropriate evidence from a variety of texts and the Internet. Standards of speaking are also good. In Year 7, pupils with special educational needs discuss ideas both formally and informally in small groups and most pupils throughout the school readily share and develop their opinions through a variety of whole-class discussions, role plays and group presentations. The oldest pupils ask probing questions, check and develop their own understanding and maturely discuss moral, cultural and social issues ranging from personal aspirations to contrasting our living styles and beliefs with those of Kenyan tribes, in geography.
9. The numeracy skills of pupils are not always secure and sometimes pupils make inappropriate use of calculators. Mental arithmetic skills vary considerably, mainly because the teaching of numeracy skills is inconsistent. In geography lessons, although the delivery of numerical skills is not planned, pupils use a wide variety of techniques to represent statistics and use numerical data. In design and technology and information and communication technology pupils confidently use measurements of length and weight to calculate area, perimeter and volume. They are also able to measure and calculate angles and make use of spreadsheets.
10. The progress made by pupils with special educational needs is good. Most pupils achieve well, particularly with respect to the development of literacy skills. Where pupils are withdrawn for specific literacy support they make very good progress. Progress is good in mainstream lessons when pupils are very effectively supported by learning support assistants and work is closely matched to pupils' levels of attainment. The highest-attaining pupils perform well. In the majority of subjects, work is challenging; pupils respond well to this, work hard and produce high standards of work.

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

11. The attitudes and behaviour of pupils in the school are good, as they were at the last inspection. Pupils respond well to the opportunities offered to them and live and work together in a comfortable and sociable atmosphere.
12. Most pupils have good attitudes to learning. They show interest in their work, sustain concentration and apply themselves to work readily. Many pupils come to lessons with positive attitudes and a willingness to learn. They ask and answer questions, join in discussions and contribute well during lessons. Most pupils are good-humoured and relaxed. They are generally enthusiastic about lessons. For example, in a Year 9 geography lesson, pupils were sharply focused on their work on the demand for energy, co-operating productively and responding well to the variety of activities presented to them. In mathematics, Year 8 pupils eagerly responded to the mental challenge of probability.
13. Behaviour of the majority of pupils around the school and in lessons is good and often very good. Pupils understand the code of conduct. They were involved in drafting the original code and consider

it to be fair. Pupils are supportive of one another in lessons, helping and complementing each other naturally. In a Year 11 mathematics lesson on graphical solutions to simultaneous equations, for example, pupils were very supportive of each other, working together and explaining difficult points to help others understand. Pupils socialise well outside the classroom and the atmosphere is good-humoured. Pupils report there is little bullying but most feel they can go to someone for help and it will be resolved. Pupils have a strong sense of loyalty towards the school and there is very little litter, graffiti or vandalism.

14. There is a small minority of pupils whose behaviour is unacceptable and these pupils sometimes cause disruption to lessons when faced with undemanding work, or when they are not sufficiently monitored by teachers. Particularly in Year 10, a few pupils learned little during some lessons because of their behaviour and unwillingness to apply themselves to work. During the last academic year, there was one permanent exclusion and 56 fixed-term exclusions. This is high for a school of this size, particularly when the overall behaviour of pupils is good. However, the school sets itself and its pupils high standards which pupils understand and are expected to respond to accordingly. Parents are supportive of the school's approaches and methods.
15. Relationships between staff and pupils, and between pupils themselves, are good and create a supportive and caring atmosphere. Pupils are valued both as individuals and for their contribution to the daily life of school. Pupils respect each other's feelings and are willing to listen to opinions different from their own. Many lessons give the opportunity for group discussions which pupils enjoy. For example, in a Year 11 English lesson, pupils discussed poetry from other cultures in a mature way and Year 7 pupils worked impressively in pairs when selecting 'lively' verbs to describe a storm at sea. Pupils are polite and friendly and enjoy having visitors to their school and lessons.
16. Pupils respond well to the opportunities to take on responsibility within school. Pupils are elected from each tutor group to meet with the heads of year to discuss pupils' concerns. Recently, pupils have met with representatives of the catering service to assess and review the school dinner service. The head boy and girl, their deputies and prefects take their duties and responsibilities very seriously and represent the school at many functions. Prefects provide a good level of support for staff at breaks and lunchtimes on a rota system. Year 11 pupils act as mentors and friends for Year 7 pupils and have to go through a rigorous procedure of application and interview before they are accepted. They meet pupils on their induction day prior to starting at the school and act as their guides for the first few days, meeting them off the coaches and directing them to lessons. Once pupils have settled into the school, the older pupils help the form tutors in morning registration times and provide support for individual pupils if tutors feel it is needed.
17. Attendance is broadly average and has improved since the last inspection. Unauthorised absence is lower than the national average. Pupils register with their tutors in the morning and afternoon, and most subject teachers take registers each lesson. Registers are marked accurately and absences are recorded correctly.
18. Pupils with special educational needs behave well and are confident that they will be successful in the work they do. A significant factor in this confidence at Key Stage 3 is that they are taught with other pupils of similar levels of attainment and because they also have support in class. Their attitude to work is enthusiastic and they have good relationships with other pupils and with their teachers. Pupils with significant behavioural problems are identified at an early stage and, following consultation between relevant staff, effective support is provided through withdrawal from lessons.

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

19. Teaching is good overall and in 28 per cent of lessons it is very good and sometimes excellent. In 44 per cent of lessons teaching is good and in 24 per cent it is satisfactory. In four per cent of lessons it is unsatisfactory. In English, mathematics and science, teaching is good. It is very good in geography and history at Key Stage 4 and good at Key Stage 3. In other subjects, teaching is good overall, with the exception of Spanish where it is unsatisfactory at Key Stage 3 and satisfactory at Key Stage 4.

20. Teachers' subject knowledge and skills are good and this has a positive effect on how well pupils learn; questioning and explanations are accurate and pupils respond well to teachers who know their subjects well. Teachers ask pertinent questions and challenge pupils; expectations are very high and pupils respond very well to this. For example, in Year 11 design and technology, the teacher's skilled demonstration on how to produce good surface finishes on different materials encouraged pupils to work hard to reach the same standard. In a Year 10 mathematics lesson, expectations that pupils should provide accurate solutions to quadratic equations challenged pupils to use algebraic processes accurately to produce realistic answers.
21. Lessons are well planned with a wide range of activities to aid pupils' learning. Practical work, discussion, small group work and individual work are approaches frequently found in lessons. The exception is Spanish where the opportunities for individual work and to speak in or listen to the language are limited; this restricts the progress pupils make.
22. Good relationships, seen in many lessons and often in classes with lower-attaining pupils, are the key to good behaviour by pupils. In the majority of lessons, teachers make it clear what is acceptable behaviour and pupils react to this well. This goes a long way to establishing good relationships which helps pupils to learn confidently. In the small proportion of lessons where teaching is unsatisfactory, the way teachers manage pupils is ineffective; expectations of good behaviour are not clearly expressed to pupils and work is not suitable to pupils' needs. This is evident in some Spanish lessons and a small number of physical education and science lessons.
23. Day-to-day marking is good and very good at Key Stage 3. Teachers mark work well, with useful comments that give pupils strong guidance on what they have to do to make further progress. Pupils know how well they achieve because of this marking and work hard to improve their work according to the targets and suggestions made by teachers. Homework is provided regularly, an improvement since the last inspection, and it supports work done in lessons. Generally, this contributes well to pupils' learning because it extends work taught in lessons and it is marked with the same rigour that is seen in work done in school.
24. Overall the teaching of basic skills is satisfactory. The teaching of literacy is good and well organised throughout the school. In nearly all subjects, teachers provide opportunities for extended writing, reading and discussion. Specific subject terminology is provided for pupils and they are expected to use it accurately. This has a positive impact on how well pupils express their knowledge and understanding. They acquire good English language skills. Good examples of teaching literacy were observed in both key stages in mathematics, geography, history and information and communication technology through the setting of well-structured and challenging oral, reading and written questions and tasks. The teaching of numeracy is unsatisfactory overall, mainly because the approaches used by different teachers vary considerably. However, in geography and ICT, numeracy skills are taught effectively, although not to any overall school approach.
25. Learning is generally good. Pupils work industriously and make good progress in lessons. They have a good understanding of how well they attain in most subjects. Learning is at its best in geography and history where teaching is lively and challenging and pupils have a good understanding of how well they are performing in their work, because there is good feedback from work done so that they are aware of what they need to do to make further progress.
26. Teaching of pupils with special educational needs is good. Setting arrangements at Key Stage 3 for many lessons ensures very good provision and teaching that challenges the pupils in an environment that consistently develops their confidence. Where support is provided in lessons by learning support assistants the support is of a good quality and enhances pupil progress. Good use is made of individual education plans to inform planning and progress. Where appropriate, subject specific targets are identified in many departments. Most teachers plan for the needs of special educational needs pupils and work closely with the special educational needs co-ordinator and other special needs staff. All staff have very good knowledge of individual pupils and their specific difficulties and an appropriate range of strategies and resources are used. Support staff are very well deployed and the withdrawal of pupils from mainstream classes is well planned and effective.

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

27. The curriculum provision is good and is subject to on-going review. It has improved since the last inspection and includes a flexible options list that is guided by the demand of pupils at Key Stage 4. The quality and range of learning opportunities at Key Stage 3 is good. The curriculum includes all subjects of the National Curriculum, together with drama, religious education and personal and social education. Pupils have a good choice of foreign languages; French is taught in Years 7 and 8 and more able students have the opportunity to learn Spanish as well in Year 9. A few pupils learn Italian. There has been increased time for music and art and design since the last inspection and timetabling of teaching groups, an issue at the last inspection, has improved. However, there are still some minor problems; in mathematics, history, science and religious education, some classes are taught by more than one teacher within each subject which creates problems of continuity and progress, especially with the low achievers. Provision for ICT within subjects varies and, in some subjects, there is very little.
28. At Key Stage 4, there is a good range of learning opportunities. All pupils study English language, mathematics, science and religious education and have to make choices from other subjects. All pupils may choose one language from French, Italian, Latin and Spanish. Further options include art, business studies, child development, drama, French, geography, history, information and communication technology, Latin, music, physical education and office studies. Pupils can follow combined or separate science courses. The school works hard to provide as wide a choice of subjects as possible, but, on occasion, there is insufficient guidance to ensure that pupils' choices reflect the school's stated aims to give pupils a broad and balanced curriculum. Timetable organisation sometimes means that some pupils in Key Stage 4 have three science lessons in one day; this is undesirable. The time allocated for physical education at Key Stage 4 means that the school's physical education curriculum cannot be adequately covered.
29. The organisation of the day, with four lessons in the morning and one lesson in the afternoon, is demanding on those pupils who travel long distances to get to school, leave home very early, and are not able to have their mid-day meal until 1.15 p.m.
30. The school provides a good range of vocational courses, followed predominantly by lower attaining pupils in Key Stage 4. Other pupils join these courses if it can be demonstrated that they will benefit from them and guidance is provided to help pupils choose wisely. Pupils may choose to follow courses in travel and tourism, construction skills, food technology, environmental studies and French. Pupils taking these externally validated courses receive additional numeracy and literacy lessons to support their attainment. All pupils follow a social studies programme in addition to the personal and social education course. This programme includes careers, money management, driving and citizenship and is taken in two additional periods once a fortnight. All pupils take a computer literacy and information technology (CLAIT) course through the Royal Society of Arts (RSA), through which they acquire information technology skills.
31. There is good provision for pupils with special educational needs and all pupils experience the full curriculum and end of course examinations. Provision at Key Stage 4 is now good and an appropriate range of courses with relevant accreditation are provided.
32. The school makes good provision for pupils' personal and social development. The overall approach is, "to make sure that pupils grow as people". Tutor time is allowed each week for a programme of personal, social and health education including topics like disability, racism, bullying, hygiene, smoking and drugs. Pupils value the sessions, which they mainly find to be helpful.
33. Extra-curricular provision is good and has improved since the last inspection. There is an impressive range of sports and physical education activities and computer clubs every day of the week. There have been valuable trips to France and Spain to support activities in modern foreign languages, and a recent ski trip to Italy. These events have significantly contributed to pupils' social and cultural development. There are close links with local theatres and the school recently staged a successful

African drum workshop. The drama and music departments together present an annual large-scale musical production involving many pupils. Fieldwork studies through the geography department are very productive. The history department regularly sends parties of pupils to the European sites of the trenches as part of their studies. The mathematics department involves Year 9 pupils in Techni-Quest activities, and makes arrangements for very able pupils to attend courses during the holidays.

