

# **INSPECTION REPORT**

## **THE LANCASTER SCHOOL**

Leicester

LEA area: Leicester

Unique reference number: 120283

Headteacher: Mr J E Blount

Reporting inspector: Mr D Darwood  
3552

Dates of inspection: 18-22 September 2000

Inspection number: 193660

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of students:	11-16
Gender of students:	Boys
School address:	Knighton Lane East Leicester
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Appropriate authority:	Leicester City
Name of chair of governors:	Mr A Greenwood
Date of previous inspection:	March 1997

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Chris Morris - 12568	Team inspector	English English as an additional language	
Dilwyn Hunt - 10072	Team inspector	Religious education	How well does the school care for its students and students?
Jim Kane – 17168	Team inspector	Special educational needs	
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## **REPORT CONTENTS**

	Page
<b>PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT</b>	<b>7 - 11</b>
Information about the school	
How good the school is	
What the school does well	
What could be improved	
How the school has improved since its last inspection	
Standards	
Students' attitudes and values	
Teaching and learning	
Other aspects of the school	
How well the school is led and managed	
Parents' and carers' views of the school	
<b>PART B: COMMENTARY</b>	
<b>HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?</b>	<b>12 - 15</b>
The school's results and achievements	
Students' attitudes, values and personal development	
<b>HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?</b>	<b>15 - 17</b>
<b>HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS OR STUDENTS?</b>	<b>17 - 20</b>
<b>HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?</b>	<b>20 - 22</b>
<b>HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS</b>	<b>22 - 23</b>
<b>HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?</b>	<b>23 - 26</b>
<b>WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?</b>	<b>26 - 27</b>
<b>PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS</b>	<b>28 - 31</b>
<b>PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES</b>	<b>32 - 52</b>

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

The Lancaster School is a boys' urban comprehensive school educating 1108 students in the 11-16 age group. The school is situated in the south of Leicester in the West Knighton Ward although 45% of its students come from beyond its immediate area. The intake represents the full range of social circumstances from good housing to the most disadvantaged. Currently 36% of its students come from ethnic minorities including 27% with English as an additional language. This is very high compared to national figures. The number of students taking free school meals is 20.7%, which is slightly above national figures. There are 19.4% of students identified as having special educational needs, mostly for learning difficulties. This is above the national average and higher than at the time of the last inspection. The school received specialist Sports College status in September 2000. It shares a campus with the Sir Jonathan North Community School and there are a range of links between the two institutions. The school draws from a wide number of feeder schools. Key Stage 2 data does however indicate that standards on entry to the school at age 11 are below national averages in English and broadly in line with national figures in mathematics and science. The school is presently oversubscribed and is undergoing a major building programme. It has increased its numbers on roll since the last inspection and is projected to expand to 1200 students by September 2003.

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

The academic standards of the school are in line with the national average at the end of Year 9 and remain so by the end of Year 11. In English and mathematics the boys reach higher levels of achievement than the national average for boys by the end of Year 11. Over the last three years, GCSE results have improved in line with the national trend. Overall, the quality of teaching is good and in nearly a quarter of lessons seen was very good. Students demonstrate a positive attitude and take interest in their learning. There is a wide range of extra-curricular activity, particularly in physical education and music, which is of good quality. There are many opportunities for boys to take responsibility and contribute to the life of the school community and this has a positive impact on their personal development. The requirements of the National Curriculum are met with the exception of one aspect of information technology. Overall the school has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection and has the capacity to achieve its planned improvements. The school is very well led and effectively managed and governed. Resources are used effectively. The school is providing very good value for money.

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

- The school has sustained a steady improvement in standards.
- Performance of boys in English and mathematics at GCSE is above that of boys nationally.
- Headteacher and other senior staff provide strong leadership and management.
- Governors provide effective and active support to the school and are knowledgeable about its strengths.
- Good teaching is a strength of the school.
- The majority of students display a positive and enthusiastic attitude to their learning. Behaviour and relationships in lessons are generally good.
- Provision for social, moral and cultural development.
- The commitment of the staff to the students in their care and to raising standards.
- Monitoring of teaching to establish targets for further improvement.
- Extra-curricular activities including not only sport but also music and drama.

### What could be improved

- There are inconsistencies in the quality of teachers' marking and their comments in students' books. Consequently many students do not know how to improve their work or the standards they might achieve.
- There are problems with students' access to information technology in many subjects. Also students are not taught adequately the 'measurement' component of the information technology National Curriculum.
- The present time allocation given to personal and social education programme is insufficient. Students' experiences in this area lack coherence and this limits progress.
- The school's long term development planning.

