

INSPECTION REPORT

GREAT TORRINGTON COMMUNITY SCHOOL

Great Torrington

LEA area: Devon

Unique reference number: 113510

Headteacher: Mrs D Nicholson

Reporting inspector: WJ Powell
3174

Dates of inspection: 17-21 September 2001

Inspection number: 193614

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: Community

Age range of pupils: 11 to 16

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Calvesford Road
Great Torrington
Devon

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Appropriate authority: Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Mrs P Hargreaves

Date of previous inspection: 21 April 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
3174	John Powell	Registered inspector		What sort of school is it?; How high are standards?; How well are pupils taught?; How well is the school led and managed?; What should the school do to improve further?
19639	Gillian Anderson	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development; How well does the school care for its pupils?; How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
31864	Desmond Mason	Team inspector	English, incl. English as an additional language	
27719	Paul Metcalf	Team inspector	Mathematics; Equality of opportunity	
22891	Ray Woodhouse	Team inspector	Science	How good are curricular opportunities?
4117	Elizabeth Morgan	Team inspector	Design & technology; information & communication technology	

15941	Colin Phillips	Team inspector	Religious education	
31981	Eric Forster	Team inspector	Art & design	
30982	Barbara Jones	Team inspector	Geography	
15576	David Nebesnuick	Team inspector	History	
27666	John Dockrell	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	
31705	John Mason	Team inspector	Music	
20395	Carolyn Rowe	Team inspector	Physical education	
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Terms used in this report

*Pupils in Years 7 to 9 are at **Key Stage 3**, having transferred in most cases from their primary schools at the end of **Key Stage 2** after Year 6. Pupils in Years 10 and*

11 are at **Key Stage 4** of their education. Those students who remain at school after the compulsory period of education are in the **sixth form**, in Years 12 and 13. Pupils in Years 7 to 11 follow courses and Programmes of Study set out in the National Curriculum. A course of religious education is a requirement for pupils and students of all ages at school.

At the end of Year 9, pupils aged 14 take national tests in English, mathematics and science. In all subjects of the National Curriculum, teachers also make their own assessments of what the pupils know, understand and can do at age 14. At the end of Year 11, pupils aged 16 may take examinations in the General Certificate of Secondary Education (**GCSE**). Others may follow courses leading to the award of the General National Vocational Qualification (**GNVQ**) or the National Vocational Qualification (**NVQ**). Sixth form students may take further courses leading to these awards, including the Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education (**AVCE**), or to those of the General Certificate of Education at Advanced level (**A-level**). Students may take examinations leading to the Advanced Subsidiary award (**AS**), equivalent to half the difficulty of the full A-level, which is gained by further study beyond AS standard. Some students may also take Advanced Extension Awards (**AEA**).

Inspectors judge the **standards** reached by pupils by comparing their attainments with national test and examination results, or by the levels of performance expected for pupils of the same age nationally. The pupils' **achievements** reflect the standards that they reach in relation to their earlier performances, and thus whether the **progress** that has occurred is high enough for the pupils concerned. These judgements take account of the educational **value added** over time. In this report, **similar schools** are defined as those with a comparable proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals.

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

With 867 boys and girls aged 11 to 16, this is an average-sized comprehensive school. It is a highly inclusive school; virtually all the children living within its catchment transfer to Great Torrington. Pupils come from the primary school in the town, plus nine others in the surrounding deeply rural area; half of the pupils use school transport. Almost all pupils are from white British backgrounds. However, 11 come from white European backgrounds, two are from black African heritage, two are Chinese, and one is from a recently arrived traveller family. Three pupils have English as an additional language, including two at an early stage. The range of standards at entry is very wide, reflecting the school's inclusiveness. Overall, however, the attainment level at entry in recent years has been below average; levels of literacy, particularly amongst boys, are markedly lower than usual. There are 175 pupils (20 per cent) on the school's register of special educational needs, an average level, of whom 37 (four per cent) have Statements of Special Educational Need, an above average figure. Pupils' Statements cover a range of learning needs, including visual, hearing and physical impairments. The area served by the school is a relatively disadvantaged one, marked by rural isolation, low levels of higher education, low incomes and, of late, the widespread effects of foot and mouth disease.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a good and effective school that serves its very diverse and sometimes disadvantaged community well. Standards are improving, and boys and girls from all attainment levels and backgrounds make good progress overall compared to their standards at entry. Teaching and learning are good across the whole school, which is a very harmonious place for pupils and staff alike. Leadership and management are good overall. The school offers very good value for money.

What the school does well

- Pupils of all attainment levels reach higher standards than would be expected from their attainments at entry. Boys are now doing much better at the school than in the past.
- The good teaching by committed and well qualified staff is a major strength of the school.
- The pupils' attitudes towards education, and their behaviour, are excellent, and relationships between all members of the school community are very good.
- The management of subjects is good, and the headteacher gives very good leadership, so that everyone has a good understanding of key educational priorities.

What could be improved

- The school's accommodation is very crowded, limiting learning opportunities, particularly in information and communication technology. Some lavatories are particularly unpleasant.
- Better use could be made of assessment information, and of marking, to help pupils to improve still further.

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 in April 1997. Since then, improvement has been good. The school has improved its cost effectiveness significantly. Standards have risen at all levels, particularly amongst boys, including improvements in English, mathematics and science. Standards have risen

at a faster rate than might be expected from national patterns. Teaching and learning, already strong in 1997, remain so. The many strengths of the school as a caring and co-operative place have been retained. Most areas for improvement in the last report have been dealt with successfully, in spite of a period of financial and staffing difficulty. The school has set itself realistic but demanding targets, and has the capacity to meet them.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved at the end of Year 11 based on average point scores in GCSE examinations.

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

In the national tests at the end of Year 9, the trend in the school's overall average points score between 1998 and 2000 is broadly similar to the national picture, with overall results in line with the national average, although below this level in English in 2000. The overall results in 2001 are above average. There has been a sharp improvement in English, and results are now average; mathematics and science are now above average. A key feature of the 2001 tests has been the narrowing of the gap between boys' and girls' results in English; boys now do slightly better than girls in mathematics, whilst boys and girls gain broadly similar results in the other two subjects. Pupils gain better test results in Year 9 than would be expected from their standards at entry. In the GCSE examinations at the end of Year 11, the school's overall results have improved at a faster rate than the national trend between 1998 and 2000. The 2001 results show further improvement, exceeding the school's targets, which were realistically demanding. Pupils gain GCSE results that are well above those expected, given their test results two years earlier, and their standards at entry. Boys' results are improving, and in some subjects, boys now do better than girls.

In work seen during the inspection, achievement is good across the school, particularly for boys. In most subjects, boys and girls are now reaching similar standards in the classroom. Standards overall are broadly average by the end of Year 9, and above average by the end of Year 11. Across the school, standards in English are average; those in mathematics and science are above average. Improvements to teaching mean that standards seen in mathematics are now higher than recent test and examination results would suggest. In other subjects, standards are above average at all levels in art and design, in design and technology, and in history. Standards are also above average in Years 10 and 11 in geography and music. Elsewhere, standards are average, except in modern languages in Year 8, as a result of course weaknesses in the pupils' first year, and in information and communication technology in all years because of inadequate access to computers. In both of these cases, standards seen are below average. Pupils with special educational needs, those from minority backgrounds, and those for whom English is an additional language, make good progress.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Excellent. Pupils are determined to do their best.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Excellent. Behaviour in lessons and around this crowded school is almost invariably of the highest quality. There is an

of classrooms	absence of bullying and oppressive behaviour. Younger pupils feel very secure.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Relationships between all members of the school community are a major strength, and pupils act in a mature and responsible way towards others.
Attendance	Good, in spite of the very dispersed catchment area.

The high quality of relationships at the school, and the mutual respect and tolerance displayed, make for a most effective learning environment. Moreover, the ethos of the school promoted positive attitudes and good behaviour.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Years 7 – 9	Years 10 – 11
Quality of teaching	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.

The quality of teaching and learning in English, mathematics and science is good across all years. Teaching and learning are very good in design and technology in Years 10 and 11, and satisfactory at all levels in information and communication technology and in music. Elsewhere, teaching and learning are good, often with very good features, particularly in Years 10 and 11.

Strengths of the teaching include the very good relationships that teachers develop, their knowledge and understanding of their subject, and the quality of the teachers' planning. Teachers have appropriately high expectations of their pupils, who in turn show very good effort in learning. Although pupils have a satisfactory knowledge of their own learning, teachers could do more to help them, through better marking, and using assessment information more fully.

Overall, the teaching of the basic skills of literacy and numeracy is satisfactory; literacy development is more advanced than work on numeracy, although a policy for the latter is now being drafted. Teaching is good at meeting the needs of pupils of different attainment levels, and those from different backgrounds; some lessons could still be more demanding of the highest attainers.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory overall. Apart from collective worship, statutory requirements are met. The curriculum in Years 10 and 11 could be broader.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Satisfactory. Clear guidelines are given to teachers in the pupils' education plans, and learning support assistants provide valuable assistance to pupils.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Satisfactory. The very small number of such pupils have access to the full curriculum, and receive appropriate support.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good overall. Greater planning is needed to ensure that pupils get a more consistent experience across the whole curriculum. Even so, social development is very good, and moral development is good. Cultural development is satisfactory overall; the school understands its responsibilities in developing an understanding of other

	cultures. Spiritual development is satisfactory.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Satisfactory arrangements for child protection and health and safety. The monitoring of behaviour, including bullying, is very good, whilst that of academic and personal progress is good. However, the school could make better use of assessment information to set clear targets for teaching and learning.

The school has satisfactory links with parents, including the quality of information that it provides. Reports, although improved, could still give a clearer picture of how well pupils are doing.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good overall. The headteacher provides very good leadership. Leadership in most subjects, including special educational needs, is good, but the overall management requirements of information and communication technology are too demanding for one person.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good. Governors have a proper role in the planning of the school's work, and in monitoring its performance. They fulfil their responsibilities well.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good. Senior managers undertake a good programme of subject reviews. Timetable constraints mean that middle managers are not always able to review the work of their own teams.
The strategic use of resources	Good. Money is well targeted to key educational priorities. The principle of best value is well understood and demonstrated.

Staffing is good, with well qualified teachers who receive good support from non-teaching members of staff. Learning resources are unsatisfactory; the school has barely half the usual numbers of computers for its size. Accommodation is poor and hampers learning, particularly in information and communication technology. Some of the pupils' lavatories are particularly unpleasant.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The progress that pupils make. • The school's expectations of pupils. • The personal development of the pupils. • The school's approachability. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The quality of information provided. • The school could work more closely with parents. • The amount of homework, and the range of extracurricular activities. • The quality of leadership and management.

Inspectors agree with the strengths identified. They judge the leadership and management of the school to be good, and the other areas of criticism to be satisfactory overall, although they agree that reports and homework are capable of further improvement.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. The standards seen when pupils enter the school fluctuate from year to year, but in general, are below average overall. At entry in Year 7, the standards reached by boys are below those of girls. The gap is most pronounced in terms of literacy skills; whilst the girls' standards are below average, those of boys fall well below this level. The difference is less marked in terms of numeracy, although still there.
2. In the national tests taken at the end of Year 9, the trend in overall results is broadly similar to the national pattern between 1998 and 2001, but this masks marked differences between the three subjects. In English, results have been in line with the national average each year since the last inspection, except for a marked dip in 2000 to below average because of underperformance by middle attaining boys. The results are back at an average level in 2001, following changes to the way in which the subject is taught. Mathematics and science have also shown average test results since the last inspection, with both showing further improvement to above average levels in 2001. Apart from English in 2000, pupils have tended to gain better results in the Year 9 tests in all three subjects than would be expected from their results in the tests taken three years earlier at the end of primary school. Overall, therefore, the achievement of the pupils in all three subjects has been good in terms of the progress made in Years 7 to 9. Comparisons of results with those of schools having a similar proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals show the school to perform at well below average levels. However, this measure is unreliable at this school, given the nature of its catchment area. In the most recent tests, boys' results are significantly better than those of girls in mathematics, whilst there is no significant difference between boys' and girls' results in the other two subjects. This outcome reflects the school's recent work to raise the standards of boys' work, particularly in English.
3. At the end of Year 11, there has been improvement in the overall GCSE results, the school's results improving faster than the national trend, and exceeding the school's appropriately high targets for 2001. At present, there are no detailed national comparisons available for the 2001 GCSE examinations. In 2000, the proportion of pupils gaining at least five passes at grade C or above at the school was above the national average; that for five or more passes at grade G or better was average. The mean points score obtained by pupils in 2000 was above the national average and that for similar schools. The 2001 results show further improvements in all of these measures. In 2000, the school's overall results were well above the level to be expected from the pupils' Year 9 test scores in 1998; the 2001 picture is likely to be at least as good. The achievement of pupils in Years 10 and 11 has therefore been very good in terms of the progress made during their examination courses.
4. When the 2000 GCSE results are examined in more detail, the school gained results that were significantly above the national average in design and technology. Results were below average in German and information and communication technology. In all other subjects, including English, mathematics and science, results were broadly average. Analyses of individual pupils' results show that boys tended to do better in geography and history than in the other subjects that they took, whilst girls performed relatively better in design and technology, English language and geography. Boys tended to do less well in science and English literature, whilst girls tended to do less well in science, drama, French, German and mathematics.

Almost all subjects showed improvements in the 2001 GCSE examinations, particularly in terms of the higher grades awarded. The slight fall in English literature in 2001 reflects the school's policy of entering a much higher proportion of pupils for the examination than is the case nationally. Geography results improved dramatically, with half of pupils gaining grades A* or A. History results also showed a high level of success; history and physical education are notable in that boys performed better than girls, against the national trend. Improvement in the boys' results is a feature of most other subjects in 2001, with many now showing no significant difference between girls' and boys' performances. This has occurred because the school has been targeting the standards gained by boys. Where there is still a gap, as in design and technology, it tends to reflect the better standard of coursework submitted by girls. One boy was placed in the highest five pupils nationally in the 2001 science and English literature GCSE examinations.