34. The school has very good links with the community, largely through the Catholic community, and through the Irish, Italian, Polish and Spanish communities. These links are geographically widely spread, covering Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire. The Friends of St Bede's and governing body work hard to maintain the school's links with the widespread community. There are close links with the police through the social studies programme and through the community policeman. The school makes good use of its associations with the Health Authority, a local bank that visits to assist pupils with money management and local firms that help with work placements.
35. Links with other schools are very good. There are regular on-going cluster meetings with the ten contributory Catholic primary schools, and a comprehensive system for ensuring a smooth transition into the school. The Catholic secondary schools in the Bristol and Bath area join together at regular intervals for combined in-service training and pupils from these schools combine for major religious celebrations. There are very effective links with the Catholic Sixth Form College, with close collaboration between staff to facilitate a successful transfer of pupils each year.
36. Provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils is good overall. Provision for moral development is very good; for social development it is good. The provision for spiritual development of the pupils is satisfactory. The school provides a daily act of collective worship, predominantly Catholic in nature. Christian festivals are celebrated with dignity and impressive respect and commitment, fully reflecting the school's mission statement. Pupils are regularly involved. However, music is not a regular part of the spiritual life of the school.
37. The contribution of subjects of the curriculum to spiritual development varies widely and is often unsatisfactory. For example, in English coverage is incidental, not planned and social, moral, cultural and spiritual development are not mentioned in the schemes of work. In geography and history, art and drama, however, the opportunities for spiritual development are well used to enrich teaching and inform subject matter directly. For example, in art, the study of religious art and its influence on thinking are major foundations of the course. Year 10 paint under the theme "thoughts of the past are prayers for the future". Year 8 millennium sculptures are on the theme of celebration, reconciliation, peace, the environment and space.
38. Moral development is very good and is underpinned by Catholic teaching. In art, pupils consider the different emotions aroused by art and design; in geography GCSE pupils study the effects on people's lives of growing single cash crops (coffee beans in Tanzania and cocoa in Kenya) and consider the idea of "fair trade" from a number of points of view. Pupils know clearly the difference between right and wrong and have a strong sense of justice. The attitudes and behaviour of pupils towards each other are considerate and are better at Key Stage 4 than amongst the younger pupils.
39. Provision for the social development of pupils is good. Pupils habitually work in pairs and in groups to share their knowledge and understanding and to develop their social skills. Pupils take responsibilities around school, for example, through being prefects or involvement in year councils. This is a step forward since the last inspection. Caring for those less fortunate than themselves is a strong characteristic of the pupils: between 1996 and 1999 pupils raised just under £12,000 for charity, the main beneficiary of which is CAFOD. The school supports a wide variety of international, national and local charities and makes donations to individuals, for example, for trips to Lourdes and to sponsor university travel. More than 20 homes in the area benefit from food parcels made up and distributed by pupils every year at Christmas.
40. Provision for the cultural development of pupils is satisfactory. In art pupils consider other cultures regularly, for example African, Japanese and native American art as well as European movements. One member of staff is sponsored by the Italian Consulate deliberately to promote the Italian language and culture amongst pupils and particularly amongst those with Italian backgrounds. Pupils have



planned experiences of other cultures in history and geography. Drama provides a rich diet of cultural experience including visits to the theatre and workshops given by visiting players.

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

41. The school provides a good level of care and support for its pupils which is appreciated by parents and pupils alike.
42. Whilst the school has always given high priority to the personal wellbeing of pupils, the last inspection reported the school needed to improve its arrangements for the care of sick and injured pupils. The school has addressed the issue and now has more staff, including non-teaching staff, who are first-aider trained so that there is always someone on site who can respond to a situation quickly. First aid supplies are monitored and replenished as required, and records properly kept. The child protection policy follows the local authority procedures and an experienced member of staff offers good support and advice for pupils and staff. The school was recently praised for the way it which it handled a child protection issue. Good use is made of outside agencies and lines of communication are clear. There are regular checks on fire equipment, portable electrical equipment, kilns, ventilation systems and so on. Health and safety is given high priority with risk assessments as the cornerstone. Regular assessments of the whole site and of departments are carried out and recorded.
43. The school provides good support and guidance for its pupils and is a secure and caring environment in which pupils feel comfortable and happy. The pastoral system of heads of year and tutors play a central role in making this so positive. Pupils and tutors have registrations, assemblies and tutor periods together, which give plenty of opportunity to build stable and effective relationships. Teachers and tutors know pupils well individually and have a genuine concern for their progress, welfare and personal wellbeing. Pupils have trust and confidence in their teachers and find them approachable, responsive and encouraging. The quality of the relationships is the basis upon which much of the personal support is built and this contributes to pupils' confidence and attitude to school.
44. The school has good systems and procedures for encouraging and maintaining good discipline and behaviour. The school has high standards and expects pupils to respond accordingly. Pupils were involved in drafting the code of conduct and consider it fair. The values of trust, respect and honesty permeate the school day and most pupils respond well to the respect with which they are treated. The merits and sanctions are clearly understood by pupils and felt to be effective in maintaining good behaviour and attitudes. Staff provide good role models for their pupils and for each other, which contributes strongly towards the calm and friendly atmosphere within the school. The school works hard with those pupils who have behaviour problems and has established an effective pupils' support programme. The feedback from teachers and pupils involved has been good and the behaviour of some of the pupils has improved significantly. The school makes good use of outside specialists for advice or extra help to support teachers in the classroom and is part of initiatives with other Bristol schools on ways to improve behaviour.
45. There are good procedures for monitoring and promoting attendance, and attendance has improved since the last inspection. There is now improved communication with parents to make sure they understand the importance of regular attendance and the effect that taking holidays during term time has on children's learning. Parents are informed whenever their child's attendance falls below 90 per cent and there are rewards for good attendance. The school is making good use of the data available and heads of year monitor and check registers and attendance regularly. The school works closely with the education welfare service to help the small number of poor attenders and is willing to try new suggestions to improve attendance further.
46. There are good systems to support pupils' personal and academic development. The teachers and tutors know their pupils well and communicate well with each other both formally and informally. This plays an important part in the on-going process of monitoring the overall progress of pupils through the year. Pupils understand how well they are doing through interim reviews and full annual reports. They have discussions with their tutor on their progress and contribute to their reports through evaluating

their performance and identifying aspects of their work that they need to improve. Pupils use their homework planners diligently. They are expected to record their homework accurately and ask their parents to sign weekly. Planners are checked by tutors so any concerns about homework are picked up immediately. All pupils follow a personal and social education programme and the social studies programme for Years 10 and 11 pupils is particularly practical and useful. It is helping pupils to become increasingly independent and well prepared for the sixth form college, further education or work.

47. Assessment procedures and practices are well developed and statutory requirements are met. The school has produced a useful assessment policy which is fully understood and used by all staff. It is used particularly effectively in geography and history but there is good practice in many other subjects including French, design and technology, information and communication technology, physical education, science and art. Arrangements for recording pupils' attainment and progress through the National Curriculum are also good in most subjects. Teachers keep good records and subject reports are both detailed and informative. Pupils play an active role in identifying regular targets for improvement and are effectively monitored both by their head of year and by an academic tutor.
48. Arrangements for assessing recording and reporting the progress of all pupils with special educational needs are good and meet statutory requirements. Procedures for identifying pupils are in place and are very thorough and effective. Primary liaison is very good and forms the foundation for initial assessment which is then developed through further testing of pupils on entry and enables pupils to receive support from the time they enter the school. Procedures for evaluating and reviewing progress are good. Support staff assess progress during lessons, liaise with subject staff and provide relevant information to inform curriculum planning.

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

49. The school has maintained the good partnership with parents reported in the last inspection and is constantly looking for ways to develop the relationship further. The response to the pre-inspection questionnaire and to the school's own surveys was very good, with predominantly very positive and supportive comments. The school is regularly over-subscribed with many pupils travelling a long way to attend.
50. Parents are very supportive of the school's work. They feel the school has high expectations and that pupils make good progress. They think the standard of teaching is good and that the school is well led and managed. They find staff approachable, helpful and concerned and appreciate the steps the school goes to, to ensure that pupils succeed. They are least happy about the range of extra-curricular activities offered to pupils and with the amount of homework pupils receive; some parents feel there is too much homework, whilst others feel there is too little.
51. Parents receive a good range of information about the school and its philosophy and approach. The prospectus is professional, attractive, informative and readable. It gives an accurate picture of the school and what parents can expect. The regular newsletter is a genuine celebration of pupils' achievements and activities, with many articles being written by pupils themselves. The newsletter is circulated to all families, partner primary schools and parishes which ensures that all areas of the community can read about St Bede's and its pupils. When possible, events and achievements are acknowledged in the local newspaper and many photographs of pupils are displayed around in the school in eye-catching displays for all to see.
52. Reporting on pupils' progress to parents is good. A parents' evening held is annually for each year, and reports are issued termly. One of the reports is detailed and personal to each pupil, supporting parents' views that staff know all their pupils well. Teachers' comments respond directly to pupils' own comments on their performance during the year and often indicate clearly what pupils do well and what they need to improve on. Targets are suggested which give practical advice on how to improve. Occasionally the comments and targets are too general to be of great use but generally the reports provide good information on the progress of pupils.