*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 previously inspected in March 1997. Since then it has made satisfactory improvement overall and in some areas it has improved well. The school has undertaken an extensive review of its assessment procedures and created new policy and guidelines. However, despite a new policy relating to marking, there is still a large degree of inconsistency in approach both within and between departments. The issue of homework has been largely addressed. At the previous inspection the school was criticised for providing '*insufficient opportunities to develop learning skills by increasing investigational and research activities*'. This has improved. At the time of the last inspection issues were raised over the adequacy of accommodation and resources. The school is presently in the first stage of a large building and refurbishment programme which will considerably improve the provision for science, the library and information technology. Currently the library is very poorly stocked. The school has developed an effective and extensive monitoring programme. Departments have a clear focus for monitoring and development. In terms of cultural development the school has made good progress and this is now a strength of the school. Progress in spiritual development is satisfactory.

### STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			Similar schools
	1997	1998	1999	1999
GCSE examinations	C	C	C	C
A-levels/AS-levels	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a

Key	
well above average	A
above average	B
average	C
below average	D
well below average	E

*(A degree of caution needs to be exercised in judging the standards achieved in this school against those of similar schools, a category currently based on the proportion of students entitled to a free school meal. These similar schools used for comparison are largely mixed comprehensive schools and nationally girls outperform boys.)*

Results for 2000 (to be confirmed).

5 x GCSE A\*-C 46.7% - 5 x GCSE A\*-G 85% - 1 x GCSE A\*-G 92% - average point score: 36.2%



per student.

Standards, by the age of 14 are in line with the national average English, mathematics and science. They were broadly in line with those of similar schools but above the national average for boys in English and mathematics. In other subjects standards by the age of 14 were judged to be similar to national averages with the exception of design and technology which, although improving, still remains below national averages. GCSE results have improved since the last inspection. In terms of overall GCSE point scores, results were comparable with schools nationally and similar schools. The best results were in art and design, geography, mathematics, religious education and physical education. Results in mathematics, science, English, history, music and information technology were similar to national averages and below in design and technology and modern foreign languages. Results in 2000 are still unconfirmed but show a further rise both in the percentage of students gaining five grades A\*-C and the overall point score per student. The standard of work seen at Key Stage 4 during the inspection generally reflected the patterns in recent GCSE results, although standards in modern foreign languages and design and technology were judged to be higher than recent GCSE results might indicate. The governors have set targets for the average GCSE point score in 2001 and for the proportion of students that should gain five A\*-C grades and one A\*-G grade. These are based on an analysis of data on the particular year group concerned. Overall, students' achievements, including those with special educational needs are in line with their capabilities. Most students achieve the targets set for them and a significant number achieve better results than expected.

#### **PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES**

<b>Aspect</b>	<b>Comment</b>
Attitudes to the school	Students like school. The attitude of most students to their learning is very good. Many students participate in extra-curricular activities.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour in most lessons is good. The large majority of students are polite and relationships are good. On rare occasions students can be disruptive in lessons where activities are not interesting or sufficiently challenging. The majority of staff employ effective management strategies in controlling and motivating students. Around the school there are some incidents of boisterous behaviour but generally it is good. Students do, however, show less regard for the school environment with regards to litter.
Personal development and relationships	There are many opportunities for students to take responsibility and contribute to the life of the school community. The encouragement they receive and the recognition of their efforts to act responsibly is effective in promoting their development as mature individuals. On occasions, however, opportunities within lessons to develop student responsibility for their own learning are missed. Relationships are very good.
Attendance	Levels of attendance are good throughout the school. There are effective systems in place to monitor attendance and initiatives to sustain and further improve these levels.

*The students' attitude towards school and learning are a strength of the school.*

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of students:	aged 11-14 years	aged 14-16 years	aged over 16 years
Lessons seen overall	Good	Good	N/A

*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 overall quality of teaching is good. In 94% of lessons teaching was satisfactory or better, of these 57% were good and 24% very good or excellent, 6% of lessons were unsatisfactory. This shows that the school has further improved on the high quality of teaching observed in the previous inspection. Teaching is very good in art, and good in English, mathematics, science, history, physical education and design and technology. Important strengths in all subjects are teachers' knowledge, the effectiveness of their planning and high levels of expectation. Weaker aspects are the consistency and usefulness of marking and in some cases linking new work to students' prior experiences and knowledge.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The school is providing a broad and balanced curriculum which offers its students a wide range of experiences and opportunities. The school meets statutory requirements with the exception of one aspect of information technology. There is very good extra-curricular provision. There is insufficient time to adequately deliver the personal and social education programme.
Provision for students with special educational needs	Special educational needs provision at the school is good in all subjects of the curriculum and special educational needs staff and subject teachers make a valuable contribution to the progress made by students with special educational needs.
Provision for students with English as an additional language	Provision to support students for whom English is an additional language is well developed. The students achieve well and make good progress.
Provision for students' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Provision for moral, social and cultural development is good. Art, music. English, drama and religious education particularly support the students' development in these areas. Progress has been made in spiritual development since the previous inspection but this remains an area for further improvement.
How well the school cares for its students	The school provides a good, caring and supportive environment. It has introduced a number of innovations which successfully contribute to supporting students' welfare.