5. In work seen during the inspection, standards overall are broadly average by the end of Year 9, and above average by the end of Year 11. Given the pupils' standards at entry, this represents good achievement in terms of the progress being made as pupils move through the school. This is particularly so for boys, given their weaker starting position when they enter the school. Good teaching and good attitudes to work underlie this picture. Pupils who have special educational needs achieve appropriately well across the school; their targets for improvement are contained in individual education plans that are well known to their teachers. Occasionally, individuals make less progress than they might in lessons because there are insufficient learning support assistants to provide support. Whilst the school's policy for gifted and talented pupils is a relatively recent one, it is having a positive effect on their progress, although some lessons still provide insufficient challenge to such pupils, for example in information and communication technology. The school monitors the performance of individuals from minority groups, including the small number having English as an additional language, to ensure that they make appropriate progress.
6. Standards seen in English are average across the school. Given the low literacy skills of pupils when they start in Year 7, this represents notably good achievement, especially for boys, in Years 7 to 9; achievement remains good in Years 10 and 11. Standards of reading and writing reach average standards by the end of Year 9, and remain at average levels thereafter. Listening skills are above average in all years, but whilst speaking skills are average across the school, pupils would benefit from greater opportunities to talk in lessons. Standards of literacy in other subjects of the curriculum are average; recent developments show the school's commitments to raising standards further through the adoption of a whole school literacy policy.
7. In mathematics, the standards seen amongst boys and girls reach above average levels by the end of Year 9, representing good achievement in Years 7 to 9, although standards in using and applying mathematics could be higher. The improvement over recent test results reflects the impact of recent changes in the way that the subject is taught. These benefits are also being felt in

Years 10 and 11, where standards are also above average, although boys are sometimes still too reliant on calculators, This represents good achievement for the pupils concerned, whose mathematical foundations were not always secure when they joined the school. Across the curriculum as a whole, the development of numeracy is satisfactory. The school is in the process of introducing a whole-school numeracy policy to provide a more coherent framework for numeracy development in other subjects.

8. Observed standards in science are average in Year 7, but pupils at all levels show good achievement, going on to reach above average standards by the end of Year 9, and in their GCSE work in Years 10 and 11. Progress is good across all areas of the course, amongst boys and girls alike, and across the attainment range.
9. Standards in information and communication technology are below average across the school. Achievement by pupils is unsatisfactory. This is because the much lower than average number of computers at the school means that they have insufficient opportunities to use and extend their skills across the curriculum as a whole. The cramped nature of the school's premises means that there is little opportunity to improve the situation in the short term. Whilst the core lessons in the subject are successful in providing basic skills, their relative infrequency makes it hard to provide greater challenges, particularly for higher attainers.
10. In other subjects, standards seen are above average, and achievement good, in all years in design and technology, and in the GCSE groups in history, physical education and drama. Above average standards in Years 7 to 9 in art give way to well above average standards in Years 10 and 11, representing good achievement overall. Standards in geography are also well above average in Years 10 and 11, the result of improvements to the way in which the subject is taught. Elsewhere in subjects, standards are average and pupils show good achievement, except that in modern languages and music, whilst standards are average overall, more limited progress reflects recent staffing difficulties. Standards amongst Year 8 modern languages pupils are lower than expected, reflecting last year's experiment with offering two languages to all pupils in Year 7. This did not provide the necessary secure grounding in language work, and has been discontinued.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

11. As at the last inspection, there are many strengths in the attitudes, values and personal development of pupils. The attitudes of pupils towards the school and their work are excellent overall. These strengths are seen across all subjects, amongst boys and girls of all attainment levels and backgrounds, in all year groups, and are confirmed by discussions with the pupils. Cases of unsatisfactory attitudes and behaviour are very rare, and these tend to be where a teacher's expectations are too low or the teacher is new to the school. The very best responses are associated with teaching that is very good or excellent when the response of pupils is a high level of interest and involvement in their activities. For example, in a Year 10 science lesson, there were excellent attitudes that reflected the high quality of teaching where all pupils were kept working hard. This kept them highly motivated and interested, and led to excellent learning. In mathematics lessons, pupils are keen and

eager and want to succeed. Overall, pupils have a good idea of their strengths and weaknesses, although these are not always sufficiently well linked to the criteria of the National Curriculum. In class, they concentrate hard on the teacher's explanations and their questioning confirms their involvement.

12. The behaviour of pupils is excellent, both in lessons, where it enhances learning, and particularly around the school, creating an orderly and sociable environment, and a good ethos for learning. Although stairways and corridors are very congested, traffic jams are disentangled in a good natured and patient way, and there is little sign of unpleasantness. Despite the dilapidation of some of the accommodation, there is a notable absence of litter, graffiti and damage. The incidence of exclusions, both permanent and fixed term, is below average for the size of school. The absence of oppressive behaviour, including bullying, sexism and racism, is very good. Some boys show thoughtful concern over girls having the same opportunities as themselves. New pupils in Year 7 report that they feel safe and secure. They know clearly what action to take if anything happens. Older pupils are also insistent that bullying is very rare indeed. Pupils say that a key strength of the school is the way that the pupils care about each other.
13. The personal development and relationships of pupils are very good. Pupils enjoy supportive relationships with one another. In nearly all lessons, they have a good rapport with their teachers and demonstrate mutual respect. They have excellent respect for outside speakers. For example, in a Year 10 "Well Boys" session taken by a local doctor, a positive introduction gave the boys confidence as they thought seriously about issues, which enabled them to have a lively discussion. Pupils have a very good understanding of the impact of their actions on others. They are considerate, for example quite naturally offering to carry books for teachers and inspectors, or asking if people are lost. They work well in pairs and groups during lessons. The pupils' respect for the feelings, values and beliefs of others is very good, and this makes a very good contribution to the overall quality of their relationships with others. Boys and girls listen very well to each other, for example in design and technology, where they can criticise constructively, and this makes a good contribution to the pace of learning. Pupils respond very well to good opportunities to take initiative and personal responsibility. They are involved with the school's catering service in a food user group, where they make responsible contributions about the content and price of food. Two pupils represent the school in the local community project, and others do so at remembrance services, or when taking visitors round the school. Pupils behave extremely well at the school leavers' ball, where the local hotel welcomes their return.
14. Attendance has remained good since the last inspection. Although the actual total number of absences has risen this year, this was the result of foot and mouth disease on local farms, for which the school is getting dispensation. Unauthorised absence has fallen since the last inspection, and is below the national average. Punctuality to school and to lessons is very good.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

15. At the last inspection, teaching was a strength of the school and this has been maintained, in spite of the early timing of the inspection in the school year, and the large number of teachers new to the school. The overall quality of teaching is good, with little variation between years; learning is also good. Teaching is at least satisfactory in 96 per cent of lessons. It is good or better in 71 per cent, and very good or excellent in 22 per cent of cases. Teaching and learning are very good in Years 10 and 11 in design and technology. Overall, teaching and learning are good at all levels in almost all other subjects, including English, mathematics and science. Whilst teaching and learning in music are satisfactory overall at present, this reflects the temporary absence of the usual head of department because of sickness; evidence suggests that teaching quality is normally higher than this. Satisfactory teaching and learning across the school are also features of work in information and communication technology. Here, much of the core course teaching is, of necessity, done by non-specialists who have yet to put their own stamp on the centrally provided course materials. The six cases where teaching is less than satisfactory have similarities, in that a lack of suitable challenge, and sometimes ineffective class control, are key factors. At this stage of the year, some of the teachers did not know their classes well, not helped in some cases by the class having more than one teacher during the week.
16. A major factor in the good learning that is seen is the very positive attitudes towards work that the pupils demonstrate, and their willingness to work hard. These, in turn, build upon the very good relationships that exist between pupils and their teachers. It is clear that most teachers have a great enthusiasm for working with young people, and communicate effectively their good knowledge and enjoyment of their subjects. These factors lay at the heart of an excellent Year 11 design and technology lesson containing a high proportion of pupils who had special educational needs. The teacher's detailed knowledge and understanding of traditional making skills was passed on to the pupils through effective demonstration, and through careful support for each member of the group, whose struggles to learn were respected with patience. Very good subject knowledge resulted in very good learning in a Year 8 religious education lesson on the Ten Commandments. The pupils' often brief initial answers were teased out by careful questioning and hypothetical situations, set up well by the teacher.
17. The overall quality of the teachers' planning, and the effectiveness of the methods used, are good, and combine to maintain interest in learning. An excellent Year 10 science lesson involved pupils in both experimental work in the laboratory and the use of computers. Although these were in adjoining rooms, the teacher moved from one to the other giving support and encouragement. The rate of learning was very high. In a Year 9 geography lesson, the teacher used a domestic kettle as an analogy to help the pupils to understand what happens inside a volcano. Effective teaching sets out clearly the objectives of the lesson, so that the pupils know what is expected of them. This, coupled with a good range of effective learning approaches, was the key to a good Year 9 history lesson on slavery, which involved recapitulation of previous work, video material, a question and answer session, worksheets and discussion. Attention was high throughout, as was the pace of working and learning.
18. For the most part, teachers manage classes well, show good use of time and resources, and have good expectations of the pupils' work and behaviour.

Pupils and teachers alike have a "can do" culture; pupils are expected to push themselves, and they clearly do so. Mathematics and science lessons offered many good examples of how high expectations promoted good learning. A Year 11 mathematics lesson saw very good learning result from the outset, because the teacher kept up a firm time pressure on all activities, and used probing questions to keep the expectations of what was to be done high. Whilst homework arrangements are satisfactory overall, some homework tasks could be more challenging, the work being insufficiently well targeted for pupils of different attainment levels. However, teachers show an understanding of the relatively limited access to resources that many pupils have, particularly in the isolated rural parts of the catchment area.

19. Overall, teachers could make better use of assessment in their work. Although this area is satisfactory overall, with good records and generally accurate assessments, marking is not sufficiently consistent, either within or between subjects. Pupils comment that the usefulness of marking depends on the subject and the teachers. Whilst some books show plenty of careful marking, giving supportive guidance on how to improve work, others contained little more than ticks and a few words of general comment. Although the school has considerable data on pupils' performances, these are not yet being analysed and shared in a sufficiently rigorous way. For example, there is little evidence that teachers use the national information now available on value added in each subject in order to diagnose underachievement, or to set suitable targets for individuals, although some work is being done in geography and science, and by senior managers. In general, although pupils have a broadly satisfactory knowledge of how well they are doing, they play relatively little part in assessing their own work, and in using the language and levels of the National Curriculum.
20. Teachers have a satisfactory grasp of the teaching of basic skills. On balance, support for literacy is stronger than numeracy at present, reflecting the school's greater progress with developing a whole-school policy for the former given the character of its intake. For example, key words are a feature of displays in many subject classrooms, and the range of reading and writing opportunities is more carefully considered in lesson plans. Mathematics lessons are benefiting from lesson structures adopted from the National Numeracy Strategy. A good development is that pupils now have literacy and numeracy targets when they enter the school, set in consultation with their primary schools. Whilst teachers make appropriate plans to use information and communication technology to support learning, the limited number of computers makes it difficult for them to gain sufficient access in all subjects. However, teachers have been quick to take up training opportunities in information and communication technology, and are keen to see greater use of computers in their teaching.
21. Overall, teaching is good at meeting the needs of all pupils, including the very small number of pupils who have English as an additional language. Unusually, the school has individual education plans for talented pupils as well as those with special educational needs. Plans contain appropriate targets, and are made available to all teachers. In some cases, teachers could still do more to extend the higher attainers, for example in mixed ability mathematics

groups; planned extension activities do not always extend pupils sufficiently. More targeted demands were made of such pupils in geography, history, music and religious education. Support for pupils with special educational needs is generally good, leading to good learning in lessons. Support assistants work very effectively within the classrooms, skilfully using their time in co-operation with subject teachers, and often working with groups to avoid drawing attention to individuals. However, at present, there are too few learning support staff to be able to provide support to subjects on a sufficiently regular basis.

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

22. Since the last inspection, the organisation of the school curriculum has improved. The school is now providing sufficient time in all year groups for pupils to cover the requirements of the agreed syllabus in religious education. The school is still unable to meet the requirements for a daily act of collective worship for all pupils because of accommodation limitations, but now provides the opportunity each lunchtime for pupils and staff to attend worship on a voluntary basis.
23. The curriculum is now satisfactory overall, but given the broad nature of its intake profile, opportunities are rather limited in Years 10 and 11.
24. The curriculum in Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory. The school offers a broad range of subjects, containing all the requirements of the National Curriculum, as well as drama. Apart from design technology, where they are taught in smaller groups, pupils in Year 7 are taught in mixed ability tutor groups. As pupils move through the school, they are placed in groups that are setted by attainment in the majority of subjects. Information and communication technology is taught in specialist fortnightly lessons in the computer suites; this is intended to be supplemented by the use of computers in lessons in a number of subjects in order to enhance learning, although limited computer facilities prevents this plan from being realised fully. Owing to timetable constraints caused by the need to employ part time teachers, some pupils are in split classes, taught by more than one teacher in the week; this makes it difficult to ensure consistency in teaching and continuity of learning.
25. The curriculum in Years 10 and 11 is also satisfactory overall, and meets statutory requirements. Pupils are required to study English, mathematics, science, physical education, personal, social and health education, information and communication technology, and religious education. Pupils select additional subjects from a range of options, but these do not include more vocational opportunities. The number of pupils disapplied from the requirements of the National Curriculum is higher than usual. In the academic year 2000-2001, disapplication from modern languages reflected a pragmatic response to major staffing problems in the subject. Proper procedures were not followed last year, but this has been rectified for the pupils now in Year 11. In the current Year 10, the numbers of pupils being disapplied, particularly from design and technology, are again larger than usually seen. The school has followed proper procedures, for example consulting with parents and arranging careers interviews. However, it now needs to monitor, regularly, the effect of these relatively new powers for tailoring the individual's curriculum in

order to ensure that the intended gains do, indeed, materialise. One effect of this change is the much larger number of pupils now studying music to GCSE. Information and communication technology continues to be provided in discrete lessons, but complete coverage of National Curriculum skills depends on contributions from other subjects such as science. As in Years 7 to 9, resource and, particularly, accommodation problems prevent this aim from being realised fully.

26. The school has a clear commitment to equal opportunities and works hard to ensure equality of access and opportunity for all pupils. A draft policy document contains useful information on equal opportunities and confirms the school's commitment to equality of opportunity for all pupils and staff. Pupils are also aware of the importance of equality of opportunity noting, for example, that the curriculum does not allow boys to follow dance, whilst girls must wait to learn about orienteering until Year 8. Access around the school for people with physical or visual impairments is wholly inadequate because of the large number of steps. Although senior managers carry out detailed analyses of attendance, exclusions, detentions and pupils' attainments by sex and their prior attainments, including those for the small number of pupils from minority backgrounds, the results are not widely known to teachers.
27. The school makes satisfactory provision for pupils with special educational needs, and for those for whom English is an additional language. Such pupils participate fully in a broad and balanced curriculum, and are supported by the advice provided by the special educational needs co-ordinator. In Years 10 and 11, opportunity is taken, where appropriate, to modify the curriculum offered in order to concentrate on basic skills. The pupils are well integrated in lessons, with a small number withdrawn for short sessions to improve basic skills, particularly literacy. A small number of pupils in Years 10 and 11 benefit from support in the learning support centre to maintain progress in lessons missed whilst out of school on work experience. Individual education plans are used effectively for pupils with special educational needs and those identified as having particular talents. Statements of Special Educational Need are efficiently managed, and regular reviews ensure that the changing learning needs of the pupils are met. Clear written guidelines are provided for all staff and good use is made of external support services. The inclusive nature of provision for pupils with special educational needs ensures that they have the opportunity to fully participate in all aspects of school life.
28. The school has made a suitable start to the national strategies to promote literacy and numeracy. The former head of English now acts as literacy co-ordinator, and clear guidance is provided through a whole school literacy policy. This work is already having a positive effect in other subjects. Literacy progress units have been introduced, aimed at raising standards amongst a group of pupils in Year 7. The development of a coherent approach to numeracy is less advanced, although a start has been made in drafting a suitable policy statement.
29. The arrangements for the teaching of personal, social and health education are good. The work is carefully planned, and delivered during weekly tutor periods, although the time is restricted as part of this period is taken up by assemblies. In addition, there are specific lessons in Years 10 and 11. The programme includes all the required aspects of health education, sex education, and drugs awareness, and has been extended to include citizenship. The school makes very good use of visitors from external agencies to supplement the work of teaching staff.