53. The school works hard to ensure that it deals with parents' concerns efficiently and staff respond to concerns quickly. The informal communication between school is good and the new assistant heads of year try to telephone all families during the year to check that parents are happy. There is a fortnightly 'surgery' for Year 7 parents to see the head of year and all year heads make themselves available at parents' request. The school also works hard to involve parents in school life and in their children's learning. Parents were consulted over the content of the home-school agreement and the return rate of signed agreements was high. The homework diary is used effectively to communicate between home and school, to check on completion of homework and to share concerns between teachers and parents. The school conducts an annual survey of parents' opinions through a questionnaire and appreciates their views and comments. The school also works closely with parents of Year 6 pupils in primary schools through open days, evenings and meetings to give prospective new parents a good insight into the school and how it works. The Friend's of St Bede's association organises social and fund-raising events through the year and supports school events well. Parents play an active part on the governing body and feel their views are well represented.

## HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

54. The leadership and management of the headteacher and senior staff is very good and provides a very clear vision of how the school needs to develop and continue to raise standards where necessary and maintain them elsewhere. Governors are equally committed to this vision and provide considerable support to the headteacher. Delegation of responsibilities is good and all staff have a clear understanding of their responsibilities and generally work hard to fulfil them effectively. The organisation of the senior management team is very good, with delegation of major responsibilities and line management functions for supporting the work of the school. The management of the pastoral system, departments, special educational needs and other aspects of the school's work is very good. The whole-school aims for improvement are reflected in the aims and priorities of all aspects of work of the school.
55. The school development plan has clearly expressed priorities, with costing, timescales, personnel responsible and means to identify success. Action taken to meet whole school targets is good. Departments' development plans are not as well detailed. Targets are identified, but the means to achieve them are not. This is an area for development identified by senior staff in school. Nevertheless, heads of departments have raising and maintaining attainment as a priority and they are starting to analyse assessment information and examination results in increased detail to identify areas for improvement.
56. The school monitors the quality of teaching well and the headteacher ensures that this is the main focus of the school's work in the efforts to raise standards. The quality of support provided for individual teachers if required is very good and has gone a long way towards establishing an effective policy of sharing good classroom practice between teachers.
57. Governors are well informed and provide a high level of support and advice for the school. They have a very good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and are regular visitors to school, both formally and informally. They play an important part in maintaining the very good relationships the school has with its feeder primaries and educational institutions that pupils move on to. They monitor the work of the school effectively, including ensuring that the issues raised at the last inspection have been addressed.
58. Financial management is very good and is closely linked to the cycle of the school development plan. The headteacher, governors and senior staff work together very effectively. The headteacher monitors finances closely, particularly carefully as new financial administration systems are introduced. Grants received by the school are used well and the school makes very good use of extra funds made available to it. Long-term financial planning is good, with imaginative use made of financial reserves to cushion variations in expenditure from year to year. Good use is made of technology to manage the finances and the school plans expenditure wisely to make the best use of funds at its disposal.
59. The school works hard to ensure value for money and to obtain good returns on spending. Staffing costs have been reviewed and rationalisation has taken place, as suggested at the last inspection. Standards and costs are regularly compared with those of other schools and very good value is obtained. The finance committee is closely monitoring heating costs at the moment and regularly reviews the cost of other services.
60. The teaching staff is well qualified and their work is well supported across the curriculum and key stages by conscientious and able learning support staff. There is also a good balance of age and experience. However, there have been some recruitment difficulties recently, particularly in science, mathematics and ICT. The induction programme for newly qualified teachers is very well organised and successful and is supplemented by visits and courses provided by the local education authority. There are also induction strategies for recently appointed but more experienced staff but in some cases these have not yet proved to be so successful. There is a thorough staff development plan, although some of the success criteria are imprecise and an appropriate performance management policy in place. Headteacher and senior management performance management objectives have been agreed and the teaching staff know who will be appraising them.

61. Overall, the accommodation in the school is good. The environment is well-maintained, clean and free of graffiti and is obviously respected and appreciated by pupils. The accommodation for information and communication technology, design and technology, physical education and modern foreign languages is good. The library is a good size and is well-located. It is a pleasant room which is very well used at breaks and lunch-times to aid pupils' learning. The use of display in the school is good everywhere. It is a particular strength of the modern foreign language department where the displays are stimulating and inspirational, creating a positive atmosphere for learning. Social areas are provided for Year 11 pupils to use at breaks and lunch-times which they appreciate greatly and recognise as part of the school's caring for the needs of the most senior pupils.
62. There are occasions when there are insufficient specialist rooms to accommodate classes for lessons in science and music.
63. Resources throughout the school are adequate except in the library where there are insufficient books, especially fiction, and there is no stock of magazines or newspapers. Text books in departments are in good condition and suitable for the learning needs of pupils.

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

64. The school is already aware of the issues raised during the inspection, or has them on its improvement plan, and is working on further improvements. What the school needs to do now is:
  - i. Improve standards of numeracy by:
    - establishing a whole school numeracy strategy that is used consistently by all teachers (paragraphs 9, 88); and
    - identify effective approaches already used within the school (paragraph 24).
  - ii. raise standards in Spanish by:
    - improving the quality of schemes of work and planning of lessons to provide suitable work for all pupils (paragraphs 142, 144);
    - providing opportunities for pupils to engage in independent learning (paragraphs 21, 142); and
    - sharing good practice identified in some lessons (paragraphs 4, 7, 22, 142).
  - iii. Improve the quality of departmental development planning to provide:
    - details of prioritised, costed action plans, with clear objectives (paragraph 55); and
    - the means to evaluate how successfully priorities are achieved (paragraph 55).
  - iv. Improve the curriculum for pupils in Years 10 and 11 by:
    - providing sufficient time for the school's physical education curriculum (paragraphs 28, 161);
    - ensuring that ICT is taught within all subjects (paragraphs 27, 133);
    - providing guidance to ensure that all pupils follow a balanced curriculum (paragraph 28); and
    - distributing science lessons equitably across the week (paragraph 28).

Minor issues that the school also needs to address:

- a. explore ways to ensure that no pupils are taught a subject by more than one teacher (paragraph 27);
- b. ensure subject schemes of work identify where the spiritual content of their work is to be taught (paragraph 37).



## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	140
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	56

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
1	26	44	25	4	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	805
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	99

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	25
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	144

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

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	7
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	15

### Attendance

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
	%		%
School data	8.5	School data	0.1
National comparative data	5.9	National comparative data	0.4

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

### ***Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3***

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	2000	81	72	153

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	61	59	53
	Girls	65	54	52
	Total	126	113	105
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	82 (82)	74 (77)	69 (66)
	National	63 (63)	65 (62)	59 (55)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	48 (49)	51 (47)	35 (26)
	National	28 (28)	42 (38)	30 (23)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	55	53	54
	Girls	62	51	49
	Total	117	104	103
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	76 (74)	68 (75)	67 (69)
	National	64 (64)	66 (64)	62 (60)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	36 (38)	44 (47)	39 (33)
	National	31 (31)	39 (37)	29 (28)

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



### Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year	2000	65	70	135

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	32	61	63
	Girls	43	68	70
	Total	75	129	133
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	56 (61)	96 (97)	99 (99)
	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	40 (42)
	National	38.4 (38)

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	68	92.6
	National	n/a	n/a

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

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	4
Black – African heritage	5
Black – other	3
Indian	0
Pakistani	1
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	2
White	775
Any other minority ethnic group	15

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

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	56	1
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)	47.2
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	16.9

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

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

Total number of education support staff	10
Total aggregate hours worked per week	260

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

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	77.5
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#### **Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11**

Key Stage 3	23.5
Key Stage 4	21.8

### ***Financial information***

Financial year	1999-2000
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	£
Total income	1 948 583
Total expenditure	1 921 331
Expenditure per pupil	2 461
Balance brought forward from previous year	99 612
Balance carried forward to next year	126 864

## ***Results of the survey of parents and carers***

### **Questionnaire return rate**

Number of questionnaires sent out	805
Number of questionnaires returned	333

### **Percentage of responses in each category**

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	38	50	8	2	1
My child is making good progress in school.	45	50	4	1	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	37	54	5	1	3
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	26	48	19	5	1
The teaching is good.	34	61	2	1	2
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	42	47	8	3	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	57	36	4	2	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	67	29	3	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	35	53	8	2	2
The school is well led and managed.	55	39	2	1	4
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	44	48	5	1	3
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	26	46	14	5	9

### **Other issues raised by parents**

At the meeting for parents held before the inspection, parents said that they were pleased with the school, the standards achieved by pupils and the quality of education and care provided. There was some concern at the inconsistency and sometimes infrequency of homework, although inspectors found that homework is generally regular and suited to the learning needs of pupils. Some parents were also concerned about what they identified as inflexible approaches to grouping of pupils for lessons. Overall, the curriculum is good, inspectors found, but for a few pupils there are some grouping difficulties. There was also concern over irregular marking by some teachers and insufficient opportunities for pupils to use their initiative. However,

inspectors found that marking is good overall and that there are many opportunities for pupils to develop and use their initiative.

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

### ENGLISH

65. Attainment on entry to the school was above average in 2000. In the end of Key Stage 3 tests in 2000, attainment was well above the national average and well above average when compared with similar schools. Pupils generally performed better in English than in mathematics or science. In the 2000 GCSE examinations, the percentage of A\*-C grades in English language and in English literature were well above the national average. There were no A\* grades in either subject: this was predicted by these pupils' national test results at age 14. In English, there was a decline in the proportion of A\*-C grades from the previous year but an improvement in the proportion gained in literature.
66. Over the last four years, standards of attainment have shown a steady improvement. During the inspection, they were above national expectations for girls and boys at the ages of 14 and 16. Most of the higher-attaining pupils are in high ability sets in which they do challenging work and make good progress. Middle ability pupils also make good progress, owing to their teachers' high expectations for them, whilst the lower-attaining pupils do particularly well because of smaller class sizes and the care and expertise of their teachers.
67. Speaking and listening is very good and a strength of the school. Most pupils are articulate and confident speakers and can hold a sustained conversation with adults and each other. They know the difference between formal and informal language forms and when to use them. By the time they are 14, pupils work maturely in paired and group activities as well as participate in whole class discussions and debates. At both key stages they work very well together, listen carefully and sympathetically to each other, support those who need it and use talk effectively to solve problems, make group decisions and generate ideas. Low-attaining pupils work in pairs well, for example, to produce a script for a radio interview, based on their reading of *Danny, Champion of the World*. By the time they are 16, pupils of all abilities argue effectively and know how to use evidence to support what they say. For example, in preparing a media assignment, every member of the class contributed well to a discussion on the ethics of advertising and gave several examples from their own experience. In another class, also engaged in a media assignment, pupils held some very sensitive and perceptive small group discussions on the emotional effects of background music and various filming techniques on an audience.
68. The standards of reading and comprehension are good. By Year 9, pupils read very well in pairs and individually and the level of discussion shows that they have a good understanding of what they read. Lower attainers, for example, read extracts from Serrailier's *The Golden Fleece* fluently. All pupils in all years study Shakespeare and by the time they reach Year 11 most are able to read the text without too much difficulty. Both boys and girls eagerly volunteer to read aloud in class and older pupils, for example, present very effective group play readings from the school's stage, showing a good understanding of setting and characters of *An Inspector Calls*. Those with special educational needs receive very effective help from their teachers and learning support assistants and consequently make good progress. All pupils keep a useful log of their reading, which is regularly checked by their teachers, most of whom adopt the very good practice of allowing their classes a few minutes of quiet reading at the beginning of lessons. Pupils read both for pleasure and for research and there are many examples in pupils' books, files and in classroom displays of their ability to use the Internet to broaden their knowledge.
69. The standard of writing is also good. Most pupils take a pride both in the accuracy and presentation of their work. At Key Stage 3 they are able to write in a variety of forms and for different audiences. Examples of good story telling, short descriptions, diaries, letters, newspaper articles, poems, advertisements and travel writing are evident in all classes. The standards achieved are high. Pupils incorporate quotations into literature essays and use a wide range of imagery in their descriptive and creative writing. By the time they are in Year 11, the great majority of pupils write fluently and use word processors to plan, draft and complete the extended pieces required for their coursework. The

work of pupils of all abilities is displayed around school and provides a high level of encouragement for pupils to perform well.