All areas of the curriculum meet statutory requirements except for the 'measurement' component of information technology. The school encourages good working relations with parents. The majority of

parents report good links with the school. Annual reports meet statutory requirements, but, at times, lack detail and specific targets for improvement.

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

<b>Aspect</b>	<b>Comment</b>
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Leadership and management are effective with a clear sense of direction and strong commitment to improvement. Development planning lacks longer-term thinking and rigour in setting priorities and reviewing progress.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governors are effectively carrying out their statutory responsibilities and play a constructive part in setting a clear direction for the school.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school is effectively monitoring teaching, student progress, attendance and behaviour.
The strategic use of resources	The school uses its resources effectively although in some subjects, particularly in science and information technology, these are insufficient. This area will be substantially addressed within the new building programme, particularly the new science laboratories and the improved access to information technology.

The school has sufficient and well qualified teachers. The management of the school at all levels is effective. Accommodation and resources have not been satisfactory particularly in light of increased numbers of students on roll. However, the current building and refurbishment programme should address many of these weaknesses.

## **PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL**

<b>What pleases parents most</b>	<b>What parents would like to see improved</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The quality of teaching.</li> <li>• The approachability of staff.</li> <li>• Expectations that students should work hard.</li> <li>• The quality of leadership and management.</li> <li>• Support to those with special educational needs.</li> <li>• The progress their children make.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More information about their children's achievements and more detail on what is taught so that they can provide active help at home.</li> <li>• Closer partnership with parents.</li> <li>• More appropriate and consistently set homework.</li> </ul>

The inspectors were able to endorse all the strengths which were identified by parents. Of the parents who expressed concerns over homework, some felt that more should be set and others less. Overall the inspectors judged that homework was set in a satisfactory way and that tasks were generally appropriate. In some cases more guidance on the amount and depth of work would be helpful. Inspectors feel that information given to parents is satisfactory. Partnership between the school and parents is satisfactory.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

1. The overall standards attained by students at the end of Key Stage 3 are in line with expected levels for their age. Overall standards at the end of Key Stage 4 are equally in line with those of schools nationally. Standards have steadily improved in both key stages since the previous inspection in line with the national trend. Most students, including those from different ethnic groups and those for whom English is an additional language, achieve the standards of which they are capable in the majority of the National Curriculum subjects.
2. This report includes comparison of the school's standards with those of similar schools. A degree of caution needs to be exercised in judging the standards achieved in the Lancaster School against those of similar schools which are based on the proportion of students entitled nationally to a free school meal. Similar schools are, in the main, mixed comprehensive schools and at ages 14 and 16 girls generally achieve at a higher rate than boys nationally. Any direct comparison, therefore, of a boys school to a similar mixed school may give an unreliable interpretation. For this reason comparisons have also been made where possible with boys nationally.
3. Attainment on entry to the school at aged 11, based on scores achieved in the national Key Stage 2 tests, indicates that students are well below national averages in English and broadly in line with national figures for students in mathematics and science. This is confirmed by the results of cognitive ability tests given to Year 7 students. The percentage of students entering the school at the higher levels of achievement against National Curriculum standards in English is significantly lower than national figures.
4. In 1999 the school's overall test results for 14 year olds at the end of Key Stage 3, in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science were broadly in line with the national average and similar schools. The trend from 1996-99 is broadly in line with national trends despite the low level of literacy skills of many students as they enter Year 7.
5. In English the 1999 Key Stage 3 results were broadly in line with both national and similar schools. The percentage of students reaching Level 5 and above (59%) was close to the national average and similarly so for Level 6 and above (22%). This was, however, above the national figures for boys. In 2000 results in English for Key Stage 3 showed a slight decrease but these are still to be confirmed and do reflect the predictions made by the department for that cohort.
6. In mathematics in 1999 the average point score was broadly in line with that for all schools but above average for similar schools. The percentage of students reaching Level 5 or above (61%) and Level 6 or above (36%) are similar to national figures and better than those for boys nationally. The 2000 results, although presently unconfirmed, continue to show an upward trend, with more students achieving the higher grades (Levels 6, 7 and 8).
7. In science students' performance in Key Stage 3 tests were close to the national average and to that of similar schools. The percentage reaching Level 5 and above (52%) and Level 6 and above were close to the national average. In 2000 science results also showed improvement along the national trend. 63% of students achieved Level 5 or above (national average of 61%).