30. The school now offers a satisfactory range of extracurricular opportunities, in spite of the restrictions imposed by the large number of pupils who travel to school by bus. It is estimated that up to two thirds of pupils take part in at least one extracurricular activity. The range of activities on offer is larger than at the time of the last inspection, and now includes more activities linked to academic departments. Homework facilities are provided, and revision classes are also held as examinations approach.
31. The overall arrangements for careers education and work experience are good, with excellent support from outside agencies. Careers education begins in Year 7, when pupils begin to consider their individual strengths and weaknesses; self-awareness is then developed further in later years. A wide range of careers topics is covered, and there is a supply of high quality resources for form tutors to use. The well-stocked careers library is extensively used, especially during Year 9 option choices. All pupils take part in work experience for a week in Year 10, and they normally obtain interesting placements thanks to the co-operation of the local community. A small number of pupils in Year 11 are offered the opportunity to take part in extended work experience.
32. The school has developed good links with the local community; these enhance the curriculum and pupils' academic and personal development, helping them to appreciate the relevance of their education. For example, pupils are able to enjoy visits to local galleries, including the local arts centre, and last year, pupils from Year 9 took part in a mock wedding at a local church. Moreover, visitors contribute directly to lessons, including a local nurse and doctor, members of the police force, and representatives from banks. Pupils have supported people in need in the local community, especially the elderly; this community service has increased pupils' sense of responsibility, and their realisation of the contribution that each individual can make.
33. There are good links with other institutions. The school has very good pastoral and curricular links with its partner primary schools. These ensure that pupils enjoy a smooth transition from primary to secondary education, and help pupils to settle quickly in their new school. Curricular links include work in design and technology, and in mathematics, which begins in the primary schools in Year 6, and finishes in the secondary school in Year 7. In history, Year 9 pupils have worked closely with pupils in Year 6, and the science department has organised teacher visits to primary schools to give demonstrations of science at work. Links with 16-plus education are less fully developed, focusing mainly on North Devon College. There is relatively little liaison with other providers of post-16 education in the area.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

34. Provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall, as it was at the last inspection. However, a lack of planned provision for this area across the school means that these aspects of pupils' experience can vary. The many areas of strength seen could be built upon to the benefit of all. In spite of this, the overall ethos of the school is a very positive one. Provision for the pupils' spiritual development is satisfactory. Many teachers

make good use of the opportunities presented by their subjects, but most departments have not considered the possibilities in a formal manner. Thus, whilst pupils have a satisfactory grasp of the spiritual dimension, its breadth could be better. Much of the content of the religious education programme and of English literature, however, is aimed at encouraging spiritual development, and the teachers involved make good use of all opportunities to encourage pupils to be reflective. The weekly assemblies provided for each year group are well planned and thoughtful, and there is limited take-up for a voluntary worship activity provided each lunch-time. However, the school still does not meet the statutory requirements for collective worship. The school has insufficient space to hold more than a weekly assembly for each year group.

35. Provision for the pupils' moral development is good. It is clearly planned in subjects such as personal, social and health education, and in religious education, where pupils are encouraged to consider moral issues and to learn how to make choices for themselves about behaviour and lifestyle. Moral issues are also considered in other subjects. In geography and science, for example, pupils consider responsibility for the environment, and in art, the starting point for their work is often related to real life issues such as the impressive project on rejection. Pupils in English and drama are expected to consider moral issues in the course of their work. Pupils throughout the school know what is expected of them, and are aware of right and wrong, and the need to be sensitive to the views and values of others. Their very positive approach to behaviour makes a significant contribution to development of this awareness.
36. The quality of relationships throughout the school is high, providing strong support for the very good provision the school makes for the pupils' social development. Personal, social and health education and religious education again play a large part in this, through their consideration of social issues. Other subjects also make a significant contribution, particularly through the opportunities provided for working in pairs or groups. Pupils with special educational needs, and those from minority groups, are natural members of the school community, often benefiting from the support of friends in class and around the school. Where pupils are given responsibility, for instance as prefects in Years 10 and 11, they show themselves to be mature and valuable members of the school community. Through membership of the school council, pupils learn directly about the rights and responsibilities of citizenship.
37. Provision for cultural development is satisfactory overall. Useful opportunities are provided through a number of subjects, including music, drama and art, to extend the pupils' cultural awareness, including activities in the community. There are numerous good examples of ways in which individual teachers or departments provide pupils with knowledge and understanding of cultures other than their own. In geography, for instance, they are introduced to a range of other cultures. In mathematics, they consider the influence other cultures have had on the subject, and in art, extensive use is made of art and artists from a considerable range of cultures, including Native American, Indian, Chinese and Japanese. The modern languages department takes opportunities to tell pupils about the cultures of German and French speaking countries, and also offers a residential visit to France. Given the school's location, it is aware of its responsibilities to develop its pupils' awareness of other cultures.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

38. The last report was generally very positive but with some minor points raised in terms of welfare and concerns in the use of assessment, which remain. Parents and pupils are positive that this is a caring school. Pupils care for each other and feel safe and secure. They are known very well by the heads of year and tutors, who monitor them carefully.
39. Procedures for child protection and for ensuring pupils' welfare are satisfactory. There is clear guidance for child protection and teachers are aware of procedures. Good links with external agencies ensure that expertise is readily available, and that provisions are secure. Further training for key staff is planned. Procedures for health and safety are satisfactory, although old

and substandard accommodation creates problems that are difficult for the school to address. This is particularly so with the toilets. Pupils justifiably complain about the smell and provision which is well below any acceptable standard. Concerns over the condition of two mobile classrooms mean that pupils cannot work in them unsupervised.

40. Procedures for monitoring and improving attendance are good. The attendance policy is a success due to the rigour of heads of year and tutors in monitoring attendance, with able support from the educational welfare officer and parents.
41. The procedures for monitoring and promoting positive behaviour are very good. The school's policies are clear, effective and well implemented. The rewards system is well understood. Teachers are firm but fair.
42. Procedures for monitoring and eliminating oppressive behaviour are very good, to the extent that there is scarcely any bullying, or feel of threat, even in Year 7. Pupils are clear about the action to take if anything happens, but incidents of bullying or racism are reported by pupils as being negligible.
43. Procedures for monitoring and supporting pupils' personal development are good. Tutors' files show careful monitoring, and where appropriate, target setting for pupils. Over the last year a comprehensive programme for personal, social and health education has been developed

Assessment

44. The monitoring of pupils' academic performance and personal development is good. Appropriate management structures are in place to support the work of the assessment co-ordinator, who in turn oversees the work of subject departments and heads of year. Recommendations of a school working party have been adopted to form the basis for a useful policy, which provides clear guidelines for assessing the pupils' attainments and progress. Following the recent appointment of a new deputy headteacher, the school plans to develop its monitoring strategies still further in the near future.
45. Most subject departments have satisfactory assessment procedures and practices in place. Some departments are more systematic than others; practices in mathematics, science and geography could usefully guide work in other subjects. The newly appointed head of modern foreign languages is currently introducing some good quality procedures in his department. In 2001, staff absence prevented the school from complying with the statutory requirements to assess and report on pupils' attainment and progress in music at the end of Year 9. Following criticisms in the last inspection report, the school has improved satisfactorily its methods for assessing pupils with special educational needs. Early identification and good initial assessment are based upon primary school national test results. Additional detailed diagnostic testing ensures that the special educational needs of the pupils are recognised. Their progress is carefully monitored and systematically recorded, both on a short-term basis and against regular termly reviews of their individual education plans. The good support and advice provided by the special needs co-ordinator and learning support assistants, and co-operation with external support services, ensure that the provision outlined in pupils' statements is effectively implemented, and that the pupils have full access to the whole of the school curriculum.

46. Procedures for monitoring and supporting pupils' academic progress are sound. A central computerised record keeping system is in place to chart pupils' progress as they join, and subsequently move up, the school. Some promising mentoring strategies are in place to help pupils make good progress in Years 7, 10 and 11. Most subjects adhere to the school's marking policy, which requires the use of a five-point scale for grading each pupil's effort and attainment in relation to the rest of the class or teaching group. Whilst pupils seem to understand the system, it provides insufficient reference to national benchmarks to enable them or their parents to measure progress adequately. To date, few subject departments share national assessment criteria with their pupils; methods used in science and art point the way forward. The frequency and quality of marking are variable both within and between departments. The most effective marking tells pupils clearly what their achievements are and what they need to do to improve. Some good examples exist in English, science and in design and technology.
47. Although there are some strengths, overall, the use of assessment information to guide curricular planning is unsatisfactory. Some successful measures include: amendments to lessons plans and schemes of work in science; setting arrangements in mathematics; and selecting a different syllabus for GCSE physical education which allocates an increased proportion of marks to practical work. The senior management team uses available assessment information efficiently, but the analysis of value added factors on a systematic basis is not yet embedded across all areas of the curriculum because subject teachers need training. Accordingly, the use of target setting to raise standards on an individual pupil basis is in its infancy.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

48. A markedly lower than usual proportion of parents completed the inspection questionnaire. Overall, parents' views of the school are that it is satisfactory in most respects. Parents are particularly positive about this being a welcoming school, which treats them as partners. Parents see as strengths the progress that pupils make, the high expectations that the school has of pupils, and the personal development of pupils. Inspectors agree that these are all strong features of the school. Some parents have moved into the catchment area to ensure admission, including teachers and others involved with the school, and admissions appeals confirm its popularity.
49. In contrast to these perceived strengths, a significant minority of parents expressed concern over the quality of information provided by the school, the amount of homework, the range of extracurricular activities, the leadership and management, and - paradoxically, given perceived strengths - a feeling that the school does not work sufficiently closely with parents. Inspectors judge that, in spite of recent changes to reports, they could be improved further. Whilst homework arrangements are satisfactory overall, some of the work set is not sufficiently tailored to the different needs of pupils. The range, and take up, of extra curricular activities are satisfactory, whilst inspectors view the

quality of management at the school as being good overall, with the headteacher providing very good leadership.

50. The effectiveness of the school's links with parents is satisfactory. The school values them and their views, as shown by the good use of its own surveys to canvas views and perceptions. The school has made a positive response to issues raised such as charting rising attendance at meetings and briefing sessions for literacy. The school is developing its links with parents. There are very good induction arrangements for the Year 7 pupils who feel confident in the school when they arrive.
51. The quality of information provided for parents is satisfactory overall, and meets statutory requirements, but some parents report inconsistencies in the way in which tutors use planners as a means of communication. Given the timing of the inspection, it was difficult to establish whether this was, in fact, the case. Planners contain the home/school agreement signed by parents. Newsletters are infrequent, and like other documentation, whilst satisfactory, are not particularly attractive or well presented. All these areas could be improved to enhance the otherwise satisfactory role of parents' in supporting the learning of their children at school and at home. Communication with the parents and carers of pupils with special educational needs is very good. They are fully involved in discussions about the needs of the pupils, they attend review meetings, and are also provided with good supporting written information.
52. Parents normally get a full report plus an interim progress sheet each year. The format of the annual written report ensures a common approach in most subjects. However, the degree of information it conveys to parents is not as useful as it might be. Although the report grades individual pupils' effort and attainment in relation to others in the class, this system provides insufficient links to national benchmarks against which parents can judge their child's progress. The last inspection report noted that some comments were bland; the quality remains inconsistent both within and between departments. The best reports identify a pupil's strengths and weaknesses in the subject clearly, then suggest specific steps for improvement. Some good examples exist in science and in design and technology. The inclusion of predicted GCSE grades in Years 10 and 11 is helpful. There are shortcomings in reporting, in appropriate detail, the progress of pupils in information and communication technology as they move through the school.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

Leadership and management

53. The last inspection gave a generally positive picture of management, although there was thought to be overload of the headteacher and deputy head, a lack of systematic monitoring of departments, and non-compliance with a number of statutory requirements. Apart from the school still not satisfying the

requirements for collective worship, there have been substantial improvements in all of these areas.

54. The school's senior managers welcome the increased use of information and communication technology to reduce the bureaucratic burden on the school, although they report that it can be difficult to locate the required information on the Department for Education and Skills' Website. They also note the incompatibility of some software, intended to ease administration, with that commonly used within schools, making the export of data impossible. Senior staff find that when information is not sent direct to the school, they often have a very short time to respond. The short notice given for the present inspection also caused problems at a busy stage in the school year.
55. The overall quality of leadership and management of the school is good. The leadership and direction provided by the headteacher is very good. In post for two years, she has identified the important challenges facing the school, and in most cases, put into place effective procedures to deal with them. Importantly, improvements to the standards at the school have not been achieved at the expense of the school's distinctive caring personality. At the time of the inspection, a new deputy head had just been appointed. Delegation of tasks and responsibilities is now good. The senior management team has been extended, and its members largely freed from simultaneously holding major subject responsibilities. The quality of leadership in middle management, including that of subjects, is also good overall. Leadership is very good in science and in art and design. The newly appointed heads of mathematics and modern languages are already having a very positive effect on the way in which their departments operate, whilst the recent reversal of roles of the head of English and the literacy co-ordinator is giving the literacy programme proper status. The management of information and communication technology is satisfactory, but the scope of the job is very large for one person, who also carries a substantial teaching commitment. The special educational needs co-ordinator provides good leadership for the team of learning support assistants, and has been given additional administrative support to enable her to focus on her managerial responsibilities as an internal consultant to her teaching colleagues.
56. The effectiveness of the governing body is good. Its committee structure is appropriate to the needs of the school, and governors discharge their statutory responsibilities properly. The only area of statutory non-compliance is in the provision of a daily act of collective worship for all pupils. Governors play a proper part in shaping the school's priorities, for example having a good input into the annual and longer term school development plans. They also receive good information about the school's performance, and act as critical friends. Governors have few opportunities to see the school in action; most work during the school day. None the less, governors have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses.
57. The last inspection criticised the school development plan for having too many targets. The present annual plan, rooted in a longer-term strategic plan, focuses on relatively few, but very important, themes. There is good linkage between school and departmental plans. Planning is given high priority; one day each year is set aside for all members of the school staff to work on the coming year's plans. The school shows good action to meet these targets, with regular monitoring of progress towards achieving key tasks.
58. The school now has rigorous and regular reviews of the work of subjects by members of senior management, which draw upon direct observation of teachers in the classroom. This, together with far better quality analysis of performance data, is proving invaluable in diagnosing strengths and weaknesses. The school is aware of its responsibilities to all pupils, whatever their background or attainments, and senior managers analyse the progress that individual pupils make to ensure that their needs are being met. Plans are in hand to extend

the availability of such analyses to all staff, and to provide appropriate training. Senior staff provide a strong lead on matters such as racial harmony, even though, but also because, there are few pupils from ethnic minorities in the school. Management is also aware of issues such as rural isolation and deprivation, and seeks to counter their effects within the school. Middle managers are not, in general, as effective in monitoring the work of their teams. Their relatively high teaching commitments mean that they cannot easily undertake comprehensive observations of their teams at work.