70. Literacy skills are good throughout the school. The quality of the speaking, reading and writing of the most able is very good, whilst those with special educational needs can be impressive in discussions and conversations, even if their writing is underdeveloped or inaccurate. The English department is very influential in shaping the whole-school literacy initiative to improve standards across the curriculum. However, the library is not yet playing a significant role because of insufficient book stocks and the lack of computers for research purposes.
71. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour in English lessons is good at Key Stage 3 and very good at Key Stage 4. Most are very well motivated and eager to learn. They readily help each other over difficulties such as explaining instructions, difficult passages in texts or lending or sharing books and equipment. They also respond well to praise and are able to keep to deadlines, maintain their homework diaries up to date and arrive on time for their lessons. The good relationships which exist between pupils, and between teachers and pupils, undoubtedly provide a secure classroom environment in which learning can flourish.
72. Teaching is good overall and in one in three lessons it is very good or better. The quality of learning is also good, closely matching teaching. Teaching is good in about half of lessons and satisfactory in one in six lessons. It was unsatisfactory in one lesson. Lessons are thoughtfully planned to meet the needs of all abilities and the pupils are stimulated and challenged and obviously enjoy learning. Most lessons have clear learning objectives which teachers share with pupils at the beginning and check that they had been achieved at the end. In these lessons, teachers often make good use of the pupils' prior knowledge and personal experience to develop their understanding. This was particularly evident in a Year 10 class which was studying *Twelfth Night* and maturely discussing the differences between being in love now, and the way it is presented in films and on television, and the "courtly love" which is a theme in the play. All teachers have high expectations of their pupils, whether they are identified as the gifted and talented or special need registers. Lower-attaining pupils, for example, follow a very similar course to all other pupils and are entered for both English and English literature at GCSE. The subject knowledge of all teachers is good and they use a wide variety of teaching techniques which make learning interesting and effective. Teachers make particularly good use of questioning to encourage contributions to discussions, check understanding and to challenge ideas and assumptions. Because pupils at the school work well in small groups or in pairs, this teaching strategy is found in most lessons. However, pupils of all ages and abilities are encouraged to take some responsibility for their own learning and to work independently when required.
73. In the one unsatisfactory lesson seen, behaviour management was inadequate and the task set to the whole class proved to be too difficult for the lower attaining pupils. Consequently, these pupils made insufficient progress. In the few sound lessons, the pace was often so fast that pupils were not given sufficient time to reflect on what they had been doing or for their learning to be consolidated; they made some progress, but not enough. Some lessons did not have clearly identified learning outcomes and, although progress was evident, it was sometimes difficult for the pupils to know what they had achieved.
74. Assessment is used very well to help pupils improve and to enable teachers to identify their needs. As a result, assessment information is used effectively to inform teachers' planning. Teachers' comments on pupils' work are usually positive and supportive and improvement targets are often negotiated with pupils. However, teachers rarely say why work is "good" or "interesting" when marking, so enabling pupils to build on their successes. Neither do they provide clear examples of what pupils need to do to improve their work. Discussions with pupils about their progress take place regularly and teachers have much useful information on each student's strengths and weaknesses. However, at Key Stage 3, there is insufficient evidence in pupils' portfolios to be able to effectively track the progress made by pupils. At Key Stage 4, some pupils are set examination targets based on their performance in the Key Stage 3 tests. This is a new, useful development, but is not yet used by all teachers in the department. Grading of all work at Key Stage 4 is accurate and comments useful to pupils.

75. The leadership of the department is good and offers clear direction and motivation to all. The department is well organised and resourced, responsibilities are appropriately delegated and communication good. There is a useful blend of expertise and experience in the team and all are strongly committed to improving pupils' learning. The level of support for the three new teachers, two of them part-time, is good and everyone is kept fully aware of the current developments in English teaching. There is limited developmental training, mainly because meetings are usually devoted to business items. However, there has recently been some very effective training by the head of department which has enabled the successful introduction of the whole-school literacy initiative. The department has several development targets, but some are not precise enough and there is no action plan with timescales, costings, responsible personnel, or details of how success will be evaluated. The department has made good use of the large amount of assessment information available to it to identify pupils' strengths and weaknesses and to set individual pupils' targets, and this is contributing to their success at both key stages. It has yet to make full use of all the information provided by the examination board in the components of GCSE English to identify the areas of weakness and devise appropriate teaching strategies to help pupils perform better.
76. The English curriculum is greatly enriched by a wide variety of extra-curricular activities. These include a writing club, a *Readathon* done in conjunction with the library, drama club, visiting theatre groups, theatre visits, poetry and book competitions and public speaking competitions. The department also makes many very useful contributions to the development of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness, especially through the study of literature texts, but these contributions are incidental, rather than planned.
77. Since the last inspection standards of pupil attainment in both key stages by boys and girls of all abilities have risen considerably, as have curriculum opportunities. A broad and balanced programme, fully incorporating the study of language, media and non-literary texts, as well as Shakespeare, drama, novels and poetry in all years, is in place and taught to all pupils. The teaching of basic skills through the literacy initiative is very good and the teaching of information and communication technology is being well developed by the newly appointed second in department. Overall, the improvement is very good.

## **MATHEMATICS**

78. Attainment on entry to the school is above average, based on the end of Key Stage 2 National Curriculum tests, but the school's assessment of pupils, confirmed by inspection evidence indicates that attainment is closer to the average.
79. In the 2000 end of Key Stage 3 National Curriculum tests, standards were above the national average for all schools and well above that for similar schools. In addition, the proportion of pupils attaining the expected level for their age and the proportion attaining high levels for their age were both above comparative national averages. With the exception of 1998, when results were below the national average, attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 has continued to improve, with both boys and girls achieving above the national average. Boys exceed the national averages for their age group by a greater margin than the girls. Year 2000 results were not as good as English but better than those for science. At GCSE in 2000, attainment overall in mathematics was broadly in line with the national average for grades A\*-C. Boys' attainment was above the national average, whilst the attainment of girls was slightly below. No pupil attained the highest grade of A\* and for both boys and girls the percentage of pupils attaining grade A was below the national average; this was in line with predictions based on these pupils' results in the end of Key Stage 3 results. Results were lower than those for English and science.
80. Evidence from the inspection shows that by the time they are 14 the attainment of pupils is above the levels expected. For example, lower-attaining pupils can identify all the symmetries of two-dimensional shapes. Pupils of average attainment are able to use the angle properties of intersecting lines, whilst higher-attaining pupils can use enlargement by a scale factor in their work on transformations. The majority of pupils use decimals, percentages and fractions competently with a good understanding of the relationships between them. Pupils with special educational needs can convert simple fractions into decimals and percentages. Pupils of all abilities make good progress.

81. By the time they are 16 the attainment of pupils in Key Stage 4 is above the levels expected. For example, in their work on functional relationships, the higher-attaining pupils solve problems relating to cyclical motion. Pupils with special educational needs can devise their own rule to classify shapes and explain their method using the correct technical language. Pupils of average attainment are able to find graphical solutions of simultaneous equations and lower attaining pupils are able to plot cumulative frequency curves and find solutions using them. Overall, pupils of all abilities make good progress.
82. Since the previous inspection, the department has made satisfactory progress. However, there has been no improvement in pupils' use of mathematics across the curriculum. Teaching is now good overall in both key stages. The use of information and communication technology is still unsatisfactory and this has already been identified by the department and is a priority within the departmental action plan. The schemes of work, which were in place at the time of the last inspection, require updating to bring them into line with national requirements. There is still a lack of resources to support the teaching of information and communication technology, although improvement is imminent.
83. In both key stages, teaching and learning are good overall. Teaching in 30 per cent of lessons observed is good and in 40 per cent of lessons it is very good, with seven per cent unsatisfactory. Teachers' subject knowledge is good and this is apparent in the way in which they give clear explanations of topics enabling pupils to develop their understanding and achieve success. For example, in a very good lesson on transformations with a bottom band in Year 8, all the pupils successfully reflected shapes in a mirror line as a result of very clear explanation and instruction by the teacher. In another very successful lesson in Year 8, as a result of the teacher's effective use of praise in a well-structured question and answer session, pupils of average attainment sustained their concentration and developed their understanding of the language of probability. Teachers have good relationships with pupils and they plan lessons well, setting clear learning objectives. This was seen in a very successful lesson on quadratic equations which challenged the most able students in a top set in Year 10. The pupils were articulate and competent in their use of mathematical vocabulary and were able to use the formula to solve quadratic equations confidently and accurately.
84. Behaviour overall is good and teachers have clear expectations and insist upon pupils paying attention and obeying the rules. Expectations of what pupils can achieve and the range of teaching methods used, together with good time management, helps pupils to make good progress. This was seen in a very successful lesson on fractions, decimals and percentages with a Year 9 group of lower-attaining pupils where all pupils made very good progress in converting fractions to percentages. In less successful lessons, as for example in a Year 7 lesson on metric units, some bad behaviour goes unchallenged and, although the majority of pupils make satisfactory progress, a small minority of pupils do not stay on task and fail to make progress. Unsatisfactory teaching occurs when pupils who are off-task are not identified and they fail to make progress, as for example in a Year 10 lesson on solving puzzles where a significant number of pupils misbehaved and did not attempt to find a solution to the question.
85. Overall in lessons, the majority of pupils maintain a good level of concentration and enjoy their work. Learning support assistants are used effectively to enhance the learning of pupils with special educational needs. Accommodation and the level of resources are satisfactory and good use is made of display to enhance the learning environment.
86. The current procedures for monitoring pupils' progress are satisfactory. Pupils' work is marked regularly and the marks are recorded to assist the monitoring of pupil progress. On-going assessment is satisfactory. Pupils are aware of their target grades and what they must do to improve. Good use is made of homework, which is set regularly and is used to extend ideas, re-inforce concepts and as a preparation for future learning. Currently, insufficient use is made of the available information on pupil attainment that is available within the school.
87. The very recently appointed head of department has identified the priorities for development. She is providing satisfactory leadership and is reviewing departmental practice and writing schemes of work in line with national priorities. The scheme of work for Year 7 is currently being developed to indicate



strategies for pupils of all abilities and is in line with the National Numeracy Strategy. She is setting out the vision and direction for the department and is preparing a departmental development plan which reflects whole-school priorities. She has already identified and successfully addressed some issues for improvement, for example, the purchase of text books to improve the learning of the lower-attaining pupils.