8. The 1999 Key Stage 3 test results reflect the trend developed over the past four years. During this period, taking all the core subjects together, the overall standard of boys in Key Stage 3 tests has improved in line with the national trend. This shows that the school has continued to be successful in its aim to improve performance. The reason for this success is closely linked to the improvement in teaching and specific strategies in some subjects (e.g. mathematics) to target groups of students.
9. In other subjects standards by the end of Key Stage 3, based on teacher assessments, are similar to national figures in history, information technology, art, music and modern foreign languages, but, slightly below in geography and design and technology. Evidence from observations of lessons, discussions with students and scrutiny of their work indicates that standards in the present cohort are comparable to national norms with the exception of design and technology. In this subject they are slightly below national expectations.
10. Over the last three years in Key Stage 4, GCSE examination standards have improved in line with the national trend. In 1999 the average total GCSE point score per student was also close to the national average and that for similar schools. The percentage of students achieving five A\*-C in 1999 was similar to national averages but above that of similar schools. In terms of students achieving five A\*-G and one A\*-G grades the schools results were well below the average for similar schools but this is, in part, explained by the high number of students being entered for alternative accredited courses particularly in the vocational area.
11. The 2000 GCSE results are still unconfirmed but the figure for five A\*-C GCSE passes was 46.7% which was almost exactly the target for the year group (47%). The percentage of one A\*-G passes was 92% which was 3% below the target figure of 95%. The overall point scores however, was 36.2 which is fractionally above the schools target figure of 35.
12. In 1999 attainment in GCSE English was in line with national figures but above the national average for boys. Unconfirmed results for 2000 indicate a similar pattern. In mathematics the 1999 GCSE results were higher than national figures as well as those in similar schools. They were also higher than boys nationally. In double award GCSE science results were above national figures but below in single GCSE science. Other subjects in which students achieved results above the national average (1999 figures) in GCSE were art and design, drama, geography, physical education and religious education. Results were broadly average in history, and information technology but, below in design and technology and modern foreign language.
13. Standards within individual subjects achieved in both key stages, judged by recent test and examination results closely match those observed during the inspection. The exception is modern foreign languages where present standards seen were higher than recent results might suggest. In design and technology standards of work seen were variable between different material areas. In some cases, e.g. textiles, they are good whilst in others there are weaknesses in the design skills.
14. Overall students' achievement, including those with special educational needs are generally in line with their capabilities. Most students achieve the targets set for them. Students with special educational needs make good progress and this is enhanced by effective use of support staff, careful implementation of individual education plans and teachers knowledge of individual students' needs. Good examples were seen of students on the autistic spectrum, and students with specific learning difficulties, being supported and achieving high standards in science and history.

15. The progress made by gifted and talented students is good, particularly in mathematics and physical education. In mathematics extra-curricular activities are arranged for such students and they have access to mathematics workshops organised by the department for local schools.
16. Standards in literacy improve significantly during Key Stage 3. Although attainment on entry into Year 7 is well below national norms, by the end of Key Stage 3 levels are at national expectations. Development of literacy by different subjects is variable. There is good use of questioning techniques in mathematics, discussion work in modern foreign languages and design and technology and the use of writing frames in geography and history but overall there is no clear whole school approach to developing students' skills in literacy.
17. Standards of numeracy remain good as at the time of the previous inspection. However, outside of mathematics, there are only limited examples of students' numeracy skills being developed in their work in other subjects. This is something recognised by the mathematics department which is currently working with other subject departments to improve the role of mathematics in supporting other subjects.
18. The school carries out careful analysis of test and examination results to ascertain appropriate targets for both individual subjects and the school as a whole. These are based on data pertinent to each year group of students. The targets set for 2000 by the governing body were largely met and targets have been set for GCSE results for 2001 for five A\*-C passes (45%) and one A\*-G passes (95%) with an average GCSE point score per student of 35.6. Although reflective of the Key Stage 3 data for this year group in ascertaining predicted grades they are not particularly challenging in light of past performance of the school at GCSE.