Staffing, accommodation and learning resources

59. Since the last inspection, the number of pupils per teacher has risen, following a period of budgetary difficulty. The school now has slightly fewer teachers than average for its size, and they teach for a higher proportion of their time than usual. However, this, together with the slightly limited curriculum in Years 10 and 11, means that class sizes are broadly average. After a period of staffing difficulties, especially in modern languages, there have been a number of good new appointments this term. For the most part, staff are well qualified for the subjects that they teach, although gaps in teachers' skills limit some areas of work in physical education, and not all teachers taking German are qualified in the language, although this is only a factor when working with higher attaining pupils. The school employs a number of part time teachers, and this poses timetabling problems, leading to some classes, for example in modern languages, having more than one teacher. This can have an adverse effect on the continuity of learning, especially in Years 10 and 11.
60. The school sees its non-teaching staff as a vital part of its work, and its technicians, premises, learning support and administrative staff provide valuable support to teachers and pupils. The school has provided appropriate administrative support for teachers to offset some of the effects of the below average staffing level. The school funds additional learning support assistants, over and above those associated with pupils' Statements of Special Educational Need, and invests in their training. One benefit of this policy is that two support assistants are currently training to be teachers.
61. The school has been re-awarded Investors in People accreditation, and this shows clearly in its staffing policies, and in the school's very good shared commitment to succeed. Its induction arrangements for staff are excellent, and most unusually, apply to internal promotions as much as to staff who are new to the school. The school has good systems for the appraisal and performance management of staff. Training needs are identified well, and the follow up to ensure that the money was well spent is unusually rigorous.

Accommodation

62. The school's accommodation is poor. Only mathematics is judged to have good accommodation; elsewhere, accommodation is a limiting factor in the work of subjects, and also constrains the broadening of the curriculum in Years 10 and 11. There are 200 more pupils than at the time of the last inspection, yet the school has no more space. Most rooms are now in use for most of the time, and whilst new classroom and computing facilities are to be

provided, there will be little net gain of teaching rooms, given that two temporary classrooms, in very poor condition, will be removed, and small teaching spaces joined together. Much of the teaching takes place in classrooms that are very cramped, meaning that teachers are unable to circulate effectively, or reorganise rooms to provide different learning approaches. Teachers display enormous tolerance and ingenuity in seeking to minimise the effects of the poor accommodation. Worse, there is no space for additional resources for learning in most areas, including much-needed computers. This is having a severely limiting effect on the progress that pupils can make, and thus on standards, in information and communication technology, and on the use of computers to support learning as a natural tool in other subjects.

63. The school has been successful in gaining extra funds to refurbish some, but not all, of its very dated laboratories, and has also used its own funds to upgrade the food technology room. These improvements merely serve to accentuate the barren and unsuitable nature of much of the accommodation, in spite of great efforts to provide attractive displays, and apply fresh paint. Few rooms are carpeted, which provides a hard acoustic environment for subjects such as English or modern languages where discussion and linguistic work is required. Although there are relatively spacious grounds, pitches are waterlogged for long periods, and therefore unusable. The site is not easily accessible by people with physical or visual impairments, having many steps, including into classrooms and areas such as the hall.
64. The size of the school population makes movement at lesson changes a challenge; only the excellent behaviour and tolerance of the pupils avoids serious crushes in the narrow corridors and on stairways. The changing rooms are wholly inadequate for the numbers of pupils now using them. Cost squeezes have reduced the provision of new lavatories in the planned new building. Pupils must therefore continue to use the degrading facilities currently in service. Despite the school's best efforts at cleaning and decorating, the older lavatories smell very badly indeed from decades of use; pupils are right to complain about them.

Learning resources

65. Spending on learning resources is above the national average but overall, the provision of resources remains unsatisfactory. At the last inspection, many subjects reported shortages of textbooks. The position has improved, but textbooks are insufficient in number and quality in religious education, physical education and science. There is a very limited range of books, software and materials to stimulate pupils with special educational needs. The school provides good support for teachers in the person of a resources technician. Teachers in the English department have produced a good range of in-house resources.
66. The number of computers is barely half the national average for the size of the school, and this is shown in the limited access that pupils have to computers to support learning. The refurbished library, although small, is well organised and used by pupils during breaks and lunch times, and after school. The overall number of books available in most subject areas is limited but of good quality. There is a valuable small section of quick to read high interest books, aimed at encouraging boys and pupils with special educational needs to read. Although limited by space, the library staff mount effective displays on topics such as healthy eating, minorities, and, in response to events on the world stage, on terrorism.

Financial management

67. The school's basic budget is broadly average for the size of the school. This is then supplemented by additional funds to support the above average proportion of pupils who have Statements of Special Educational Need. Such targeted funds, including the money for laboratory refurbishment, are spent and accounted for in a proper manner. Financial procedures are good; the most recent audit report noted only minor points for action.
68. Since the last report, the school has passed through a period of considerable financial difficulty. The governors and senior staff have been successful in bringing income and expenditure back into balance over the last two years, in part because rising pupil numbers have brought extra income, but also because of firm cost control, particularly of teaching costs. Governors and senior managers have a good understanding of the concept of best value, and seek to provide maximum benefit from the funds received. For example, in order to support as many pupils as possible, the school has funded additional learning support assistants, and made appropriate training available. There is a good plan to continue with this policy as funds allow, with the aim of improving effectiveness by attaching assistants to subject areas, thus improving continuity of support.
69. Although there is no long term financial model, governors are successful in allocating funds to the school's needs in a good manner that targets educational priorities, drawing upon the school development plan. Teaching costs per pupil are below average, allowing slightly above average spending in most other areas. However, the biggest constraint of all, the school's inadequate premises, is quite beyond the scope of the annual budget, despite significantly above average spending by the school on repairs and refurbishment. The school has not been able to build up significant financial reserves. The school's use of new technology is satisfactory, but as with so much of the school's work, further development is being restricted by the inadequate accommodation.
70. The school receives average funds, and is successful in achieving test and examination results that are good in relation to the pupils' standards at entry; standards are still rising. The quality of teaching is good in almost all areas of the school's work, as is learning. The pupils' attitudes to learning, and their behaviour, are excellent. This has been achieved by well judged management and a hard working staff, despite the overcrowded and inadequate accommodation. The school is judged to offer very good value for money.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

71. The governors and senior managers of the school should consider the following points for action when planning the future work of the school:

- (1) * Continue to press for the funds to make substantial improvements to the school's accommodation to ease overcrowding, and to provide a proper environment for learning, paying particular attention in the short term to:
 - a. the need to provide many more computers around the school in order that the pupils are able to use them to support their learning within subject areas; and
 - b. the need to provide suitable changing facilities and lavatories for the pupils.
(9, 20, 62 - 64, 66, 69)

- (2) * Make greater use of the valuable assessment data now being gathered by the school in order to:
 - a. improve the quality and consistency of the marking of the pupils' work;
 - b. enable pupils, parents and teachers to have a clear understanding of how well individual pupils are performing, and could be performing, in relation to national benchmarks in all subjects; and
 - c. involve pupils more fully in the processes of assessment, so that they understand what they must do in order to improve their work. (19, 44 - 47)

NOTE: An asterisk () denotes that elements of this key issue are in the current school development plan. None of these areas of improvement formed key issues at the last inspection. The numbers in brackets following each point refer to the relevant paragraphs of the report.*

In addition, the school may also wish to include the following lesser areas for improvement in its action plan, in order to:

- ensure that homework offers sufficient challenge to pupils, taking account of their educational needs; (18, 49)
- ensure that higher attaining pupils are provided with work that challenges them in all lessons; and (5, 18, 21)
- audit, plan, and monitor, in a formal manner, the school's provisions for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils across the whole of the curriculum. (34 - 37)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	149
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	134

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	4	29	73	37	5	1	0
Percentage	2.7	19.5	49.0	24.8	3.4	0.7	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll

	Y7 – Y11
Number of pupils on the school's roll	867
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	92

Special educational needs

	Y7-Y11
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	37
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	175

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	19
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	21

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	8.2
National comparative data	8.7

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.4
National comparative data	1.1

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

Attainment at the end of Year 9

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	82	84	166
	(2000)	(91)	(80)	(171)

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	42 (45)	62 (67)	62 (63)
	Girls	63 (50)	63 (50)	64 (46)
	Total	105 (95)	125 (117)	120 (109)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	64 (56)	75 (68)	76 (64)
	National	64 (63)	66 (65)	66 (59)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	32 (22)	49 (34)	36 (28)
	National	32 (28)	43 (42)	34 (30)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	47 (48)	57 (53)	56 (77)
	Girls	65 (49)	64 (42)	64 (68)
	Total	112 (97)	121 (95)	120 (145)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	67 (64)	74 (55)	73 (84)
	National	65 (64)	68 (66)	64 (62)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	35 (23)	37 (21)	34 (41)
	National	31 (31)	41 (39)	32 (29)

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

The 2001 figures in the above table, for both the school and national data, are provisional at this stage.

Attainment at the end of Year 11

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001 (2000)	67 (65)	68 (80)	135 (145)

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	35 (22)	65 (59)	67 (64)
	Girls	42 (55)	64 (77)	68 (78)
	Total	77 (77)	129 (136)	135 (142)
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	57 (53)	96 (94)	100 (98)
	National	(47)	(91)	(96)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	43.9 (42)
	National	(38)

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

National data for 2001 are not yet available.

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	-
Black – African heritage	2
Black – other	0
Indian	2
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	2
White	860
Any other minority ethnic group	1

Teachers and classes**Qualified teachers and classes: Y7-Y11**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	44
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	18.7

Education support staff: Y7-Y11

Total number of education support staff	24
Total aggregate hours worked per week	559

Deployment of teachers: Y7-Y11

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	78
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Average teaching group size: Y7-Y11

Key Stage 3	24.8
Key Stage 4	22.6

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left during the last two years	5.5
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	9.3

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	1
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage		
Black – African heritage		
Black – other		
Indian		
Pakistani		
Bangladeshi		
Chinese		
White	21	1
Other minority ethnic groups		

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

Financial information

Financial year	2000/1
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	£
Total income	2101944
Total expenditure	2116543
Expenditure per pupil	2569
Balance brought forward from previous year	32576
Balance carried forward to next year	17977

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	864
Number of questionnaires returned	109

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	45	36	13	5	1
My child is making good progress in school.	45	52	3	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	27	51	14	2	6
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	22	49	22	5	2
The teaching is good.	26	57	11	0	6
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	28	41	25	6	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	46	38	7	7	3
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	50	46	4	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	26	44	22	6	2
The school is well led and managed.	18	47	20	6	9
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	29	57	8	2	4
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	22	36	22	4	17

The return rate of completed questionnaires was markedly lower than usually seen.

Other issues raised by parents

The small number of written comments received from parents reflected the above pattern.

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

ENGLISH

Overall, the quality of provision in English is **good**.

Strengths

- the experience, skill and enthusiasm of the teachers;
- the good quality of teaching and the positive relationships fostered between pupils and staff;
- the department's self-critical approach to its work, resulting in good evaluation of strengths and weaknesses; and
- the vigour with which the National Literacy Strategy is being implemented.

Areas for improvement

- the need to allow more time in lessons for pupils to practise speaking;
- the need to tackle inconsistencies in marking and assessment procedures;
- the need for better opportunities to use computers as a natural tool for learning; and
- further work to deal with underachievement by some higher attaining pupils.

72. Standards on entry to the school are below average overall, although the full range of attainment is present; standards fluctuate from year to year. Boys are markedly weaker than girls in terms of literacy skills at entry. Standards in the national tests at the end of Year 9 have been in line with the national average since the last inspection, except in 2000, when they were below the national average and well below that of schools having a similar proportion of free school meals. The 2001 results are once again at an average level. The dip in 2000 occurred mainly because of underachievement amongst many middle attaining boys. In 2001, the proportion of pupils gaining at least the expected Level 5 in tests is average; that reaching the higher Level 6 is above average. Overall, pupils tend to gain better test results in English than would be expected from their scores three years earlier, with the exception of 2000, when performance was below expected levels. Although girls have gained better test results than boys in recent years, the 2001 figures show no significant difference. However, the boys at the school performed better than boys nationally in 2001, whereas girls at the school perform less well than their peers nationally. This suggests that the school has been successful in targeting the work of underachieving boys over the last year. At the end of Year 11, GCSE results in 2000 were in line with the national averages overall, although once again, boys performed less well than did girls. In 2001, results in English language have risen, but those in English literature have declined slightly, in part reflecting the school's higher than average entry rate for the subject. However, pupils tend to obtain GCSE results that are well above those expected given their performance in Year 9 tests two years earlier.

73. The work seen during the inspection shows standards overall to be average for the ends of Years 9 and 11. At all levels, pupils, including those with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language, are achieving well and making good progress, given their standards of literacy when they enter the school. In this, they are helped in no small measure by their own good behaviour and willingness to take part in the learning process. Standards of writing are in line with the average for the end of Year 9, with the girls generally attaining higher levels than the boys. Standards of writing across Years 10 and 11 are also average, representing satisfactory progress. Reading standards are average for the ends of Years 9 and 11. Reading is encouraged through the use of imaginative and informed reading lists for each year group, incorporating high quality contemporary literature and established classics. However, pupils are not encouraged sufficiently to read aloud in class, although some instances were seen, for example in a Year 8 lesson, where pupils showed a clear grasp of the moral deficiencies of Chaucer's cheating pardoner. Most lessons featured teachers reading aloud to pupils, done as part of the National Literacy Strategy, as a means of exploring literature and developing other aspects of the pupils' studies. In all lessons observed, most pupils read independently, and are making good progress across Years 7 to 11. Standards of speaking are average at all levels; pupils across Years 7 to 11 demonstrate above average listening skills. In general, speaking and listening work seen suggests that pupils are given insufficient opportunity to make oral contributions. When given the chance to speak, the pupils' responses are lively and insightful. Middle attaining boys, in particular, rise enthusiastically to such opportunities. More use could be made of formal links to the pupils' work in drama to raise their speaking skills in English.
74. The quality of teaching across the English department is good throughout Years 7 to 11, as is learning. Teaching is always at least satisfactory, with some lessons judged to be very good. A strength of the teaching is the excellent relationships observed between staff and pupils. The enthusiasm displayed by teachers for their subject engages most pupils at all levels. A good example of the impact of this urgent enthusiasm on pupil learning emerged during discussion of a book dealing with homelessness, *Stone Cold*, when a Year 10 boy observed that the passage contained rhetorical questions and the simile of "a heap of chips like a mountain." Teachers show an impressive command of their material and most lessons are delivered with style and verve. Lessons include a good variety of activities and make suitable use of varied media and computers. However, many pupils make use of computers at home, since there is insufficient opportunity for them to do so during lessons, limiting progress in both English and information and communication technology alike. Pupils enjoy English lessons and work well together in undertaking the variety of tasks that are set.
75. The courses offered meet the requirements of the National Curriculum. They are imaginative and well thought out, and this is reflected in the good progress that pupils make. A particular strength is the development of a bank of sequential lesson plans for each year group that is now being further refined.