88. The use of information and communication technology in mathematics is currently unsatisfactory but is under review and has been identified as an area for development. Monitoring of teaching and learning by the new head of department will commence as part of the performance management system which is in the process of implementation. However, teaching has been observed and evaluated by members of the senior management team. There is no whole-school numeracy policy, but development is planned for the summer term.

## SCIENCE

89. Attainment in the end of Key Stage 3 National Curriculum tests in 2000 was above the national average and in line with results in similar schools. The trend in results has been steadily upwards for the last three years. At this age boys perform better than girls, although the difference in results has been decreasing for the last four years and is now small. Pupils enter the school with attainment in science above average, according to National Curriculum tests at age 11. Inspection evidence shows that attainment on entry is average overall. Pupils make good progress during their first three years in secondary school.
90. Results in the GCSE combined science double award have been variable over the last three years but have shown steady improvement since 1998 and were above the national average in 2000, with two-thirds of pupils gaining grades A\*-C in the year 2000; one-third of pupils obtained A\* or A grades. The proportion obtaining A\*-G grades was broadly average. The results in the combined science single award exam for grades A\*-C were above average in 2000 and improved on the results of 1999. Results were very good compared with other subjects.
91. By the time pupils are 14 the standard of pupils' work seen is above the standard expected nationally. Pupils know about the different forms of energy, about fossil fuels and the products of combustion and know how to test a gas to find out if it contains carbon dioxide. They know about the solar system, Earth's place within it and they can explain how day and night and the seasons are caused by Earth's movement in space. Pupils understand how rocks are weathered in the Earth's atmosphere and they show a good knowledge of the structure of the human body. They can construct simple electric circuits from circuit diagrams, can draw neat optical ray diagrams and understand the refraction and dispersion of visible light. All pupils at this age have a basic knowledge of the units used in scientific measurement. Work is carefully presented and writing legible. Diagrams of scientific apparatus are neatly drawn and tables of results compiled with care. Practical work is performed safely and calmly. Less-able pupils are sometimes not as conscientious, drawing diagrams freehand instead of using rulers and they leave work unfinished on occasions. Graph-drawing skills are in line with expectations for the age group, although less able pupils use bar charts to display results rather than line graphs. Pupils of all levels of ability express themselves well verbally and are keen to answer teachers' questions in class.
92. By the time they are 16, the attainment of pupils is above average overall and pupils show a range of well-developed skills. Able pupils, especially but not exclusively those studying three separate sciences, show a wide range of knowledge in depth about scientific matters and use scientific terminology fluently in their discussions with each other or when answering their teacher's questions. Less-able pupils do not exhibit the same depth of knowledge and understanding and sometimes cannot recall the correct terminology but they can describe scientific phenomena in more general terms. Able pupils show they can research a topic, extract relevant details from a large body of knowledge and summarise it succinctly. All pupils carry out practical work safely and accurately and co-operate well within their practical groups. Able pupils can use a range of equations, substitute values into the equations and calculate a required outcome accurately. They can balance chemical equations and carry out calculations using molar quantities. Less-able pupils are not as confident when manipulating equations and their answers are sometimes incorrect. The best diagrams seen,

especially of a biological nature, are meticulous in their execution and attention to detail. Although lower-ability pupils do not reach this very high standard, their diagrams are carefully drawn and easy to interpret. Graph-drawing skills are well developed across the ability range and all pupils understand the requirement for a "fair test" when designing and carrying out their own practical investigations. A minority of pupils show well-developed word processing skills to produce carefully presented course work.

93. Since the previous inspection, some curriculum changes have been made. Pupils can follow a triple science course if they wish while the remainder follow a modular course with examinations spread at intervals over two years. The proportion of pupils entered for the combined science single award in the year 2001 will fall as a consequence. Some laboratories have been refurbished since the previous inspection and now offer good accommodation for the teaching of science. It is planned to refurbish the remaining laboratories in the near future, when funding is available. Teaching has improved overall.
94. Teaching is good overall. Thirty per cent of the teaching is good and 20 per cent is very good and, where such teaching occurs, pupils learn well. Teaching was unsatisfactory in one lesson. Good teaching is characterised by interesting, well-planned lessons with a variety of activities for pupils. The lessons proceed at a good pace, are sufficiently challenging for the level of ability of the pupils and teachers exercise good control. In such lessons pupils build up their knowledge in a systematic way, extending and reinforcing what they had learned previously. Pupil interest is maintained when they are involved in a range of activities and the lesson pace is brisk. Teachers in these lessons show an expert knowledge of their subject and when asked unexpected questions show that they can provide satisfactory answers and expand on it to widen pupils' knowledge. Unsatisfactory teaching is caused by failure to establish what is expected reasonable behaviour and a lack of expert knowledge. As a result, pupils are sometimes inattentive, miss vital information and learning is less than effective. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress. These lessons are calm and orderly, teachers are patient and supportive and ensure that pupils' new knowledge is reinforced by constant practice and careful questioning. A feature of most science lessons is the relaxed atmosphere and the attentive behaviour of the pupils. Relationships within the classroom are good. Pupils listen carefully, obey instructions quickly and quietly and lesson time is used effectively. As a consequence, pupils learn well and make good progress.
95. The leadership and management of the science faculty are good. Responsibilities are delegated and the head of faculty has a clear idea of how the faculty needs to develop in the future. Already improvements to the curriculum have been made and some refurbishment has been carried out, although more is needed and planned. Resources are generally sufficient and, although there are insufficient computers and data loggers, there are plans to buy more. The development plan is rudimentary since it does not specify priorities, costs or deadlines and hinders the planning of schemes of work and staff training needs. Staffing is suited to the needs of the curriculum, although there have been staffing difficulties in the recent past, with the necessary use of several supply teachers. The learning of some pupils suffered during this time and available assessment information was not used effectively enough to identify gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding, and to plan remedial action to rectify deficiencies.

## **ART AND DESIGN**

96. Attainment in Year 9 is mainly above expectations for the ages of the pupils and confirms the school's own annual assessment of attainment at the end of Key Stage 3. In Key Stage 4, attainment seen is mainly above expectations for the GCSE course. This is in line with the school's GCSE art examination results in 2000, which were above the national average for similar schools. The GCSE results continue the upward trend established in recent years, although the percentage of pupils taking GCSE is very low compared with other schools. Within this overall good picture of attainment, a small proportion of pupils, mainly boys in Year 10, produce work which is below expectations.
97. A good feature of attainment, which develops across both key stages, is the expressive quality of many pupils' work in art. This is particularly seen in the way they use colour, tone, texture and pattern in a good range of materials and processes. For example, by Year 9, pupils skilfully choose colours to express the mood of their designs and by Year 11 they can exploit all of the visual elements of art

to express their own feelings, often in complex imagery that is developed over extended stages of research and experimentation. Sketchbooks are effectively used to record this process of personal research and development of ideas in art. Good practical and drawing skills enhance the quality of much of the work. Many examples of work seen explore and express pupils' developing spiritual awareness, as, for example, Year 8 sculptures on the theme of reconciliation and peace, or Year 10 paintings about prayers for the future. Similarly, there are many examples of work showing increasing awareness of pupils' own and other cultures, as in Year 7 masks based on African art and Year 8 work based on the Byzantine style. These features of art attainment represent an improvement since the last inspection, which found imaginative work in need of development.

98. Overall, attainment has improved since the last inspection, although the use of information and communication technology to generate and manipulate imagery remains undeveloped. Other areas of relative weakness are the quality of some of the three-dimensional work and pupils' historical knowledge and understanding about art.
99. In both key stages, teaching and learning is good overall, and sometimes very good. Nothing less than satisfactory teaching was seen, in spite of the fact that some art lessons are taught by non-specialist teachers. In these lessons there is some evidence of lower attainment because of lack of specialist subject knowledge to help pupils gain more depth in the quality of their design work. However, in the main, subject expertise is a strength of teaching, enabling pupils to gain confidence and develop skills under expert art leadership. Another strength is the large amount of individual attention that all pupils receive to support their practical work. This enables pupils of all abilities, including pupils with special educational needs and those with higher ability in art, to achieve well. Lessons begin with clear aims and demonstrations or examples shown of what is required, so that pupils know what to do, how to do it and why. They get opportunities to develop their skills and to respond to the set themes in individually thoughtful ways. Work is regularly assessed, with pupils able to contribute to the process, so that they gain clear understandings about their progress and achievements and how to improve them.
100. Almost all pupils enjoy art lessons. Behaviour is good or very good and pupils try hard to produce successful work. However, in Year 10 there is a minority of pupils, mainly boys, whose behaviour and work are unsatisfactory. These pupils occupy too much of teachers' time with behaviour management, taking time away from subject teaching. This is to the detriment of other pupils in the group.
101. The art department is well managed and since the last inspection has been able to at least maintain most standards and quality, in spite of several periods of staffing disruptions and temporary cover arrangements. The department is now beginning to re-build and move on from this period.

## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

102. The results of teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2000 show that more than half the year group are achieving above the national average. The GCSE results for grades A\*-C in 2000 were above the national average. When the pass rate is compared to other compulsory subjects they compare favourably. The GCSE results continue to improve.
103. By the time they are 14, pupils' attainment is above the standard expected nationally. The department's concentration on developing skills in designing and making has ensured good quality outcomes in resistant materials, graphics, electronics, textiles and food technology. Pupils have a good understanding of designing and ways of presenting their work to communicate their ideas for designs. Standards of technical skills are good. Pupils understand the working characteristics of a range of materials and how to use tools safely and accurately. The quality of finished products demonstrates an attention to detail, accuracy and precision. When designing and making high visibility clothing, pupils fit their design to very specific criteria, select suitable materials and use construction processes confidently and with some accuracy. They are familiar with mechanical systems, cams, cranks and levers. In textiles, pupils demonstrate good technical skills, contributing to high-quality products, as, for example, in a project making badges where there were opportunities to create designs using the computer. In food technology, pupils write clear specifications for sweet

and savoury foods and produce products to a very high standard. They decide on suitable ingredients and have a good understanding of what constitutes a healthy balanced diet.