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

19. Students have good attitudes to learning and show a keen interest in their lessons and other aspects of school life including extra curricular activities. They indicate in discussions that they enjoy school and this is confirmed by a large majority of the parents consulted by inspectors. Attendance levels across all year groups are good and continue to improve.
20. In lessons students are keen to answer questions and participate in activities with confidence. Many examples of this were seen in all year groups and subject areas. Year 9 students in English were keen to take parts in a play being read aloud and in a careers lesson were willing to talk about their own strengths and weaknesses in front of others. In geography, project work on the local area, demonstrated that students could work collaboratively and in mathematics students worked well in pairs solving problems by trial and error. This has a positive impact on standards.
21. Standards of behaviour in lessons in both key stages are good. Behaviour during communal activities such as assemblies and in the dining room is also good, although at break time and in the corridors and on stairways there is, on occasions, some boisterous behaviour and jostling. Generally property is treated with respect although students drop unacceptable quantities of litter around the school site. The overall high standards of behaviour are underpinned by a well-established structure of commendations and sanctions which are understood and accepted by students. In the last year the number of exclusions has also fallen and is in line with national figures.
22. Relationships throughout the school are very good. Students from different social and ethnic

backgrounds work and play together well. They listen to each other's views and applaud the achievements of their colleagues in sports and community activities such as the creation of special millennium banners which were displayed in Leicester city centre. Students confirm that bullying or other oppressive behaviour is rare and if it does occur it is dealt with efficiently.

23. The school successfully promotes students' personal development by providing a good range of extra curricular activities, residential visits and many opportunities to take responsibility. An elected School Council provides a forum for students to discuss and make a contribution to school policies, including the arrangements for the use of the new all weather pitch. Year 10 students act as 'peer pals' to new Year 7 students and students help others with reading as part of the 'study buddies' scheme. Students also act as sports coaches and referees and take the initiative in organising charity fundraising. There is widespread participation in all these activities which make a significant contribution to students growth as mature individuals.

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

24. The quality of teaching is good and remains a strength of the school. In nearly a quarter of lessons observed teaching was very good or excellent. This represents a further improvement since the previous inspection and is in part the result of the careful monitoring of teaching by the school, which helps provide specific targets and strategies for the improvement of teaching. Good teaching was seen in all subjects and year groups and is a significant factor in accounting for the positive attitude of students towards their learning.
25. This good teaching has its basis in effective planning and in the teachers' confident knowledge and understanding of their subject and how to present it in the classroom. For the majority of teachers there is a real commitment to the school and its students. Teachers try not only to ensure improved academic results but also to foster a sense of enjoyment in learning. The best lessons are well structured, they start with a clear statement of objectives which are revisited at different points and re-emphasised in the final review of the session. This is particularly true in English and mathematics. The plenary is also used to share and praise students' work which contributes to the positive ethos within most lessons. A consistent feature of good teaching is effective management of students' behaviour. In the majority of lessons observed there was an orderly and purposeful atmosphere characterised by effective use of humour and praise and a concern for the individual needs of students. On one occasion where a student displayed poor behaviour the teacher acted quickly to de-fuse the situation and prevent the disruptive behaviour of one affecting the learning of others.
26. There is a good sense of pace within lessons which is enhanced by the atmosphere of low stress and high challenge which staff create in their rooms. The more able are particularly well supported in mathematics, where there is a clear expectation that students become mathematical thinkers, being able to access a range of tasks, understand the mathematical concepts underpinning them and be able to tackle confidently mathematical problems. There are also good links made between present work in GCSE and potential courses available to students post-16. Similar challenge was observed in physical education, history and English. Staff make good use of 'time targets' particularly in mathematics and English to ensure a sense of pace and urgency in lessons.
27. At the previous inspection there was concern raised about the lack of *'investigative and research activities'* observed in lessons. There has been a clear improvement in this area, particularly in mathematics, geography, history, art, English, the expressive arts (in Key Stage 4) and science. The range and number of fieldwork trips have also improved, particularly in

geography, history and modern foreign languages. These provide good opportunities for students to practise subject specific skills in context.