Plans incorporate clear learning objectives, expected attainment levels and a sequence of timed tasks, as well as opportunities for work that is more closely matched to the needs of different pupils. As a result, pupils know what is expected of them. Teachers manage their mixed ability groups well and offer helpful and encouraging spoken comments to pupils in class. However, the use of marking and assessment to promote progress in English is uneven at present. The teachers' written comments sometimes give insufficient guidance to pupils as to what must be done to improve work. At present, standardisation of assessment and marking does not take place until Years 10 and 11. Efforts are in hand to put in place a systematic and consistent approach to marking, but this is in the process of evolving and embedding.

76. The targeting and tracking of underachievers and pupils with special educational needs has become more systematic since the last inspection. With the introduction of literacy progress units and the compilation of a comprehensive record of pupil needs, provision for pupils with special educational needs has improved considerably. These pupils are helped by the judicious deployment of learning support assistants, and the use of work more closely matched to pupils' individual needs. Pupils entering the school now have literacy targets, set in collaboration with their primary schools. As well as catering for the least able, there is a need for the department to ensure the allocation of more challenging tasks to raise the standards of the most able pupils. Few pupils are attaining A* in English or English literature.
77. The promotion of literacy across the curriculum is satisfactory. The commitment to the development and implementation of a systematic whole school policy on literacy reflects the school's commitment to raising standards in this area, and to the National Literacy Strategy. Some good practice is taking place in subjects such as geography, history mathematics and modern foreign languages. Key words are a feature of many classrooms, for example in computer rooms, where subject specific terms are displayed prominently. Many subjects are providing a suitable range of opportunities for speaking and listening, reading and writing, including the use of computers. For example, a Year 9 science class promoted literacy by using a play about the work of Pasteur and Jenner. The school's success in promoting literacy is attracting attention elsewhere in the county.
78. Overall the English department has made good progress since the last inspection. Developments and innovations introduced during the past two years have had a positive impact on pupils' progress and standards. The quality of management and leadership of the department is good, and recent work is rooted in effective monitoring and evaluation of its work. The English team has made progress in adapting the curriculum to widen opportunities for pupils' appreciation of other cultures and traditions. Provision for the social and moral development of pupils is good as teachers make use of work in English to promote the moral development of pupils and to foster social skills. The department is making strenuous efforts to put in place systems for using tracking and assessment to promote the standards and achievements of pupils. It is a good and improving department.

Drama

79. All pupils in Years 7 to 9 take drama and the subject is available as an optional subject in Years 10 and 11. Pupils show good achievement in the subject in Years 7 to 9, reaching average standards for the end of Year 9. Standards in Years 10 and 11 are above average, with boys and girls alike showing good achievement, and gaining above average GCSE results in the recent past, including 2001. All pupils, including those with Special Educational Needs, develop their capacity for teamwork. They develop skills in speaking and listening and in focusing on a specific task. Pupils learn to take responsibility for direction and presentation, as well as the enacting of specified roles. Pupils learn to evaluate their own work and that of others. Pupils enjoy drama, are attentive and engaged, and contribute a good deal to the lively and co-operative atmosphere that characterises most classes. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress, helped by clear learning targets.

80. Teaching is good at all levels, as is learning; it is always at least satisfactory and sometimes very good. Qualities of creativity and co-operation are encouraged and fostered. Criticism is always constructive and pupils are encouraged in their efforts at all levels. Teachers provide lively and effective examples of role play and voice projection, and give helpful guidance that enables pupils to succeed in improvisation and presentation. Carefully structured schemes of work ensure that moral and social issues such as health, racial awareness, bullying and careers all form part of the curriculum for drama. Pupils respond very positively to all these provisions, which underpin the progress seen.

81. Leadership and management of the subject are good. The dedicated drama studio is an improvement on previous provision, but the hall remains an austere and distracting environment for many drama activities. The school makes use of an arts centre in the area to overcome the limitations imposed by its own facilities.

MATHEMATICS

Overall, the quality of provision in mathematics is **good**.

Strengths

- teachers have good subject knowledge, high expectations, and explain the subject confidently;
- pupils enjoy excellent relationships with their teachers; and
- there is a shared commitment to improvement, and the department is well placed to continue to raise standards.

Areas for improvement

- work on using and applying mathematics is not sufficiently well developed;
- there is insufficient challenge for some higher attainers, especially in mixed ability lessons in Year 7; and
- there is no whole-school numeracy policy to provide a coherent framework to develop the pupils' numeracy skills across the curriculum.

82. Standards of numeracy when pupils enter the school are below average, with boys performing less well than girls. In the national tests at the end of Year 9, results overall have been in line with the national average since the last inspection. In 2001, the overall results are above average, with an improved proportion of pupils reaching the higher levels. Boys performed better than girls; boys' results were above those of boys nationally, but those of the girls were significantly below girls' results nationally. Given the pupils' attainments on entry to the school, these results are better than would be expected; boys in particular achieve well in relation to their earlier standards. At the end of Year 11, GCSE results fell between 1998 and 2000, being in line with the national average in 2000. Results have improved in 2001, particularly at the higher grades. Overall, boys and girls tend to obtain similar results, although girls tend to do less well in mathematics than in the other subjects that they take. Compared to their performances in tests at the end of Year 9, pupils of all attainments show good achievement, tending to gain better GCSE results than would be expected.
83. In work seen during the inspection, standards at the end of Year 9 are above average. This is higher than recent test results because of changes in the way the subject has been taught in the past year or so. The work covers all of the attainment targets appropriately, although that on using and applying mathematics, such as investigating matchstick patterns and the painted cube investigation, is not sufficiently developed and consolidated. Number work is well practised and algebraic skills well supported, so that, in a Year 9 lesson on sequences, the pupils' ability to spot patterns and describe these in terms of algebra was well rehearsed. Pupils identify the symmetries of different shapes but their drawing and construction work is not so confident. Higher attaining pupils can rearrange formula and use trigonometry to calculate angles and sides of a right angled triangle. Work seen shows standards to be above average for the end of Year 11, reflecting good achievement. As with the younger pupils, this is higher than recent examination results because of improvements to the way the subject is now taught. The work covers all of the attainment targets with an appropriate emphasis on developing number skills, although boys' mental skills are not so well developed; they are too reliant on their calculators. Pupils factorise quadratic equations and calculate the solutions of a pair of simultaneous equations. They make good use of trigonometry to find lengths and angles of right-angled triangles, although their drawing skills remain weak. Pupils can calculate the mean, median and mode of a set of data and identify the relationship between two variables using scatter graphs. Higher attaining pupils can calculate an approximation to the area under a curve and use trigonometry to find lengths and angles of any triangle. Pupils

with special educational needs are well supported, with appropriately challenging work; they make good progress.

84. Overall, the quality of teaching is good across all years; learning is also good. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good. They are keen, eager, behave well and want to succeed. Boys and girls enjoy supportive relationships with one another and, in the majority of lessons, they have a good rapport with their teacher. Lessons start promptly with a numeracy activity, which concentrates the pupils' attention and provides a link to the earlier work. For example, in a Year 7 lesson, pupils played 'Sum Bingo' which helped them practise their mental arithmetic skills, whilst in a Year 10 lesson, pupils were challenged to work out the number of ways of arranging 30 pupils in 30 seats for a seating plan. Teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge, confident exposition and high expectations of their pupils in terms of work, application and presentation. As a result, pupils concentrate hard on teachers' explanations and their questions confirm their involvement. Lesson planning is very good, with work referenced to National Curriculum levels by the teachers, although these are rarely shared with pupils to help them appreciate the level of difficulty. None the less, pupils have a good idea of their strengths and weaknesses. Pupils with special educational needs are sensitively supported in the classroom with help from the teacher, the learning support assistants and other pupils. However, in some classes, teacher exposition dominates the lesson so that pupils can lose interest. In a small minority of lessons, especially in mixed ability lessons in Year 7, there is insufficient challenge for the most able. For example, in a Year 7 lesson on multiplication and division, able pupils wasted time by adding $2 + 4 + 8 + 16 + \dots$ without considering patterns of answers which would have allowed them to reach a solution more quickly.
85. The curriculum meets statutory requirements and has recently been rewritten to take account of the National Numeracy Strategy and changes in the GCSE examination from 2003. The curriculum is complemented by a range of activities including taster days for Year 6 able mathematicians, bridging tasks in Year 7, additional lessons for GCSE statistics, A-level taster days and a mathematics trail devised by Year 10 pupils. The subject's rich cultural heritage is highlighted through references to Mayan, Bengali and Punjabi numbers, as well as Egyptian fractions. The provision for information and communications technology is satisfactory, although inconsistent across the department. The schemes of work make good reference to opportunities for using information and communication technology, but access to the computer room is difficult. The provision for literacy within the department is satisfactory, and teachers make appropriate use of key words in their planning and teaching. Assessment procedures are good and all books contain information on how attainment and effort grades will be assessed. Information on pupils' attainment, including very full records of external examinations and internal assessments, is kept centrally. More use might be made of this data for target setting and informing curriculum planning.
86. The provision for numeracy across the curriculum is satisfactory, although pupils tend to show an over reliance on using calculators for simple calculations such as finding the mean of two numbers. The lack of a whole school numeracy policy means that opportunities for pupils to use and develop their mathematical skills in other subjects are patchy. However, a draft exists and the school has recently set up a numeracy working party to identify areas for further co-operation, and to develop a suitable policy statement. Algebraic skills are encouraged in science for formulae involving density, potential energy and centre of gravity, although their use of computers for creating algebraic expressions for spreadsheets is not so strong. Pupils make good use of graphical skills in geography using line graphs, bar graphs, star charts and population pyramids, but their interpretation skills are less well developed. Pupils' data handling skills are used to good effect in food technology for statistical investigations on favourite foods.
87. The leadership and management of the subject are good. The head of department engenders a strong team spirit among her recently appointed team of dedicated and hard working teachers. She has built upon the work of her predecessor and introduced a number of successful initiatives, which are now beginning to have a positive effect on improving standards at all levels. Staff induction and support are strong features of the department and the head of department has a very good idea of the departments' strengths and weaknesses,

but there is insufficient formal monitoring and evaluation to ensure consistency and disseminate good practice. There is a shared commitment for improvement and a capacity to succeed. Progress since the last inspection has been good and issues of able pupils, visual aids equipment and resources have been addressed. The department is well placed to continue to improve and to raise standards.

SCIENCE

Overall, the quality of provision in science is **good**.

Strengths

- teaching overall is good;
- results are improving in national tests and examinations;
- pupils have a very positive attitude towards learning; and
- relationships between teachers and pupils are very good.

Areas for improvement

- the quality of accommodation and learning resources; and
- the monitoring of teaching within the department.

88. Pupils' standards on entry are generally below average. In the national tests taken at the end of Year 9 in 2001, overall results are above average, with a large increase in the proportions of pupils gaining the higher levels of performance. This represents good achievement compared with the pupils' standards on entry. Results have improved significantly since the last inspection. There is no significant difference in the results obtained by boys and girls. In the GCSE examinations taken at the end of Year 11 in 2000, the results are in line with the national average. The achievement of these pupils since their national tests in Year 9 is satisfactory, but pupils overall tend to do less well in science than in their other subjects. Girls obtained better overall results than boys. In 2001, however, there was a significant improvement in the GCSE results, with girls and boys performing equally well.

89. In work seen during the inspection, standards are average in Year 7, and above average in all other year groups. Pupils are therefore achieving well throughout the school. They particularly enjoy practical lessons, and their formal investigations are of a high standard. Their planning, observations and analysis are well developed. A Year 11 group, investigating the voltage produced in different coils by electromagnetic induction, understood the need to change one variable at a time, and how to record their observations. They listened carefully during a discussion leading to analysis of their results. Lower attaining pupils, including those with special educational needs, are well integrated, and provided with effective support; they also achieve well. For instance, pupils in a Year 8 class predicted the path of white light through a prism before carrying out the experiment. They were very eager, and thoroughly enjoyed the challenge of recording the colours seen in the resulting spectrum. Higher attaining pupils are provided with challenging work in class,

but homework tasks are sometimes more routine, and therefore less interesting.

90. The department is beginning to use strategies to support the school's literacy initiative. Key words are stressed in each topic, and there are opportunities to read in class. Pupils are normally encouraged to use their own words to record observations during investigations, but in a minority of classes there is too much copying from the board, resulting in a lack of challenge. Teachers stress the need for careful presentation of work and the majority of pupils produce clear notes in their books. A significant number of lower attaining boys are given extra help with their writing. Pupils regularly use numeracy skills in science lessons; graphical work is improving because teachers now ensure greater consistency in presentation. Formulae are frequently used to calculate values such as density and current, but pupils' confidence with number is variable. The science department makes a significant contribution to the development of pupils' attainment in information and communication technology. Pupils use computers confidently to record and analyse their practical work, as in a Year 11 class studying how the acceleration of a trolley depends on its mass.
91. Teaching in science overall is good throughout the school; learning is also good. Very good lessons were observed in all areas of the National Curriculum. Teachers have a very good knowledge and understanding of their subject, and frequently add interest to lessons with the quality of background information. There are very good relationships between teachers and the pupils. The best lessons are characterised by detailed planning that focuses on how pupils will learn, as opposed to what will be taught. This results in good pace to the lesson, and the maintenance of interest. For example, in a Year 10 lesson looking at rates of reaction, pupils recorded their readings in two ways. They became very involved in their work, discussed it confidently, devised ways to improve the accuracy of their results, and compared the readings obtained from the two methods; excellent learning resulted. In the small minority of lessons which are less successful, it is because planning is less detailed, resulting in inappropriate learning opportunities for pupils, as in a Year 9 class studying the absorption and reflection of coloured lights. The practical tests were very difficult to carry out because of a lack of blackout, and pupils were unclear about how they should record their results. This resulted in unsatisfactory learning. Teachers have very high expectations of pupils. Their management of potentially difficult pupils is very skilful. The many strengths of the teaching mean that pupils show considerable interest in their work, and their level of concentration is good. The number of opportunities for pupils to use their initiative is increasing, as in a Year 9 class researching the history of immunisation, and practising a play about Pasteur's findings. The marking of books is mostly good, though there is some inconsistency across the department, particularly in the quality of comments on what pupils should do to improve. The longer-term assessments of work, for example the end of module tests, are very good, and related to National Curriculum levels, so that pupils are given clear information about the

standard of their work. Most pupils are aware of their previous result in national tests, and their individual target for the next round.