104. From the evidence of design work and practical projects, pupils' attainment by the time they are 16 is above national expectations and reflects the examination results. Current work with resistant materials, graphic design, electronics and food technology is above the expected standard and pupils pay particular attention to accuracy, quality of finish and the selection of materials and ingredients. In their design work, they develop a good understanding of construction techniques, and presentation of work is of a high quality. Pupils have limited experience of control technology and computer-aided design.
105. The majority of pupils make good progress across Key Stage 3; the highest-attaining pupils make satisfactory progress. Their knowledge of design and technology increases steadily because they have opportunities to solve problems and work independently or in groups to develop their practical and design skills and their skills of investigation and research. Their skills in designing and making develop through a range of activities in resistant materials, textiles, electronics, graphics and food technology. In a lesson on designing and making a key tag, for example, pupils made good progress because they were briefed about what they had to do in detail, listened to instructions carefully, and worked in teams to specific time limits. Progress is good across Key Stage 4. Pupils' knowledge of designing and making improves steadily because they consolidate learning, reinforce skills of designing, their practical competence to solve more complex problems of design and their knowledge of food preparation. They know how their work is assessed and quickly learn how to judge their standards and how to improve.
106. The behaviour of pupils and their attitude to learning is always good and is a direct consequence of good, enthusiastic teaching. Pupils show interest, concentrate well and work hard. They listen attentively and watch carefully to understand what they must do and take pride in their achievements. They respond well to teachers and they are able to work without close supervision. They take responsibility for their areas of work and in organising their tasks.
107. Teaching throughout the department is always good. Teachers have a very good knowledge of the subject, plan well to ensure that lessons have suitable pace and this has a positive effect on the way pupils learn. Practical activities are well organised and the supervision of lessons effective, with appropriate interventions to support and sustain individuals pupils' learning and maintain appropriate expectations. Teachers' expectations of pupils' performance and behaviour are high and, as this happens in an atmosphere of good relationships, pupils react positively and learn well. The emphasis on good standards of graphical skills and presentation of work are also effective in encouraging high standards. Learning objectives are clearly stated and work is flexibly planned to provide for pupils' different levels of attainment and interests. Pupils' work is assessed regularly and teachers give helpful oral and written comments. Assessment concentrates upon tracking experiences and outcomes and individual targets are used to inform pupils what they need to do to improve their work. The department also sets overall targets for attainment across each year group. Homework is set to reinforce the content of lessons. A lack of resources restricts teaching in computer aided design and control. The department is involved in a project to improve literacy across the school and is helping to develop technical vocabulary.
108. The leadership and management of the department is good, with a clear vision and direction leading to effective strategies to promote curricular improvements. The department has specific aims and values, including a commitment to good relationships and equality of opportunity for all which is reflected in the work of the department. There is a shared commitment to improvement and the capacity to succeed. Responsibilities are carefully delegated to ensure the effective contribution of staff. There is a programme of monitoring, evaluation and development of teaching including peer observation of lessons. The department has identified appropriate priorities and targets and takes necessary action and review of progress towards them. There is a very good scheme of work and the department handbook outlines clearly the policies, aims and objectives of the department.
109. The department has made good progress with the areas identified for development in the last inspection. There is a very good scheme of work and projects provide opportunities for pupils to

develop their research skills in a variety of contexts. The joint planning covering all aspects of design and technology ensures that the work is challenging and provides progression. The department still has to develop projects relating to systems and control. A significant number of pupils in the current Year 10 do not have the opportunity to study technology as specified in the National Curriculum.

110. Accommodation is generous and there is a good level of tools, resources and equipment available. However, the lack of resources for newer technologies and information technology limits coverage of the programmes of study and the standards that pupils can attain. The technical staff make a significant contribution to the organisation of the department and, on occasion, work with specific groups of pupils to support practical work, providing advice and guidance. The department has carried out a safety audit to ensure the safe organisation of resources and accommodation; staff awareness of health and safety requirements, including risk assessment are in place.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

111. By the age of 14, attainment estimated by teachers and expressed in National Curriculum levels is well above average. In the 2000 GCSE examinations, results were well above average and have improved steadily since the last inspection. In 2000 all pupils obtained a pass grade and 70 per cent obtained an A\*-C grade; twice the national average proportion of pupils obtained an A\* grade. Boys attain slightly better than girls. Teachers rightly consider that a paper more difficult than the present upper tier at GCSE would more seriously challenge pupils.
112. The inspection of lessons and the scrutiny of work confirm these findings. The highest attainers in Year 9 work consistently at well above average levels. For example, pupils link what they have learned in climate studies, economic geography and global, regional and local geography to explain the effects of changing energy demands on the environment, and on people's lives. The lowest-attainers perform a little below the national average overall. For example, they describe usage of energy changes well and can often draw on what they know to explain what they can see in illustrations or other visual material. For example, pupils in a Year 8 lowest set relate flat roofs to low rainfall in parts of East Africa. Pupils of all abilities achieve well in class and make very good progress between the ages of 11 and 14. The progress made by pupils is very good, taking into account that attainment on entry is broadly in line with expectations.
113. By the age of 16 standards are well above average; pupils build on their good knowledge and understanding obtained in the lower school to develop good thinking skills. For example, pupils used what they learned about the causes and effects of migration in Year 10 to work through the implications of the organisation of world trade for single crop economies. They did this by studying coffee growing in Tanzania and by developing their understanding of world trade.
114. Teaching is good overall. It is good in about 40 per cent of lessons and is very good in the same proportion. It is satisfactory in the rest of lessons. Teaching is very good in 75 per cent of lessons and is never less than good at Key Stage 4 where only the full-time geographers are deployed. At Key Stage 3 the school deploys three additional teachers, two of whom are geographers and all of whom carry significant responsibilities elsewhere. These are deployed, very well supported and monitored to make best use of their good skills. They make a substantial contribution to the department.
115. Teachers' good subject knowledge is supplemented by very good planning so that the content of lessons springs straight from good schemes of work and is securely based in the National Curriculum. Learning objectives are very clear and delivered through a careful sequence of widely varied activities. Teachers working in the same year work closely with each other and establish effective teaching styles and routines. Expectations of work and behaviour are consistent, shared with pupils and play an important part in establishing good learning patterns. This helps focus pupils sharply on their work so that their own knowledge, understanding and skills develop well. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good overall and are better at Key Stage 4 than at Key Stage 3.
116. Literacy and numeracy skills are taught well through the subject. Many opportunities are provided to develop listening, speaking and writing skills, although imaginative writing is not well established at Key Stage 3. Nevertheless, some work is very good. For example, one assessed piece of work in

Year 8 provided opportunity for extended writing on the Masai and Kikuyu tribes of Kenya from analysis of photographs. Numeracy is well supported. For example, in a Year 8 lesson, pupils' attainment in geography is aided by using statistical information in comparing Kenya with Britain. The department makes sound use of ICT to teach some topics.

117. Pupil develop basic geographical skills very effectively through a well-planned programme of practical and fieldwork at Key Stage 3. Consequently, course work at Key Stage 4 makes a significant contribution to examination success for the higher-attainers. The most recent external moderator's comments were justifiably complimentary and supportive.
118. Teachers' expectations of pupils' work and behaviour are high and are largely met. Pupils work hard and are absorbed in their lessons, too busy to misbehave. Work is well organised with clear learning objectives and detailed marking scheme intended to provide guidance for pupils. The quality of homework is very good, providing opportunities for pupils to become independent learners through extended research. Pupils are firmly steered towards how to learn as well as what to learn, and they are assessed on what they find out for themselves. Homework diaries are used well to provide guidance for pupils' homework and independent learning. Pupils' work is prominently displayed in all the public spaces of the department. Teachers generally use praise well to support progress.
119. The assessment system employed is very good; marking is effective and thorough and is supported by comments on how to improve. Teachers maintain clearly recorded information that provides an accurate assessment of pupils' performance and makes valuable comparisons against the class and year standards. From this, targets are set for improvement and predictions for performance in end of Key Stage 3 tests and GCSE examinations are made. Target setting is better at Key Stage 3 than at Key Stage 4 where it is being introduced for the first time this year. The department has identified areas for improvement from the analysis of the examination board's detailed list of results, but does not yet fully use this valuable source of information to help detailed planning of the examination course.
120. The management of the department is excellent and the head of department makes a significant contribution to the improvements in the subjects and to the continued success of the department. Teachers in the department provide very good role models and contribute strongly to the very good moral development of the pupils. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are consistently good and are better at Key Stage 4 than at Key Stage 3.

## **HISTORY**

121. Attainment at the end of Year 9, based on the assessments carried out by teachers, is above the national average. Girls do much better than boys, particularly at the higher levels. In the GCSE examinations in 2000, the proportion of pupils who attained grades A\* to C was well above the national average for boys as well as girls. Boys' attainment at Key Stage 4 has greatly improved since the last inspection. The department has tackled underachievement of boys in Years 10 and 11 identified in the last report with confidence and success. Inspection evidence supports the standards seen in tests and examinations and indicates that they are above average at Key Stage 3 and well above average at Key Stage 4.
122. By the time they are 14, higher-attaining pupils have an extensive and detailed knowledge of key areas of history, such as mediaeval social structure, the campaigns of Napoleon, Nazi Germany and the Western Front 1914-1918. In their study of the Western Front, these pupils identify attitudes of both soldiers and civilians to the fighting and say how and why these changed as the war went on. Pupils quote sources aptly and confidently evaluate them for bias. In research, they use quotations well to illustrate the points they make in their independent analysis of desertion statistics. After careful study of the conditions, food and health of the soldiers, they fully understood and give reasons why some of the men fighting at the front found conditions unbearable. Higher-attaining pupils identify propaganda in World War I and say why and how censorship was used. They read a selection of war poetry with good understanding and comment on it sensitively. Research skills of higher-attaining pupils are of a very high order. Bibliographies are a routine and carefully considered feature of their work. Pupils of average attainment have good knowledge of the historical areas covered in lessons,

but they do not read so widely to support their work. Their independent research skills are good. They quote a range of sources to support the points they make and can often evaluate them effectively. Essays and research pieces are generally well written, but pupils of average attainment do not marshal their arguments with the competence of the high achievers and some of their writing is not always effectively paragraphed or well punctuated. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well. They work with enthusiasm and energy to produce carefully structured pieces of writing, using the selection of sources provided for them. The most able pupils are both challenged and stimulated by the lessons.