28. Teachers have appropriate expectations of most of their students in Key Stage 3 and high expectations for those in Key Stage 4. An example of this was seen in English where a lower attaining Year 11 class reading *Macbeth* was required to select and analyse quotations to a detailed level in planning an essay. They responded to this demand with high motivation and increased levels of attainment. Another example was seen in a Year 11 religious education class where students observed a range of video clips based on the life of Gandhi. Rather than simply explain these to the students the teacher invited them to discuss each video clip, identify the significance and share the issues they raised. In physical education, particularly in Key Stage 4 football, students were constantly challenged to evaluate their actions and suggest ways to improve their effectiveness as players in retaining possession of the ball. There is some good practice in improving students literacy skills. Some of the approaches associated with the National Literacy Strategy have been developed to support Key Stage 3 students. A good example of this was seen in history and geography with the use of writing frames, in science with the development of 'word walls' to help students learn key terminology. Similarly in modern foreign languages effective strategies were seen implemented to develop reading skills. There is good use of questioning in many areas to promote discussion and reflection. In Year 7 mathematics for example, careful questioning was used to ascertain students' prior knowledge on angles as a baseline for developing new work. The importance of developing listening skills was well illustrated in a Year 8 English lesson where, through small group discussion and negotiation, the teacher gave an effective demonstration on how to encourage others to contribute to discussion. This was a major factor in the very high standard of group discussion that followed.
29. Teaching of students with special educational needs is good with examples of very good practice seen in English, mathematics, history and science. Lessons are well matched to the individual needs of the students and individual education plans (IEPs) play a constructive role in teaching, planning and students' learning. The quality of special educational needs support is good. It is most effective when the staff are following the schools policy of supporting a 'halo group' (a group of special educational needs students beyond the individual identified). Similar support is given to students for whom English is an additional language and they are well-integrated into mainstream classes. In the majority of classes relationships between students and adults are good so that attention and motivation are sustained.
30. In most cases students' written work is frequently checked and written comments are often added. There are some good examples of constructive and diligent marking but overall there are shortcomings in the value and consistency of the marking procedures that are currently adopted, particularly at Key Stage 3. In many instances marks and comments tend to place an undue emphasis on students' effort and attitude at the expense of providing them with information on strengths and weaknesses or more focused advice on how their work could be further improved or how their achievement linked to National Curriculum levels. The marking of tests and coursework at Key Stage 4 is more effective.
31. A minority of parents expressed a range of concerns about homework arrangements. Some considered that not enough was set or that the work lacked challenge and stimulus on occasions. In contrast, others felt that their children had too much work to do at home. Inspectors found that homework was generally set according to the agreed schedule and that, on the whole, work was appropriate to the needs and ability of the students. There is good practice in art where students are given a schedule of topics to be covered for the year and homework is linked to the



module being taught. This enables students to see the direct link between course and homework. There were some instances of homework being ambiguously worded and poorly focused tasks led some more diligent students to spend an excessive length of time working on them because they were unsure about the outcomes that they were expected to achieve.

32. On the few occasions when teaching was less satisfactory or ineffective it was often down to over-directed teaching with long exposition by the teacher and little time for students to discuss or reflect upon the learning. On some occasions it was due to lack of challenge. This made concentration difficult and occasionally led to low levels of disruptive behaviour. In some areas there are good opportunities for sustained discussion and structured debate, particularly in English, personal and social education and drama. However, in many lessons opportunities for this are missed.
33. In the best lessons teachers had clear strategies to build upon and reinforce prior learning. This was particularly true in mathematics and English, and to some extent in science. In other areas however, there was a tendency in Year 7 to repeat rather than reinforce Key Stage 2 work
34. There is evidence of some good work using information technology in history and geography but overall development of information technology skills is adversely affected by the difficulties of students being able to access information technology equipment. There is also a lack of a coherent whole school approach to using information technology effectively in the teaching of other subjects and using it as a tool for independent study. Certainly all students would benefit from having more openings to apply their information technology skills within the context of the subject they study. This is an area recognised by the school as in need of development and the completion of the new building programme should help alleviate these access problems.
35. There is clear correlation between the quality of teaching and the quality of learning and most students make good progress in their learning both in lessons and over longer periods of time. This is true at both key stages. The great majority of students work hard and show high levels of interest and concentration. They are generally keen to succeed and respond positively to praise and encouragement. These factors make an important contribution to standards of attainment. Students actively welcome opportunities to take responsibility for their own learning and there is greater evidence of them developing as independent learners than at the time of the last inspection. There is, however, still scope for teachers to offer more opportunity for this process.

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

36. As it did at the time of the previous inspection in 1997, the school is providing its students with a broad and balanced education. The curriculum includes all the subjects of the National Curriculum, religious education, drama and personal and social education. In addition, at Key Stage 4 the curriculum includes pre-vocational education, although in Year 10 this is largely confined to students who are placed in lower ability groups for science, plus a vocational option in the Humanities Block.
37. The breadth and balance of the curriculum is being achieved by the implementation of the National Curriculum programmes of study and by incorporating the nine key areas of educational experience identified by Her Majesty's Inspectorate in 1985. A narrow curriculum is also avoided by the school making a large number of subjects compulsory in Years 10 and 11, with a corresponding restriction on the amount of choice allowed to students. Students and parents are generally happy with this restricted choice.