92. Overall, the leadership and management of the department are very good. There is very clear educational direction, with detailed schemes of work, regularly reviewed, which support teachers' planning. Good teamwork is evident, with a commitment to continuing improvement. Development planning is detailed, with clear priorities for action. This helps the department to overcome the unsatisfactory level of resources, and the overall lack of quality in the accommodation, in spite of recent improvements. There is a need, however, to use lesson observations within the department; at present, timetabling limits what can be done. Pupils also play a major part in the improvement in standards. They have a very positive attitude to their work, which is maintained as they move through the school. They are well prepared for lessons, and show respect for their teachers in the way they respond and behave.
93. The department has made good progress since the last inspection. The overall quality of teaching remains high, and there is very good leadership and strategic planning. Assessments are thorough, and they are linked well to National Curriculum targets. While there is a need for further improvement in the matching of homework tasks to ability, and in marking, the pupils' achievements in science are improving across the school, and standards in national tests are rising in both Year 9 and Year 11.

ART AND DESIGN

Overall, the quality of provision in art and design is **good**.

Strengths

- standards of work in observational drawing and painting, and in textiles; and
- the high expectations of an effective and hard working team of teachers.

Areas for improvement

- the need to use computers more to generate creative artwork; and
- provision of adequate space for sculpture and display.

94. On entry to the school many pupils have limited experience of the subject. In recent National Curriculum Teacher Assessments at the end of Year 9, results are above average, with most pupils reaching, or exceeding, the expected standard. There has been some progress in raising the achievement of boys at the lower levels of attainment following the application of thoughtful strategies to raise performance. In GCSE examinations at the end of Year 11, the general picture is one where results for art and design are broadly in line with the national average, but varying from year to year, with the subject attracting a higher proportion of pupils than nationally. Pupils tend to gain

results that are in line with those in the other subjects that they take, with girls gaining markedly better results than boys.

95. In work seen, the standards of work at the end of Year 9 is above average, representing good achievement. Pupils show good achievement overall over Years 7 to 9 in both National Curriculum attainment targets. The essential skills of observing and recording are done well in closely observed pencil studies of natural objects. Pupils demonstrate good understanding of the effect of light on objects in enlarged tonal pastel drawings, aided by regular exposure to good examples. Pupils gain new skills in stencil work, learning how to control the consistency of paint and experimenting with colour overlays to achieve new textural effects, due to good teacher demonstration. One example of successful design and making is their imaginative and vibrant bow ties, where they were introduced to new print and textile techniques. From studying the art of different cultures, pupils appreciate different ways of seeing, such as Aborigine dream painting, approaches which they incorporate into their own original work. From studying the painting techniques of artists they learn how to use paint well. They know how to design and make small-scale paper and card sculpture. These are done well in delightfully imaginative shoe designs in personal interpretations of a sea theme.
96. The standard of work seen in GCSE groups is well above average for the end of Year 11. Achievement is good. Pupils express their well considered responses to issues of moral concern, such as child abuse, in expressive and imaginative figurative paintings using new techniques they have learnt from their further study of artists. Much promising sculpture is underdeveloped, however, owing to the lack of work space. Sketchbooks are used with great imagination and flair. These books are often of a standard associated with a higher stage, particularly in their experimental approach to felt and paper-making, or to small scale fabric jewellery. Craft skills, such as batik, are well developed. Pupils are familiar with the work of local practising artists, but first-hand knowledge of art is restricted by lack of opportunities to visit art galleries. There are now no significant differences between the standards of work of boys and girls in the classroom, reflecting recent work to improve the progress of boys in the subject.
97. Pupils with special educational needs achieve appropriately, thanks to the teachers' clear identification of their individual needs and the agreed, and reviewed, target setting.
98. Overall, teaching is good at all levels, as is learning. Teaching is successful in arousing and maintaining the pupils' interest, which is good. Expectations of the team are high and pupils respond very positively to the high standards promoted in the exemplar work they are exposed to and the regular good-quality demonstrations that promote craft skills. The management of groups is good in what are very cramped working conditions. The completion of tasks is wisely linked to a deadline and this creates a sense of urgency and positive activity. Appropriate homework tasks are regularly set at both stages to extend classroom study and these promote sound research skills such as using the

Internet. Assessment arrangements are satisfactory. All pupils show clear benefit from having individual targets to work towards. The regular emphasis on key skills has had a positive effect on the pupils' use of an art vocabulary, and on their presentation of opinions and judgements when writing about art.

99. The head of department provides very good leadership in establishing the means to monitor and promote high standards at both stages; there are good arrangements for monitoring the work of the subject. There has been good progress since the last inspection. Standards have risen at both stages. Pupils are now confident in their observational drawing skills and no longer rely on copying from photographs. Concepts of measurement and proportion are well understood and applied. The subject's use of information and communication technology is very poor; the very limited access to computers means that the department does not yet provide pupils with opportunities to use computers to generate creative art. Accommodation for the subject is poor. Pupils are immersed in a stimulating environment of their artwork in the studios but facilities to celebrate and display their achievements across the school are inadequate, as is the space to work with larger three-dimensional pieces.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

Overall, the quality of provision in design and technology is **good**.

Strengths

- pupils reach high standards in their work and achieve well;
- teaching is very good overall; and
- pupils show considerable interest and pride in their work.

Areas for improvement

- pupils could be more involved in assessing the quality of their own work;
- more use could be made of target setting based on national data; and
- the accommodation for textiles is inadequate.

100. Standards are above average at all levels. The teachers' assessments of pupils' work at the end of Year 9 in 2000 show that standards are significantly above average. In 2001, a different method was used to determine standards, producing slightly fewer of the highest grades. Teachers' assessments are not moderated outside the school and the 2001 grades more closely reflect the standards of work seen during the inspection. At the end of Year 11, the GCSE results in 2000 are significantly above average. The results for girls are significantly above average, while those of boys are average. The highest results are in food work. Pupils tend to get higher grades in design and technology than in the other subjects that they take. Similarly high results have been reached in 2001, with boys increasing their performance at higher grades. In earlier years, many pupils took examinations that did not meet National Curriculum requirements so a trend is not clear.
101. The standards of work seen during the inspection are above average at all levels, with standards in some cases in Years 10 and 11 well above average. The pupils' achievements are good in Years 7 to 9, and very good in Years 10 and 11. In Years 7 to 9, pupils develop skills in the use of a range of tools, for example when manufacturing a container using wood. They use tools accurately and have a good knowledge of technical names. Measurement is

above average for accuracy, although lower attaining pupils have more difficulty in spatial concepts, for example identifying the required edge of a piece of wood. Most pupils can identify and correct their own mistakes. However, fine motor skills are less well developed as seen in the limited delicacy of soldering on an electronics circuit. Design work is above average, and the totality of the design process is well demonstrated in food and textiles work. Some pupils use computers to enhance the quality of their work; this work is often undertaken at home. Boys' and girls' practical work is of a similar standard in lessons. However, girls tend to be more thorough in preparing their coursework, and so tend to gain higher examination grades. Pupils with special educational needs achieve appropriately; their progress is greater when support is present in the lesson. The basic skills learned in the earlier years prepare pupils well for examination work in their chosen specialisms. There is marked progress in the quality and complexity of work. Design work is well above average, aided by the very clear guidance given by their teachers. Pupils take a pride in the appearance of their work. For example, a group studying resistant materials worked with care in sketching initial design ideas, and a food group recorded the development of their examination project. When designing, ideas are often innovative, including those produced by lower attaining pupils. Presentation of folders and finish of practical work is of a high standard, particularly in graphical communication and food technology. Computers are used well, as in graphical communication, where when a computer-generated image was carefully chosen as a superior solution to other options. Lower attaining pupils are less critical of the quality of their work; although the boys taking the Certificate of Achievement option produce work of a high standard, taking great pride in the quality of craftsmanship. Research and evaluation is of a high standard, particularly in food technology. Literacy levels are generally satisfactory; few spelling errors occur in coursework. The precision and accuracy of practical work demonstrates above average understanding of size and shape.

102. Teaching is good in Years 7 to 9 and very good in Years 10 and 11. Pupils learn well because of this good teaching. Teachers are experts in their subjects; they are able to communicate their knowledge to pupils in a way that they can easily understand. Planning and preparation are thorough, so that classes can usually proceed at a brisk pace. Where learning is less successful, it is as a result of a loss of this pace with a consequent drop in interest. This may be when teachers are too rigid in controlling the activity within the classroom so that some higher attaining pupils are not being stretched. The exemplars provided, for example in food lessons, and the prepared, staged processes in craft lessons, set standards to strive for or help generate design ideas. The use of target setting is limited and pupils are rarely involved in self-assessment, but the good use of questioning, with groups and particularly individuals, is powerful in helping pupils understand how to improve their work. In Years 10 and 11, more freedom and responsibility is given to pupils and they accept this readily. Teachers expect their classes to be successful and as a result, pupils, for example in graphics and the Certificate of Achievement class, achieve more than they expect to. Pupils generally show very good interest, effort and commitment to their work.
103. There has been a recent change in the management of the department. Food and textiles technologies retain some autonomy in the way they deliver the curriculum. Both approaches complement each other, but a unifying feature, such as a clear house style, would help pupils see design and technology as one subject. Teaching is monitored regularly, this practice pre-dating the requirements of performance management. Results are monitored, year on year and subject by subject, but there is limited comparison with national data and the concept of value added has yet to be considered. There is sufficient high quality technician support in all aspects of the subject. While there are good links with primary schools, links with the community and parents are more limited. This limits opportunities to challenge all, but especially the higher attainers, to do even better.
104. The department was praised in the last inspection report and the strengths noted then have been maintained. The non-compliance with the requirements on the National Curriculum has been corrected. The refurbishment of the food rooms has enhanced the learning environment although the textiles room is very basic and acoustically poor, causing some loss of communication in lessons. Workshops are very cramped; it is the good behaviour of the pupils that ensures a safe working environment. In order to continue to raise standards further,

consideration should be given to the use of assessment data to guide curriculum planning and develop target setting with pupils.

GEOGRAPHY

Overall, the quality of provision in geography is **good**.

Strengths

- results in 2001 show a dramatic improvement over those at the time of the last inspection;
- experienced teachers show good knowledge in the way that they present and discuss the subject; and
- pupils experience a good range of motivating activities in lessons and homework in all years.

Areas for improvement

- the need to improve assessment so that pupils understand more clearly the links between what they are being taught, what will be assessed, and what they need to do to improve;
- providing more challenge when pupils use computers; and
- improving the accommodation for the subject.

105. Standards as shown by Teacher Assessments at the end of Year 9 are broadly average. Girls do better than boys, reflecting the national pattern. At the end of Year 11, GCSE results since the last inspection have also been broadly average, apart from 1999 where they fell below this. In 2000 the girls' results were significantly above average. In 2000, both boys and girls tended to perform significantly better in geography than they did in the other subjects that they took. The GCSE results in 2001 show a dramatic improvement, with over half of the pupils attaining grades of A* or A. This is the result of substantial revision of the way in which the subject is taught. Whilst girls still do better than boys, boys' results are markedly better than in previous years.

106. At the end of Year 9, standards in the work seen during the inspection are average. Standards at the end of Year 11 are well above average. Achievement is good overall; progress improves as pupils move up the school. In Year 7, pupils enthusiastically attempt to master the mapwork skills of using scale for the first time and many are successful. Those who have difficulty with number work find this a challenging task. The pupils with special educational needs successfully complete the more straightforward tasks with the help of a teaching assistant. By Year 8, pupils are secure in their knowledge and understanding of relevant geographical terms. For example, they understand the difference between endangered and extinct species, and they are able to offer reasons for this endangerment, such as turtles on tropical beaches that attract tourists. The pupils' recall of geographical facts from previous learning is good, especially their knowledge of where places are. For example, in Year 9 lower attaining pupils are able to name the main islands of Japan and to name Tokyo, the Japanese capital. Higher attaining pupils in Year 9 are able

to write well, coherently and accurately about the patterns of density and distribution of population in the USA and to make appropriate observations about its multicultural composition. The pupils respond well to the opportunities they are offered to produce work in a variety of formats. For example, in Year 7, the pupils produce a tourist brochure for a visit to Dartmoor. Whilst pupils use computers as an aid to improving the presentation of their work, this is not extending their competence in information and communication technology. In Year 8, pupils design a poster to communicate the need to protect endangered species and in Year 9 they research the Kobe earthquake event, so that they can write about victims' first hand accounts for a newspaper's front page. By Year 9, the pupils have mastered the skills of drawing a range of graphs, for example, for climate, to show population structures, to show river flood levels; their skills of analysing and comparing what they have drawn are less well developed. From Year 7, the pupils are accustomed to using information and communication technology to present their work attractively and effectively. By the end of Year 11, middle and higher attaining pupils successfully combine their improved geographical knowledge and understanding with their development of basic skills to produce GCSE coursework investigations of a high standard. For example, in Year 10, work focuses well on the coastal characteristics of South West England and, in Year 11, on an urban settlement survey of Barnstaple. Lower attaining pupils candidates find the writing demands at this level too high and either omit, or only partly complete, the introduction, conclusion and evaluation sections.

107. The quality of teaching is good at all levels, as is learning; there are some very good features in Year 10 and 11. A strength of the teaching is that all lessons start with a recapitulation session that helps to remind pupils of what they know already; this helps to engage them for what is to come and helps them to feel confident about their learning. The few pupils who may have forgotten aspects of previous work are handled sensitively. Teachers draw on a good range of material, for example, pictures, newspaper reports, textbooks, or the Internet to capture the interest of pupils, and to provide a range of activities that help to focus concentration and motivate them. As a result geography is a popular subject in the school. Challenging tasks are set periodically, and expectations of what pupils are capable of achieving are high. Lessons are carefully planned, with a logical sequence for pupils' learning; resources are shared between teachers so that all pupils have a similar experience, no matter who teaches them. Lesson pace is kept at least steady and is often brisk and ensures that most pupils complete their work. Occasionally a more routine pattern of working develops in lessons, with pupils highly dependent on directed tasks, rather than thinking for themselves. Homework is built in to most work, and is marked regularly. This is appreciated by pupils, whose attitudes and behaviour in all lessons observed, are good. Whilst comments on the pupils' work are supportive, they do not inform pupils in the terms of the National Curriculum what they must do to improve. At GCSE level, omissions in pupils' work are usually noted, but otherwise few helpful comments were seen to help them perform better.