123. By the time they are 16, pupils reach very good standards. They have a very good range of historical skills at their disposal. Well-developed study skills enable them to understand the nature of the Depression in a wide range of societies between the wars. This helps them to put Nazism in context. Good skills of annotation enable them to analyse Churchill's Iron Curtain speech of 19 March 1946 and Stalin's reply to it. As a result, pupils understand some of the causes of the Cold War. Pupils take effective notes, which helps the learning process. They have good skills of collaboration, which helps them to put a point of view and listen to the opinions of others. This was particularly in evidence in a lesson in Year 10 when they discussed ethical issues of the Treaty of Versailles. Higher-attaining pupils organise and deploy relevant information to reach independent and carefully substantiated conclusions. Their essays are well structured and well presented in correct English. Those of average attainment need more help to analyse their sources, although their knowledge is good and the organisation of their essays competent.
124. Teaching is very good overall. It is good in Key Stage 3 and very good in Key Stage 4. At Key Stage 4, two-thirds of teaching is very good and one-third is good. At Key Stage 3 teaching is good in 30 per cent of lessons and very good in 40 per cent; it is satisfactory in the rest. Teachers have very good knowledge of their subject and can always give telling examples which extend pupils' knowledge of their subject and keeps them interested. In a Year 9 lesson, for example, the teacher was able to explain that Nazi Germany saw all men as heroic soldiers and all women as homemakers. The teacher then went on to explain exactly who was not included in these categories and why they were not. This helped the pupils to understand Nazi racial policy more fully. The teacher's wide-ranging knowledge of the history of the Jews added scope and rigour to the lesson. Teachers question the pupils skilfully, allowing them to think for themselves. In a lesson on the Cold War in Year 11, the teacher's questions allowed pupils to consider who was to blame and give their opinions to the rest of the class. In a Year 8 lesson, pupils successfully deduced the personal qualities of Napoleon through an evaluation of his early achievements. They went on to study a diagram of the battle of Austerlitz in order to come to their own conclusions as to Napoleon's strengths and weaknesses as a general. Teachers use inventive and interesting strategies that aid progress. Pupils in Year 11 were presented with sealed envelopes filled with slips which gave the short- and long-term causes of the Berlin Blockade and its effects. They were then able to construct a web of cause and effect at a sophisticated level. The pace of all lessons is brisk and much ground is covered in each lesson. Pupils work hard and enthusiastically. Teachers know exactly what they intend the pupils to learn and how it will be assessed. They tell this to the pupils clearly so that they become confident learners. Resources in the classroom, both written and visual, provide a very good basis for independent study. Teaching is rigorous and enthusiastic.
125. Assessment procedures are very good, and leave pupils in no doubt as to what they must do to improve. It forms a firm basis for curriculum planning and, as a result, classroom activities are well pitched to the pupils' abilities. Useful recapitulation and plenary sessions reinforce learning.
126. The curriculum is very good. The programmes of study are interesting for the pupils and demanding of their time and interest. Although reading and writing and the use of information technology are well promoted in lessons, curriculum planning for the extension of pupils' literacy is not yet well developed in the programmes of study. The subject makes a good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
127. Management is excellent at subject and faculty level. The managers work as a harmonious and highly effective team. They have improved the standard of teaching and learning since the last inspection by a systematic and well-founded programme of monitoring and evaluation. Standards of attainment of

boys in Years 10 and 11 have risen significantly. They realise further analysis of Key Stage 3 assessment information is now required if attainment is to rise further and planning for this is at an advanced stage. Very good new schemes of work have been developed and an increased variety of activities in lessons have been introduced since the last inspection. ICT has been further developed. Target setting in the classroom and for individuals has been introduced and is starting to be effective. There is now an annual visit to the First World War battlefields for Year 9. The high quality of personal research mentioned at the time of the last inspection continues to be a striking feature of attainment. Take up of the subject at Key Stage 4 remains fairly constant and is a result of the present structure of the school's option system.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

128. Teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2000 show that the attainment of pupils is well above the standard expected nationally and that a significant proportion achieved the higher levels. There has been an improvement over the last three years. The GCSE examinations results in information technology in 2000 were below the national average. All pupils have the opportunity to take a basic skills certificate in information and communication technology. Pupils' knowledge and skills in the subject are about average when compared to their attainment in most other subjects in the school.
129. By the time they are 14, pupils' attainment is above the national expectation across the range of activities within the subject and this is reflected in the above average teacher assessment in 2000. Pupils demonstrate good skills in word processing, helping to improve their spelling and presentation of work. They are familiar with spreadsheets to organise information and the simple use of formulae to make calculations. They can construct a database and use desk top publishing to a high level of competence. The use of computers for all strands of the programmes of study is above that expected for pupils of a similar age as they have sufficient opportunity to develop these aspects apart from control technology and CAD / CAM. Pupils have access to the Internet and use this to download images and information. In Year 11, pupils' attainment in information and communication technology is above the expected standard for 16 year olds. Pupils are confident enough to work independently, using a wide range of software. They use their skills to solve more complex problems, particularly in handling information and data. The higher-attaining pupils understand and use applications to organise, refine and present information for different purposes and produce results of good quality. For the majority of pupils at both key stages, progress is good and the highest-attaining pupils make satisfactory progress.
130. Pupils have good attitudes to the subject and behave very well in lessons. They treat equipment with care and, with few exceptions, work hard to master new skills. All lessons include much independent work, which pupils enjoy as their confidence grows. They are co-operative and responsive, listen carefully to teachers' instructions, read the guidance material thoroughly and try to work accurately. They enjoy discussions about their work, set themselves suitable targets to achieve and try to meet them.
131. In specialist lessons the quality of teaching is good. There are also examples of good teaching in French, history, geography, art and elements of RSA basic skills lessons which contributes to pupils' acquisition of subject knowledge and skills. These lessons are planned to a high standard and have suitable challenge; this interests pupils and they work hard to meet the challenge of new skills. The management of classes is good. Clear targets are set for pupils of similar levels of attainment and this helps them to learn effectively. This careful matching of work to pupils' needs motivates pupils and maintains their interest and has improved since the last inspection. Relationships are very good and the skilled support given to pupils in their work quickly builds their confidence and helps them to learn well.
132. The teaching of information and communication technology is well managed. There is a scheme of work that covers the programmes of study, although there is insufficient use of computer-aided design and control systems. Pupils' achievements across the curriculum are assessed and fully recognised. The department has responded well to the last inspection and improvements made include an increased challenge in work set for pupils and improvement in access. Technical and curriculum support are good and training has been provided for staff so that they can use applications and gain



access to the network. There are opportunities for pupils to use computers during the lunch-time and there is a study club where pupils can develop their computer skills and have access to the Internet. The school's provision is good; the ratio of pupils to computers is better than the national average.

133. There are omissions in the delivery of information and communication technology across the curriculum and, at present, there is no effective co-ordination of the use of computers in other subjects. Other than French, history, geography, art and elements of RSA basic skills lessons the subject schemes of work provide no evidence of teaching using computers. At present, the school is not fulfilling the requirement to teach information and communication technology across the curriculum.
134. However, where there is good practice, there are opportunities for pupils to use computers and practise their skills. For example, in French lessons they use desk top publishing for creative writing and in the RSA travel and tourism lessons, pupils have the opportunity to use the Internet to carry out research and prepare information for travel brochures and leaflets. There are also examples of competent teaching in history, geography and art lessons, which contributes to pupils' acquisition of subject knowledge and skills. Their progress in other strands specified in the National Curriculum programmes of study, is less satisfactory as insufficient attention is paid to the aspects of control systems, computer-aided drawing and handling data.

## **MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES**

### **French**

135. Standards in French are above national standards overall. Pupils achieve well. The results of teacher assessments at the end of Key Stage 3 were in line with the national average in 2000. From analysis of work and lessons observed, standards in the current Year 9 are just above national expectations for this stage of the course. Higher-attaining pupils attain standards that are well above national expectations. They use past, present and future tenses confidently and talk about the weather in the past using the imperfect tense. Lower-attaining pupils attain standards that are in line with national expectations. They use past and future tenses with considerable support from the teacher.
136. GCSE results have improved significantly since the last inspection, with the proportion of pupils gaining A\*-C passes rising from in line with national averages to well above. Pupils did much better in French than in many of their other subjects. Although boys' results dropped slightly in 2000, they were well above the national average with a third more boys gaining A\*-C passes than nationally. Girls' results improved in 2000 and were above the national average. Standards in the current Year 11 are above national expectations. Higher- and average-attaining pupils attain standards that are well above. They use past, present and future tenses to talk about healthy eating, alcohol and drug abuse, including smoking. Lower-attaining pupils attain standards that are in line with national expectations. They use expressions such as 'j'y habite' with confidence and write extended passages in French with the help of writing frames. Listening, speaking, reading and writing skills are well developed but independent study skills, such as the use of dictionaries, for example, are less secure.
137. Teaching ranges from excellent to unsatisfactory but is good overall. It was most effective in the Year 9 lesson observed, where the teacher's excellent subject knowledge, enthusiasm for the subject and determination to encourage pupils to talk about clothes, using a variety of unusual adjectives, meant that they made excellent progress and were totally engaged in the learning process. Teaching is less satisfactory where less-experienced teachers are dealing with classes containing a small number of pupils with behavioural problems, with no additional support from learning assistants.
138. As a result of the good teaching, learning is also good overall. Pupils, including those with special educational needs, make good progress and achieve well. The exception to this is a small number of lower attainers, mostly boys, who are underachieving because they are not able to concentrate and complete the work they have been given. Gifted and talented pupils are well catered for in lessons such as the Year 10 lesson observed, where the most gifted linguists had been strategically placed to increase the pace and challenge and raise the level of French being spoken. Most pupils develop their literacy skills effectively, but the development of numeracy is less consistent. There is adequate provision for developing skills in using computers and most classes are taught in the computing room at least once a term.

### **Spanish**

139. Standards in Spanish are below national averages overall. Although most pupils achieve appropriately in lessons, their achievement over time is unsatisfactory as a result of disrupted provision in previous years. Standards in the current Year 9 are below national standards. Higher attainers understand descriptions of people from a tape played slowly and lower-attaining pupils identify one or two adjectives from a similar exercise.
140. Since the last inspection, GCSE results have fallen from just below the national average to well below. The proportion of pupils gaining A\*-C passes was half the national average in 2000. Pupils did worse in Spanish than in all of their other subjects. Girls performed particularly badly, dropping from in line with national averages in 1999 to very low when compared with national averages in 2000. Boys' results remained broadly similar and were well below national averages in both years.
141. Standards in Year 11 are below national expectations. Higher-attaining pupils attain standards that are in line with national expectations and use a variety of tenses to talk about their holidays and they

make sound progress. Lower attaining pupils attain standards that are well below national expectations. Although they have covered a similar amount of work as more-able pupils, they copy lists of vocabulary and structures without fully understanding the language or using it for themselves. Many have a poor knowledge on which to pin new work. Listening and speaking skills are weaker than reading and writing, partly because of the large amount of English spoken by teachers.

142. Teaching is unsatisfactory at Key Stage 3 and satisfactory at Key Stage 4. Strengths include good identification of expected learning outcomes and effective use of visuals such as the bright overhead transparencies used to remind Year 10 pupils of the vocabulary for parts of the body and to introduce ailments. Where teaching was weaker, it was because the teacher had not planned the lesson sufficiently to ensure that full use was made of the time available. In some lessons, few opportunities were provided for independent learning, use of dictionaries or group work and pupils were not given enough time to learn the work being taught before being asked to produce it.
143. Learning is unsatisfactory in Key Stage 3 and pupils make unsatisfactory progress. In Key Stage 4, pupils make satisfactory progress. Learning is unsatisfactory over time, however, and pupils underachieve at both key stages because they have not made enough progress in previous years.

### **Modern foreign languages**

144. Management of French is good overall. The head of department provides clear educational direction and has organised the examination procedures and documentation well. Teachers know pupils well and there is good assessment practice. There is some monitoring of teachers' lessons, marking and planning, but, as yet, evaluation procedures are not rigorous enough to ensure that the best and weakest practice is highlighted and used as a basis for professional development for all teachers. The management of Spanish is unsatisfactory. At present, responsibility for producing the scheme of work, for example, is unclear. The current scheme of work for Spanish is inadequate and does not support less experienced teachers sufficiently in planning their work. The curriculum allocation for Spanish is low in comparison with the time provided in other schools. With just one lesson per week, pupils do not have enough time to establish a sound base of learning before making their choices on entry into Year 10. Staffing difficulties in previous years have resulted in unsatisfactory progress over time and underachievement for pupils such as those in the current Year 11 Spanish group.
145. Display is excellent in the two main French classrooms and provides an inspirational learning environment. The importance of introducing pupils to life beyond the classroom through trips and exchanges is a key element of the school's aims and objectives. Foreign language assistants work well with pupils.