38. Generally, the school is providing a broad range of experiences which is meeting the interests and particular needs of its students, including the high proportion of students with English as an additional language and those having special educational needs. There is good access to the curriculum for all students, as there was at the time of the previous inspection.
39. Although an appropriate amount of time is allocated to all subjects (with the exception of personal and social education), the recent achievement of Sports College status is placing some strain on the school's timetable. This is largely due to the requirement to increase the amount of time given to physical education. To fully meet the needs of those students who wish to specialise in information technology, history and two modern foreign languages, lessons are provided before morning school and lunch times. Generally, teachers and parents are responding positively to this extended day. However, it is not providing satisfactory delivery of a second modern foreign language, where provision is inadequate and access restricted. The school is not yet taking up the suggestion to provide twenty-five teaching hours a week – a suggestion which has been taken up at Key Stage 4 by the majority of schools.
40. Overall, the school's connections with other educational institutions are good. The school has close links with the local consortium of schools and effective relationships with the sixth form and further education colleges. With about three-quarters of school leavers continuing with full-time education, college open-evenings and visits to the school from post-16 institutions take place annually. The school has some difficulty with achieving effective liaison with its partner primary schools because there is a large number of them. It receives good information about students' personal details and about students with special educational needs, and English and mathematics staff visit the largest of the primary schools. However, information about work in subjects is not so good and students' prior attainment when they join the school is insufficiently taken into account in allocating students to ability groups.
41. Although the school's links with its local community remain limited, there has been some improvement since the school was last inspected. Connections with the industrial concern, Caterpillar, is helping the Young Engineers in design and technology; the textiles group in design and technology usefully visit another local factory and its employees give talks in school; there are contacts with local religious communities and the school featured in a Midland Bank promotional video in 1999. These links positively enhance the curriculum opportunities offered to students.
42. Although personal and social education is highlighted as important in the headteacher's message to parents in the most recent school prospectus, its provision is unsatisfactory. The school includes health education and drugs awareness in its personal and social education programme but lessons are only timetabled seven times a year in Years 7 to 10 and four times in Year 11. There is no time for it in the short form-tutor sessions each day. In consequence, its delivery lacks coherence. Students perceive it as happening too infrequently to be useful.
43. Sex education is included in the Key Stage 3 science curriculum and is taught in discrete modules by the head of the science faculty in Years 10 and 11. It is effectively delivered but its full value for students is diminished by its isolation from the other elements of the personal and social education programme. The fragmentary implementation of this programme is contrary to the principle of coherence included in the school's curriculum statement.
44. The school's provision for careers education and guidance is good, as it was at the time of the previous inspection. It is well planned and is effectively taught by qualified teachers in Years 9

- to 11. There is a careers library with a wide range of resources, including materials for disabled and special needs students. Good use is made of the local Careers Officer both in contributing to careers lessons and in conducting interviews with students. The careers education programme has been supported by an Army Day in June 2000 with a number of students working with the Royal Marines. At the time of the inspection an effective display in the corridor relating careers to individual curriculum subjects was a useful addition to careers guidance. Students value careers education and guidance.
45. Other work-related education is provided through a three weeks long work-experience in Year 11. This continues to be well supported by local employers and valued by students. The quality of the programme has been maintained since the last inspection. In Years 10 and 11, the school is providing a non-GCSE optional course in pre-vocational education, which leads to certification under the Leicestershire Vocational Framework. Under the school's revised arrangements, pre-vocational education in Year 10 is available only for students in lower ability sets for science.
  46. Overall, strategies for teaching literacy in the school are satisfactory. They are good in English where they are contributing well to students' progress and are having a positive effect on standards. However, the school has not adopted the whole-school approach to literacy recommended at the Key Stage 3 National Literacy Strategy conferences and, as a result, the contribution of other curriculum areas to the development of students' literacy is limited. However, the development of a whole-school literacy policy is included in the school improvement plan and the policy should be in place by January 2001. Strategies for teaching numeracy are good in mathematics although there is only a limited implementation of strategies for developing mental skills. As with literacy, the school is planning to have a whole-school numeracy policy by January 2001.
  47. Since the previous inspection, the school has continued to provide an extensive programme of extra-curricular activities. This includes a comprehensive range of sports, a variety of music activities, drama productions and educational visits. Students continue to value the extra-curricular activities provided and access to them is good. The availability and popularity of extra-curricular sport, however, is inevitably narrowing the range of activity chosen by students. Study support for students is also available, for example, in mathematics where staff make themselves available to help students at breaks, lunch-times and after school. Overall, the school's extra-curricular provision provides enrichment to its curriculum, as it did when the school was last inspected.
  48. The school is meeting most of the statutory requirements for the curriculum. It is not, however, fully carrying out the requirements for information technology. In particular it fails to fully deliver the 'measurement' component of information technology. Neither is the school providing a daily act of collective worship for all students.
  49. The overall provision for promoting students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Progress has been made since the previous inspection particularly in enhancing students' cultural development. A good attempt has been made to identify ways in which the resources of the local area may be used to enhance cultural development. Some faculties have been particularly successful in extending local contacts and arranging activities, which involve visiting or working with local groups. The drama department, for example, has good links with the Leicester Theatre in Education, Leicester University Theatre, the Haymarket and Phoenix Theatre. The department has been involved in an ambitious range of drama including Christmas productions, "*Romeo and Juliet*", "*Oliver*", "*Adrian Mole*" and Alan Bennett's "*Forty Year On*".