108. Leadership and management of the subject are good. The head of department is working hard to sustain and develop further the revised course for GCSE. Examination results are analysed carefully to determine what needs to be done to improve the pupils' learning in the different parts of the examination. Extra resources have been purchased to update and improve textbook quality. A good range of fieldwork experiences is planned into all years except Year 9. The work of other teachers in the department is carefully monitored through lesson observations and discussions of pupils' work. The subject has considerable potential for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, and most teachers draw such links instinctively. However, such opportunities are not planned sufficiently into schemes of work.
109. Overall, the subject has made good progress since the last inspection despite problems of inadequate accommodation. There has been a marked improvement in the results of both boys and girls at the end of Year 11, whilst results at the end of Year 9 have been maintained. The other positive comments made in the last report are still applicable, apart from the reference to marking helping pupils improve their work. The time has now come for the department to refocus attention on developing the curriculum with stronger links to assessment, recording and reporting for Years 7 to 9, and to help the pupils become more independent learners by involving them more in their own assessment.

HISTORY

Overall, the quality of provision in history is **good**.

Strengths

- the latest GCSE results are well above average, with boys outperforming girls, in contrast to national trends;
- teaching of the subject of the subject is good, and marked by the teachers' enthusiasm for, and expertise in, the subject;
- the way in which historical evidence is interpreted; and
- the very positive relationships that are evident in the classroom.

Areas for improvement

- the subject needs much better access to computers;
- inadequate storage of materials and the poor accommodation restrict the range of learning that can be undertaken; and
- assessment in Years 7 to 9 could be improved.

110. Pupils' standards on entry to the school in Year 7 are below average. Standards at the end of Year 9 in the form of Teacher Assessments are broadly average. At the end of Year 11, GCSE results are well above average. For example, in the 2001 GCSE examination 74.1 per cent of pupils gained grade C or better. In contrast to the national trend, boys reach higher standards than girls. The trend since the last inspection is a steady improvement in standards at all levels.

111. In work seen, standards are average by the end of Year 9. Achievement in Years 7 to 9 is good; pupils of all levels of attainment make good progress in their first three years in the school. Pupils develop a good range of historical skills, including particularly the interpretation of appropriate historical evidence and data, the prioritising of difficult historical issues and the understanding of chronology. They are able to use a wide range of material, including worksheets, photographic evidence, video material and a wide range of primary and secondary source material. The handling of different forms of historical data is impressive, and pupils are able to work individually, in pairs and in groups to develop their understanding of history. Pupils are given many opportunities to use historical sources, and to make effective judgements about their reliability. This is one of the real strengths of the department. For example, in Year 7, pupils are introduced to the sorting of historical data by examining the evidence of the life and times of the Bronze Age Lindow Man. By the end of Year 9, pupils are able to analyse the complex social and moral issues of the eighteenth century slavery question. They are able to extend their understanding through both group and class discussion. Pupils with special educational needs make effective progress in relation to their prior attainment because their teachers and teacher assistants know them well and provide effective guidance in lessons. Higher attaining pupils are able to make satisfactory progress by the termly in-depth research projects and by oral contributions in class.
112. Pupils continue to show good achievement throughout Years 10 and 11 as they build upon the sound foundation of skills and knowledge acquired in the earlier years. Therefore by the end Year 11, standards are above average. By the end of Year 9, pupils have developed a good understanding of historical causation, the relationship between documentary evidence and analysis, and they have developed their own understanding of a wide range of historical material. Study skills, particularly the interpretation of a wide range of source material, are strengthened, especially for the higher attainers, through the Dartmoor Merrivale local history project. At this stage, there is a greater emphasis on developing advanced reasoning skills through careful structured questioning. For example, in a Year 10 lesson on the supernatural and rational streams of Ancient Greek medicine, pupils were able to effectively differentiate between contrasting philosophies, and to make choices about the relative strengths and weaknesses of each approach. All pupils, at this stage, including pupils with special educational needs make good progress.
113. Teaching is good overall and in some lessons it is very good; learning is also good at all levels. There is consistency across all the year groups. The overall standard of teaching has improved since the last inspection. There is considerable evidence of well-planned and well-structured lessons. Teachers use a wide range of strategies to create a sense of purpose and learning in history. Archaeological evidence is used to develop an understanding of life in the Bronze Age, visual material, including video, to capture interest and involvement in the conditions of slaves in the Middle Passage. This variety of method encourages and develops pupils' historical understanding and overall enjoyment of the subject. Many lessons begin by reinforcing pupils' previous knowledge and understanding through an effective use of structured questioning. This enables all pupils to contribute, within their capabilities, and the teachers are skilful at encouraging contributions. Teachers know their subject well. They have an obvious love of the subject and this commitment is strongly communicated to the pupils, providing a firm basis for learning. Historical concepts are clearly explained and developed using a wide range of materials and methods. There is good evidence of teachers using their knowledge, enthusiasm and teaching skills to develop pupils' understanding at all levels of attainment. History is made relevant and interesting by relating many of the events to current experience. In the best lessons, pupils' attention is caught right at the beginning and is then held through a series of well-thought and varied activities. Year 9 became very involved right from the start of the lesson in making speeches to each other in pairs, then following up this activity with three speeches to the class. During this activity pupil concentration and focus was very strong. Overall, the standards of behaviour are very good. The strong relationships observed in the department support learning well. Homework is set regularly and marking is well organised. However the current marking scheme is not linked to the National Curriculum skills or levels in Years 7 to 9, and at present is not effectively supporting progress, learning or achievement. Assessment at this stage is mostly supportive, but does not inform the pupils of what to do next to improve their learning. In Years 10 and 11 assessment is more closely matched to examination success and performance. Recently the department has reviewed its

marking and assessment of the GCSE coursework element and this has contributed to the increased examination pass rate.

114. The subject is well led and managed, and has made good progress since the last inspection in spite of major deficiencies in accommodation and some areas of learning resources. The head of department has introduced a comprehensive and effective scheme of work, which has formed the basis for the careful lesson planning observed. The specialist classrooms support an effective learning environment with attractive displays of pupils' work. However, the department is partly housed in a temporary hut, in very poor condition. There is also a lack of secure storage, which is preventing the development and use of the full range of history curriculum materials. There is limited access to computer facilities; the use of computers within the curriculum is at an unacceptably low level. The provision of history fieldwork since the last inspection has remained relatively limited, although there is good practice in Year 8, where the local Civil War resources in Torrington are fully and effectively used.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Overall, the quality of provision in information and communication technology is **unsatisfactory**.

Strengths

- taught lessons in the subject give pupils a good grounding in the use of software;
- pupils use what they learned earlier in their schooling when using computers at home and in other subjects; and
- pupils show care when using computers, and a capacity to work independently when they have the chance to do so.

Areas for improvement

- the school's poor accommodation restricts the school's ability to increase the number of computers from its present low level; and as a result
- work in the subject through other departments does not provide appropriate consolidation, development and challenge; and
- assessment and reporting arrangements could be improved.

115. Although the Teacher Assessments at the end of Year 9 suggest above average standards in recent years, these are not moderated externally, and are not reflected in the work seen during the inspection. At the end of Year 11, the GCSE results in 2000 are significantly below average for the A* to C range, although all candidates achieved at least a G grade. The results for girls and boys are very similar, which is unusual. In 2000, pupils tended to get lower grades in information and communication technology than in the other subjects that they took. However, results in 1999 and 2001 show higher standards, with pupils tending to do better in the subject.

116. The school provides fortnightly core skills lessons in the subject in all years, and expects pupils to then use what they have learned in their other subjects. The greatest factor that is holding down progress, and thus standards, is the school's cramped accommodation, both for specialist work and in most other subjects. This limits severely the number of computers that can be deployed to support learning on a day to day basis, and thus the opportunities that pupils have to develop in the subject.

117. The standards of work seen during the inspection are below average at all levels; achievement is unsatisfactory overall. Work in the core lessons is well designed to teach skills, but the restricted time available, the long gaps between lessons, and the design of many of the tasks, combine to limit the progress that pupils can make. Whilst pupils use computers in many other subjects of the curriculum in all years, little of this work extends standards in information and communication technology. In Years 7 to 9, pupils show a good understanding of the keyboard and are able to recall and apply previously learned techniques. Most pupils at this level are now very familiar with basic text processing software, and can incorporate images from a variety of sources and organise the work on the page effectively. However, recall and use of formulae in a spreadsheet, including knowledge of cell addresses, is weak even for higher attaining pupils. Pupils can be uncritical of the outcomes of their work; few check for accuracy, for example by ensuring that the work will fit the page. In modelling tasks, trial and error rather than careful design is too often employed to seek an optimum outcome. However, higher attaining pupils understand the need for careful phrasing of search instructions and can refine their search, for example when looking for suitable pictures. Girls and boys generally work at similar levels. By Year 11, pupils are able to work on their own and higher attaining pupils show a good understanding of the more advanced features of software. Lower attaining pupils lack confidence, sometimes avoiding their turn when having to share computers. Most pupils work independently, and are able to research and make comments about information found on the school's intranet. Pupils studying for GCSE examination in Year 11 show a wide range of expertise, although progress is sometimes hindered by the prescriptive nature of the task set. Many of the pupils approach tasks mechanistically and do not try to predict or evaluate outcomes. However, this is not always the case, as where higher attaining boys took themselves beyond the set task and worked at a standard closer to A-level requirements. The limiting effects on progress of the present system are growing as pupils arrive from primary schools with higher standards of competence.
118. Teaching overall is satisfactory at all levels; learning is also satisfactory. Much of the teaching is undertaken by teachers for whom this is not their specialism. The scheme of work and associated work sheets prepare pupils well to understand the basic skills in the use of computer programs. They represent an enormous investment of time and effort by the subject co-ordinator to ensure that his colleagues have proven material to use in lessons. However, this scheme does not go on to stretch pupils and require them to carry out the type of more open-ended tasks in order to reach the standards expected of the National Curriculum; there is insufficient time to be able to do so. At its best, the teaching breaks the activity into snappy sections and there is an assumption that pupils can do what is asked of them. This aids concentration, and pupils are encouraged to experiment with the software and go beyond the set task. Pupils show great care in using computers; their behaviour and attitudes in lessons are very good, and this ensures that the maximum is derived from the limited resources and time available.
119. Teaching and learning are not monitored systematically, as no time is allowed for this in the co-ordinator's timetable. This means there is no overview of the learning experiences of the pupils across all subjects, and assessment is not coherent. As a result, it has not been possible to report the progress of individual pupils to their parents in the detail normally seen. The work of managing the infrastructure, and assisting colleagues in delivering National Curriculum requirements is vast, and beyond the capacity of a single person. The number of computers in school is barely half the national average. While they are of good quality, as is the software, this causes problems in ensuring that all the classes that need to use them are able to do so. All staff who were in school last year have received good quality training using New

Opportunities Funding and show a willingness to use computers in their lessons.

120. The positive statements in the last report have not been fully sustained. The impact of limited computer resources has had a negative effect on the ability of other subjects to deliver their own information and communication technology requirements. Most significantly, the rooms which house the majority of the computers are crowded, lack ventilation and adequate natural light, and the seating is unsuitable for the length of time spent using a computer. The layout limits the ability of the teacher to provide individual help to pupils. This makes it particularly difficult for pupils with special educational needs to make adequate progress; moreover, the special needs base lacks suitable computer facilities. Whilst new computer rooms are planned in a forthcoming building project, the space vacated is required urgently for other subjects. Overall, the basic problem of providing adequate access to computers is tied up with the wider issue of the school's poor accommodation.
121. All subjects of the curriculum are now required to use information and communication technology in their work. However, at present, history, art and design, religious education and physical education are unable to do so in any consistent way because of constraints of access brought about by the limited resources and timetable constraints. Most subjects report some problems of access for some classes. The work carried out in other subjects using computers tends to reinforce what has already been learned, rather than extending competence. For example, in English, work is word-processed and pictures added to enhance presentation. Coursework in design and technology is often written up on computer, while other forms of information are added such as using a spreadsheet to analyse and show the results of a survey. This is also seen in geography work throughout the school. In science, pupils learn about data logging, whilst in mathematics, work is well planned to address requirements. These two subjects ensure that pupils do make progress in the data handling area of computer use. Religious education lessons include making a 'PowerPoint' presentation on the life of Jesus, which also enhances pupils' attainment in information and communication technology. None of this work is currently used when arriving at an assessment of the standards of pupils' work, nor do subject reports comment on progress in information and communication technology.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

Overall, the quality of provision in modern languages is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- the new head of department is providing good leadership after a difficult period for the subject;
- much of the teaching is good;
- clearer systems and procedures are being developed for the subject; and

- pupils show good attitudes towards the learning of languages.

Areas for improvement

- pupils need more opportunities to speak the foreign language;
- there needs to be a greater breadth of teaching strategies, and of resources, including
 - the use of computers;
- there should be fewer split classes;
- accommodation needs improvement; and
- assessment arrangements need further development.

122. At the time of the inspection, the head of department and several of the teachers in the subject were new to the school. Severe staffing problems in 2000/2001 mean that historical information on standards and progress do not reflect what is now being put into effect in the subject.

123. National Curriculum Teacher Assessments at the end of Year 9 in recent years show boys reaching average standards and girls performing at well above average levels. These assessments are not subject to external moderation, and there is no evidence from the inspection to validate the performance of girls at this level. At the end of Year 11, the pupils' overall results in French and German were below average in the 2000 GCSE examination. Pupils tend to do less well in modern languages than in the other subjects that they take. Underachievement is most marked amongst higher attainers, particularly girls. Results for 1999 and 2001 appear high, but levels of entry are low; in 2001, only 72 per cent of the year group was entered for a modern language GCSE. Because of staffing problems, there is no clear trend to results over recent years, but results in German have been consistently below the national average. However, all pupils entered have gained at least grade G in a language.

124. In work seen during the inspection, standards are average for the end of Year 9 in both French and German. Achievement is satisfactory overall. Pupils with special educational needs reach a satisfactory level because the setting arrangements enable teachers to adapt their programmes and there is support from learning support assistants. Higher attaining pupils in both languages respond well to teacher expectations, but their achievement is not as high as their efforts deserve. Work from last year shows a lack of challenge to high level performance. In French, pupils are not confident when speaking and make elementary mistakes of pronunciation. In German, these pupils have not developed the skills of independent learning. Standards amongst pupils preparing for GCSE examinations are average for the end of Year 11. In both languages pupils of all ages are now producing more extended written work. In all years, good progress is seen in some lessons, but overall, achievement remains no more than satisfactory because pupils are not given a sufficiently active role in their own learning. Standards are below average in Year 8 for those pupils now studying a single language, following the experiment of learning both languages in Year 7 last year. The need to catch up is setting

considerable problems for teachers. Those higher attaining pupils who continue to study two languages exceed expected standards, especially in German, and could attain the highest grades with increased teaching time.