### **Italian**

146. GCSE results in Italian have been very high for the past two years, with most pupils entering gaining A\* - C grades. The very small numbers entered render comparisons with national averages invalid. Pupils achieve very well and make very good progress as a result of the fast, challenging teaching provided by the Italian Embassy.
147. At present, however, pupils are extracted from a variety of lessons in Key Stage 3 for one hour of tuition per week. This does not offer a secure enough foundation of learning to encourage pupils to continue with the language at Key Stage 4 and, as a result, numbers taking GCSE are very small.

### **MUSIC**

148. End of Key Stage 3 assessments show pupils' standards to be in line with the national average and these assessments were confirmed by observation of Key Stage 3 lessons and scrutiny of pupils' work during the inspection. Results in the most recent GCSE examinations were below the national average, but they were higher in the two previous years. No pupils are currently taking the GCSE music course in Year 10. Four pupils are following the course in Year 11 as an extra-curriculum class on Thursday evenings: no observation was made of this class during the course of the

- inspection. Standards of achievement are average and have improved a little since the last inspection.
149. By the age of 14, pupils have gained a number of skills which enable them to compose, perform and appraise music with reasonable accuracy. They understand basic musical literacy and can write melodies, using the treble clef. They set the rhythm of words to music accurately when composing tunes. Pupils have a secure knowledge of how to form chords, including C, F and G major, D, E and A minor and B diminished. They understand and recognise the difference between major and minor intervals. All pupils have a good grounding in how to use the electronic keyboards for their composition work: they use fade and echo effects, and note clusters, with imagination when doing creative work. The more-able students are used constructively as leaders in group improvisation and this helps to raise the standard of achievement in performances. More singing is included within the curriculum than at the last inspection, but the overall quality is poor. Strategies are in place to raise the quality of singing. Pupils with special needs make satisfactory progress in practical group work.
  150. Information and communication technology is used in a limited way within the department. Appropriate software is used on the department's computer by Key Stage 4 pupils. Plans are in hand for the use of music software to be extended to Year 9 pupils next term in order to further develop composition skills.
  151. There have been some improvements since the last inspection. A notable area has been the development of assessment procedures, which are now comprehensive and are understood by the pupils. Practical work is undertaken more regularly than at the last inspection. As many lessons have to be taught in non-specialist rooms in different parts of the school where there are no musical resources, pupils' quality of learning is impeded. Music technology has been extended, but there are not enough keyboards for each pupil to have one each in lessons and this also affects the progress that can be made. Pupils are given awards and praise for successful work.
  152. Attitudes to music at Key Stage 3 are satisfactory. Most pupils listen closely to the taught part of lessons and to music played to them. They work constructively in groups, despite the fact that some groups are rather too large for all pupils to make at least equal progress. Concentration is variable and some classes become restless towards the end of lessons. Pupils are shy and embarrassed when singing. Many lessons have a rather sombre atmosphere and pupils often do not seem to be really enjoying their work. This attitude may also be reflected in the exceptionally small numbers opting to take music at Key Stage 4 and also to the small numbers involved in the extra-curricular activities. Girls tend to have more positive attitudes to music lessons and make more progress than boys.
  153. Teaching is satisfactory, with some good features. Lessons are well planned and appropriate resources have been produced for a thorough delivery of the curriculum. Teachers are good practical musicians themselves and are fully conversant with the ways in which music technology can be effectively used, and this enables pupils to learn well in many lessons. Sound guidance and advice is given during practical work, enabling pupils to make satisfactory progress. Lesson planning, although thorough, is not always systematically kept to. Lessons do not always end with some form of plenary sharing of the progress made and pupils often become restless towards the end of lessons as they have achieved their targets in good time. Insufficient challenge is provided for the more-able pupils, as was identified in the last inspection, although some attention is given to setting different targets to pupils of varying ability. There is insufficient variety of activity. Some lessons start with too much teacher input which leads to negative attitudes by the pupils.
  154. The department collaborates with the drama department to present an annual musical production involving large numbers of pupils. Workshops by professional musicians have recently been staged in school. The department could make more impact upon the spiritual, moral, social and cultural life of the school, and there could be more varied and attractive extra-curriculum activities which would appeal to more pupils. Accommodation is poor for a thorough delivery of the National Curriculum.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

155. In the end of Key Stage 3 teachers' assessments in 2000, standards were broadly in line with national expectations. GCSE results for 2000 were below the national average, although they were slightly better than the results obtained by the same pupils in other subjects. Attainment of pupils not following GCSE courses is above the national average.
156. By the time they are 14, the attainment of the majority of pupils conforms to the national average in all areas of the physical education curriculum and many pupils are able to apply the techniques, skills and competition rules to several aspects of the curriculum, including badminton, basketball, football and netball. Basic skills are sound for most pupils and provide a platform for future development. In basketball, many boys pass accurately and use space effectively. Shooting skills are developing and the boys have a sound knowledge of the rules of the game and a basic tactical awareness which they are able to apply in games. Many girls in badminton have satisfactory 'tracking' and basic racquet skills but have not refined these skills and have little understanding of position on court or movement around the court. A minority of higher-attaining pupils are able to refine these basic techniques and incorporate them into games. The ability of pupils at the end of Key Stage 3 to observe and analyse performance is below national expectations.
157. By the time they are 16, pupils reach good standards in physical education. In a Year 11 basket ball lesson, many boys have advanced control and shooting skills, together with good tactical awareness. In a trampoline lesson, as well as being able to perform a simple sequence of quality movements, some pupils were beginning to observe performance in the lesson and analyse this to improve both their own performance and that of other pupils in the lesson. This, however, was an exception and there were only a few examples of pupils at either key stages becoming good independent learners or developing the ability to analyse their own or that of others. By the time they are 16, pupils in GCSE theory lessons have a good understanding of the effects of performance-enhancing drugs in sport, and associated issues.
158. Pupils learn and make good progress in most lessons at both key stages. In Key Stage 3, progress was never less than satisfactory and was good in the majority of lessons. Pupils are encouraged to develop not only skills but also some understanding of the techniques and rules. In most Key Stage 3 lessons, pupils demonstrate increasing control and levels of accuracy in a range of skills. At Key Stage 4, progress and learning is also good. In a Year 11 basketball lesson, all pupils developed accurate passing skills and were able to apply these to a controlled game where they significantly improved their tactical awareness. In a Year 10 trampoline lesson, all pupils developed increasing control and were able to improve both extension and bodyline while at the same time developing evaluation skills. In some lessons, the progress of more-able pupils is unsatisfactory, although for those with special needs, progress is good.
159. Pupils' attitudes to learning are positive at both key stages. Most are enthusiastic, well behaved and co-operative, demonstrating a real enjoyment of the subject. They are attentive and able to sustain concentration. Relationships between pupils and between pupils and staff are usually good. Opportunities for pupils to take responsibility and to undertake different roles such as coach or official are limited. A very good range of extra-curricular activities, and fixtures with other schools, provide many opportunities for pupils to extend and develop their skills, which they do. School teams compete very successfully with other schools in a range of sports and several pupils achieve representative honours.
160. The quality of teaching is good in most lessons at both key stages and was less than satisfactory in only one lesson. Good teaching was seen in both key stages and in these lessons a secure knowledge of the subject is regularly conveyed to pupils through perceptive observation of performance, appropriate intervention and good teacher directed question and answer sessions. Thorough planning, incorporating varied teaching strategies and an appropriate sequence of activities involving both individual and collaborative learning is also a feature of these lessons. Discipline and class management is usually good. Evaluation of individual pupil performance by staff is used to improve standards during most lessons and target setting for whole classes is a feature of many lessons, although individual pupil target setting is rarely used at either key stage, including in GCSE lessons. Although there is a discrete unit on health and fitness in Year 9, lessons in Key Stage 3 do not consistently teach pupils how to prepare for and recover from specific activities, nor do they stress the benefits of regular exercise.

161. The curriculum meets statutory requirements at both key stages and the range of activities at Key Stage 4 should provide a sound preparation for post 16 leisure activities but the time allocated to pupils in Year 11 is not adequate to teach the school's curriculum. Schemes of work are good working documents, although they do not provide specific guidance on developing the potential of the more-able pupils. Consequently, these pupils do not always make appropriate progress.
162. The organisation and leadership of the department is good and day-to-day organisation and communication within the department is very good. The head of department gives a clear educational direction for the department and a good departmental handbook clearly identifies policies and procedures. All staff are good role models, are committed and give generously of their time. Although the department has appropriate and clearly identified targets, including raising levels of attainment, development planning lacks the necessary detail to ensure that effective progress is made to meet these targets. Most issues raised in the last inspection report have been successfully addressed. Most procedures relating to the assessment of pupils are now thorough and extra curricular provision is now very good. Opportunities for pupils to develop planning and evaluation skills are, however, still limited.

## **DRAMA**

163. Results in the most recent GCSE examinations were significantly higher than the national average, and this has been the trend in recent years. Standards of attainment are currently good at Key Stage 3 and are very good at Key Stage 4. Teaching is very good across both key stages and this, combined with very good attitudes to the subject by the pupils, leads to a good quality of learning at Key Stage 3 and a very good quality at Key Stage 4. The specialist teacher has a thorough knowledge of drama teaching methodology and of the history and conventions of the theatre. She inspires pupils and excites the interest of both boys and girls. For example, Year 9 pupils applied the knowledge of Elizabethan gesture, vocal and physical skills, and of symbolic props accurately, and with enthusiasm and confidence, in a lesson on Shakespearean theatre. Pupils in Year 11 demonstrated a secure awareness of the functions of stagecraft, scenery, costume, make-up and props in another lesson. At both key stages, pupils undertake their task with great enthusiasm and an obvious love of the subject, an attitude that rubs off from the teacher.
164. Management of the subject is excellent and it contributes strongly to the cultural life of the school and to the personal development of all pupils. The options system for Key Stage 4 restricts how many pupils can take the subject further.

## **BUSINESS STUDIES**

165. The subject is taught only at Key Stage 4, and does not attract many higher attainers from Key Stage 3. Standards have been consistently good since the last inspection and boys, particularly, have scored well above national averages at GCSE until 2000. In that year, GCSE results dropped dramatically due to the long-term absence due to sickness of the teacher in charge. This has now been remedied and realistic targets show that GCSE results are expected to rise again.
166. Evidence is based on the scrutiny of pupils' work and conversation with the teacher in charge. Standards in work seen confirm the results obtained in GCSE examinations. Written work is detailed, homework is set regularly and past examination papers are used effectively to illustrate and reinforce learning in each topic. Written work includes extensive examination practice, which is valuable to pupils. Marking is thorough and according to school policy, but, whilst comments written on pupils' books are always encouraging, they do not always show pupils how to improve their work or set them targets.
167. The subject is well managed and benefits from being part of the humanities faculty; there is valuable management support and development.