125. The quality of teaching in both languages is good at all levels, as is learning. Careful planning with clear objectives makes the purpose of the lesson clear to pupils. Teachers teach largely in the foreign language, which demands pupil attention and contributes to pupils developing their listening skills. Teachers move at a good pace through the planned activities so that pupils are always actively involved. For example, in one lesson, the teacher noted “I sense we are going off the boil on this task” and immediately moved on to sustain pupil concentration. Teachers regularly set time limits for work completion, keeping pupils focused on their work so that the whole lesson is based upon active learning. Pair work is well used to involve all pupils in speaking tasks. Pupils would benefit from teachers using a wider range of strategies to engage pupils in speaking where they are relatively weak. Staff teaching in their second language have adequate skills for the groups they teach, but lack the depth to sustain a realistic foreign language environment. Pupils respond very positively to the quality of teaching; their good attitudes and very good behaviour in both languages make a major contribution to their own learning. Teachers establish good relationships with the pupils. This gives pupils the confidence to volunteer answers and ask for help. One Year 11 pupil explained the benefit as “the new teacher explains things so I can get my head round it”.
126. Since the last inspection, improvement has been good. There has been an improvement in the teaching of German and an improvement in the quality and purpose of homework. Curriculum provision and time allocation are satisfactory. The department is committed to offering a language to all at Key Stage 4. To accommodate part-time teachers, eight groups have shared teaching; this makes continuity difficult and has an adverse effect on learning. This arrangement is unsatisfactory for a Year 11 group preparing for GCSE. A clear pattern for first and second language provision needs to be determined to enable long-term subject planning and staffing.
127. The new head of department has made a very good start and is already having a positive effect on the subject. At present the use of computers and assessment is not well developed, limiting achievement, as does the unsatisfactory accommodation. There is inadequate space for group activities, the acoustics are poor and the temporary classroom requires blinds. There is a shortage of text-books in one year group and the need to update the course book in another. After a long period of inconsistent staffing, the department is now fully staffed. The department is now in the position and has the capacity to improve standards and raise the status of modern languages in the school.

MUSIC

Overall, the quality of provision in music is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- the GCSE results have been above average for some years;
- the clear and consistent format of lessons ensures that pupils can structure their learning in music; and
- there is a strong tradition of extra-curricular music, which enriches the life of the school and the wider community.

Areas for improvement

- complete the revision of schemes of work to incorporate the latest requirements; and
- improve the quality of accommodation and learning resources, including computers, for the subject.

128. At the time of the inspection, the head of department was on extended sickness leave, one teacher had just joined the school, and thus temporary arrangements were in place to cover the management of the subject. These factors mean that no reliable Teacher Assessments could be made at the end of Year 9 in 2001. However, the corresponding figures for 2000 show below average standards for boys and girls alike, although it is not possible to check the accuracy of these assessments. In contrast, at the end of Year 11, the GCSE results over the past four years have been above the national average. There are no significant differences between the results of girls and boys.

129. In Year 9 standards in work seen during the inspection are average. Standards at this early stage of Years 10 and 11 are also average. In Years 10 and 11, pupils achieve well, showing good progress in their work. Achievement is more variable during Years 7 to 9, but broadly satisfactory. Most pupils apply themselves well to exploring and developing musical ideas using keyboards, whether individually in Years 10 and 11, or in groups in Years 7 to 9. They are less successful in extending structures and combining resources. For example, in a Year 10 lesson developing music for a film scene, pupils lacked the facility to change the style of the music to fit changing moods. Instrument-specific techniques, as, for example, playing a keyboard, are not consistent. In one Year 9 class, several pupils had not grasped that, when playing a melody fingered for the right hand with the left hand, technical difficulties would arise. In another Year 9 lesson, pupils were able to analyse and evaluate music from Prokofiev's *Lieutenant Kije Suite* well, showing good aural intelligence. However, communication of ideas and feelings using musical vocabulary is often off-mark. Paradoxically, and although working at different levels, Year 7 pupils in a chanted round were more successful at internalising music and recalling it than Year 11 in recognising intervals and taking down musical dictation. No singing was observed at any level and computer-based work was limited to a few individuals in Year 11 using sequencing software to build up an original pop song. However, many more pupils were observed using the memory facilities of the keyboards effectively, for example when developing a composition over several lessons. Pupils in all classes worked better using graphic notation than with staff notation. Achievement in GCSE is higher than in Years 7 to 9 in part because the groups contain many more well-motivated pupils who learn instruments as a

supplement to the curriculum. These groups also have a large number of pupils designated gifted and talented, who achieve appropriately, and none with special educational needs, although these pupils participate well in the Year 7 to 9 course. Access to the GCSE course is open to all pupils.

130. At the time of the inspection, the head of music, who normally teaches some 80 per cent of the music lessons, was on extended sick leave. Indirect evidence suggests that the quality of teaching is good under more normal circumstances. The quality of teaching observed during the inspection is satisfactory across the school, as is learning. The main strength of the teaching is the planning of the lessons, which consistently revise concepts, link through to an introduction of, and engagement in, practical work, and conclude with performances, discussion and comment of pupils' work. This helps all pupils, regardless of ability, to stay focused and keep their orientation through a series of different activities. As a result, pupils have good attitudes towards the subject. Teachers also manage pupils well, ensuring chatter does not get out of hand and very efficiently helping pupils overcome the constraints of the accommodation. Some teaching of basic musical skills lacks the rigour and methodology for pupils to build up their musical knowledge securely. Issues of literacy could be more carefully addressed, including better and more visible key word displays. Informal assessment is not used enough in order to ensure that pupils stay focused on their work during composition and performance projects extending over several lessons. Occasionally pupils can be timid, as instanced in a Year 9 class when reflected light made a board illustration invisible to many, but no pupils commented on this to the teacher. On other occasions, as in some Year 11 interval recognition work, they can be too talkative for concentration at the task in hand. Pupils with special educational needs are well integrated into the classes and those who are gifted and talented are identified for appropriately challenging extension work in most projects.
131. There is a strong tradition of extra-curricular music. Over 50 pupils learn instruments, with lessons in most cases supplied by Devon Youth Music; two highly motivating sessions were seen. In recent years, the head of music has written musicals annually in collaboration with colleagues and departments throughout the school. These have been performed by pupils in the local community as well as at the school. There have also been regular concerts with a string orchestra of 20 players and a larger jazz group. Relationships with feeder schools have been fostered through the primary music centre in the school and there are still some Year 6 pupils coming for instrumental lessons in their lunch breaks.
132. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory. The interim arrangements for the management are working very well, although several key tasks are on hold. Schemes of work require updating to reflect fully the latest requirements of the National Curriculum and GCSE. Changes to the curriculum arrangements in Year 10 have made the subject more popular, and this increases further the pressure on accommodation. Planned building work will reduce the space available for music. While resourcing is adequate, there

is much ageing equipment and many dated books, often insufficient in number for class use. With only one up-to-date computer, pupils have little opportunity to use information and communication technology in their work, which limits standards in this area.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Overall, the quality of provision in physical education is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- above average GCSE results;
- good teaching promotes good progress on examination courses; and
- boys reach commendable standards in competitive sport.

Areas for improvement

- the unsatisfactory accommodation for the subject;
- the organisation of the curriculum and its timetabling;
- the use made of assessment information; and
- the inadequate facilities for pupils to work with computers.

133. In 2000 and 2001, the teachers' own assessments indicate that standards at the end of Year 9 are average for all pupils. In Year 11, standards in the 2001 GCSE examinations are significantly above average, continuing the upward trend from 1999. Pupils tend to gain better results in physical education than most other subjects that they take. In 2001, boys in the school overtook girls for the first time, gaining all the A* and A grade passes. Pupils reach good standards in competitive games and athletics. More boys represent the county and South West region than girls; a few compete at national level.

134. By the end of Year 9, the standard of National Curriculum work seen during the inspection is average, and achievement is satisfactory overall. Standards at the end of Year 11 are also average in core physical education lessons; work in GCSE lessons is above average, representing good achievement. Pupils with special educational needs achieve satisfactorily, whilst achievement is good for gifted and talented pupils. Up to the end of Year 9, most pupils show satisfactory achievement appropriately well in single sex classes. Boys display satisfactory techniques in rugby drills and in badminton. They sustain vigorous activity to reach challenging targets for running, rowing and cycling on exercise machines; oral work indicates that most have a good grasp of the principles of fitness. The youngest girls progress well in their introductory dance lesson, creating and developing rhythmic sequences to music. In gymnastics, girls in Year 8 devise interesting group balances on apparatus. By the end of Year 11, standards in games match national averages. Pupils can apply the relevant rules and tactics in invasion games; they evaluate and improve performance appropriately. Girls discuss and practise set patterns for centre passes in netball; some assist with umpiring. Boys improve throwing and line-out strategies successfully in rugby. By this stage, girls and boys also achieve well in mixed activities, as in orienteering.

In examination classes, standards of written, oral and practical work are above average; there are no significant differences in the overall standards reached by boys and girls. Pupils, including those on examination courses, rarely have the chance to use computers as part of their work. In addition, the department lacks suitable audio-visual equipment to allow detailed analyses of pupils' performances.

135. The quality of teaching and of learning is good in Years 7 to 11. Teachers plan well to meet the needs of pupils across the ability range, using resources efficiently. As a result, pupils enjoy the subject and most co-operate sensibly. In Years 7 to 9, a strength of the teaching is the competent, enthusiastic organisation of interesting and progressively demanding tasks that motivate the pupils. However, appropriate warming-up and cooling-down activities are not yet a regular part of each lesson. The most effective teaching and learning occurs when discipline is quiet and firm. In the good lessons, teachers demonstrate skills carefully, introduce relevant technical terms, then check that pupils understand the work through pertinent questioning. As a result, the youngest pupils improve quickly in new activities such as rugby and dance. The pace of learning is reduced when teachers fail to curb the pupils' chatter promptly. The teaching of a mixed Year 9 class was poor because expectations of work and behaviour were not established at the outset and pupils, particularly boys, showed little respect for a temporary teacher. The teaching of older pupils is good in orienteering and most games lessons. Thus high attainers develop consistency with low serves and overhead-clear shots in badminton; without prompting, some give encouragement to their peers on game tactics in rugby. Teachers have a very good grasp of the GCSE course requirements. Hence, learning gets off to an impressive start in Year 10. Pupils respond well when they embark on observation and analysis aspects because the teacher explains clearly what they have to do; very good class organisation for theory work ensures pupils contribute confidently in an anatomy lesson. Because teachers show enthusiasm for extra-curricular activities, participation rates are high over the course of the school year.
136. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Deployment of the two full-time subject specialists to examination groups is paying dividends. Effective monitoring and evaluation to promote consistency across the department are constrained by staffing and timetabling anomalies. These include: some Year 7 classes with three different teachers for the subject; severe overcrowding of totally inadequate changing rooms and the already limited facilities when five classes from two different years attend lessons together. These arrangements impact adversely on standards. Accommodation is unsatisfactory and reduces curriculum coverage: the surface of the hard-court area is hazardous and lacks perimeter fencing; pitches are frequently waterlogged; the gymnasium is cramped. Appropriate plans to update records of pupils' progress are under discussion. To date, the use of assessment information to set individual targets for pupils is embryonic.
137. Since the last inspection, improvement has been good. GCSE results have risen from below average to above average. Good standards have been

maintained in both lessons and representative sport. The school gained the Sportsmark award in 2001. However, curriculum allocation remains below average at Key Stage 4; boys and girls do not get equal access to the curriculum at Key Stage 3. Inadequacies in accommodation persist, despite successive annual increases to the numbers on roll.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Overall, the quality of provision in religious education is **good**.

Strengths

- teaching is good overall, and often very good, leading to good learning;
- all pupils now receive a full programme of teaching in the subject; and
- the subject has improved considerably since the last inspection.

Areas for improvement

- accommodation is poor and this has an adverse effect on progress and learning;
- arrangements for assessment need further development; and
- pupils need greater opportunities to use information and communication technology.

138. The 2001 examinations saw the first year group of pupils complete the short course GCSE at the end of Year 11. Over two-thirds of the year group entered the examination. Unfortunately, this first set of results was clearly below the level expected by the school, and likely to be well below national figures when these are available. All indications from coursework and the general motivation of pupils suggested that their performance should have been at least in line with that in the school generally. The school is still analysing the reasons for this, and some papers are being reviewed, but the results were particularly disappointing. There was no significant difference between boys and girls in overall results, although the number of girls entering the examination was greater than the number of boys.
139. However, these results are not indicative of overall standards in the school. Standards of work seen by the end of Year 11 are broadly in line with those expected by the locally agreed syllabus. Although pupils throughout the school do particularly well in their thoughtful, personal response to the ideas and beliefs they encounter, many pupils in Years 10 and 11 are hampered by a lack of background knowledge in the subject. The indications are that, because of the improved quality of work now taking place earlier in the school, this balance is being redressed, and thus achievement is good. Standards by the end of Year 9 are at least in line with the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus, and for many pupils they are above that level. Achievement is good. They show interest in and respect for the ideas, beliefs and practices they are encountering, gaining quite detailed knowledge of a range of religious traditions. They show their understanding in their often sensitive response in discussion and in the quality of their written work, such as that produced by a Year 9 class who wrote very effectively about belief. The subject makes a contribution to the development of skills in information and communication technology, but these are limited by a lack of computers in the department and restricted access to central facilities.
140. The quality of teaching and learning overall is good; many lessons show very good features. The new teachers in the department have quickly established themselves and already have good relationships with their groups, maintaining what was already a strong feature of the department. All teachers show very good knowledge and understanding of the subject and have high expectations of their pupils in terms of both behaviour and what they can achieve in the subject. All are enthusiastic about, and have a lively approach to, their teaching. They clearly value the contributions of all pupils, creating an atmosphere of mutual respect. The pupils respond well to this, with most showing good and often very good motivation and interest. Most are keen to learn, and they enjoy the wide range of learning opportunities presented, as when Year 7 pupils engaged in a lively and entertaining quiz show about the value of a human being. Pupils of all attainment levels, including higher attainers and those with special educational needs, achieve well. They make good progress because of the carefully structured approach to learning in all lessons and the use of resources and activities that provide appropriate challenge to the range of abilities. Homework is used well in all years to extend and reinforce the pupils' learning through a range of activities, which also encourage the pupils to become more independent in their learning. All work is marked carefully, and useful arrangements for assessment and the recording of pupils' progress are being put in place, but need further development.
141. The department is addressing what it believes to be a lack of motivation and consequent under-performance for boys, but this is not significantly different to the situation in many other schools. The subject makes an important contribution to the spiritual, moral and social development of all pupils, providing many opportunities for reflection, the careful consideration of moral and social issues, and the development of a good understanding of a wide range of cultures and beliefs. It also contributes to the pupils' development of skills in literacy through, for instance, an emphasis on the development of appropriate language and the provision of many opportunities for different forms of writing.
142. Since the previous inspection, improvement has been good. The school has appointed a full-time head of department, who has worked hard to develop the subject. Appropriate time is now allocated throughout the school to meet the requirements of the agreed syllabus, and the examination course has been established. Significant numbers of pupils, including many higher attainers, are currently expressing interest in pursuing a full GCSE course. However, the work of the department is hampered significantly by its very poor accommodation. The

one specialist room, though large, is in a mobile classroom in extremely poor condition. There is no other specialist teaching base, and the two new teachers take their groups in a wide range of other rooms throughout the school. This necessitates the carrying of all resources, and makes it impossible for these teachers to enhance the pupils' learning through the provision of supportive displays of, for example, work completed or key vocabulary.