50. Students' cultural experiences are also well developed through religious education. For example, students' awareness of cultural diversity is extended through a good programme of visits to both local places of worship as well as famous places of worship in London including Regent's Park mosque and the Hindu temple in Neasden. In religious education students in Year 9 also undertake an extended assignment exploring religious art focused on an identified religion of their own choice. Other faculties, which make a good contribution to the students' cultural development are art, music and geography.
51. Students are frequently reminded of the high standards of conduct expected of them in school. Classroom rules are clearly displayed in every room reinforcing the school's commitment to high standards of behaviour and the belief that students need to be taught what is right and wrong. All staff consistently maintain the code of conduct and the general lack of aggression, racial tension or hostility in the school is evidence that the school is largely successful in establishing good moral standards. Through the teaching of specific topics, for example, in English, drama, history and religious education students are asked to consider issues of right and wrong and how moral choices may be made.
52. The promotion of students' social development is also good. The school provides clear opportunities for students to take responsibility and to be involved in the wider social life of the school. For example, within the school, students are involved in activities like, 'peer pals', 'study buddies', School Council, assemblies, drama productions and fund raising. Wider social issues like social change in Leicester, the consequences of the Kobe earthquake and the appropriateness of direct action, are also explored in curriculum areas like English and the humanities.
53. The school has sought to address concerns raised in the previous inspection regarding spiritual development. The school has undertaken an audit in an attempt to identify where the school provides planned opportunities for spiritual development. The science faculty has made use of published material specifically to promote spirituality in the classroom. The school has made some but limited progress. Overall provision for spiritual development is satisfactory. There remains within some departments however, an uncertainty about what spiritual development is with some faculties equating the term with matters to do with religion while others confuse it with moral development. This confusion limits further development.
54. As was reported in the previous inspection, the school does not meet the statutory requirement to provide a daily act of collective worship. Although many of the assemblies involve the students in planning and delivering the assembly, they are often low-key occasions. Some assemblies do celebrate the religious diversity within the school but in the main they tend to provide predictable moral messages. They do not consistently provide opportunities for students to reflect. They do, however contribute to reinforcing the school's ethos and code of conduct. There are also good opportunities for celebrating success and rewarding both academic and sporting achievement. However, in their failure to make a positive contribution to the spiritual development of the students they are a missed opportunity.

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

55. The arrangements within the school for students' welfare, support and guidance are good. Most members of staff play an active part in ensuring the care and well being of students through a clearly defined pastoral system. Relationships between staff and students are good. Form tutors and year heads have well described roles and work closely together so that students feel secure

and are able to seek support as necessary. Through its pastoral database the school makes very good use of information technology to record and make easily available information on students' attendance and patterns of behaviour. There are good procedures in place to encourage attendance, including a certificate award system to reward both individuals and forms. An additional award for good attendance has been put in place through contacts with the Leicester City Football Club. A pastoral clerical assistant has been appointed so parents may be telephoned on the first day that their child is absent. Weekly meetings take place with the Educational Welfare Officer in order to identify potential problems so that through early intervention poor attendance can be avoided.

56. The personal and social education programme, which is mainly taught by form tutors has a clear structure and is well documented. It does make some contribution to the care and nurturing of the students. However, the time allocated of seven lessons a year is insufficient in order to ensure that the information and topics are effectively covered or that issues are appropriately discussed in depth. The form tutors' handbook, which provides very good guidance, advises tutors to contribute to the development of the students by making use of registration time, for example, through the use of structured activities. These do not however directly link to the school's personal and social education programme. The majority of tutors, however, make ineffective use of this time by merely issuing notices or allowing students to spend the time chatting. As indicated in the school audit most curriculum areas make some contribution to the personal and social development of students. Nevertheless, this is not sufficient to make up for the shortfalls of the discrete personal and social education programme.
57. Generally sound policies and procedures are in place for health and safety. There are regular safety audits. The school nurse is available for students at all times in her office. She is able to deal with medical problems but also provides advice and counselling. Procedures for child protection are sound and members of staff are aware of what to do if there is evidence which gives rise to concern for a particular student.
58. The school's procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour and eliminating oppressive behaviour are good. An assertive discipline system has been introduced based upon a system of rewards and sanctions. Incidents of bullying are dealt with speedily and effectively, in line with the school's policy. An effective on-call system exists for serious breaches of discipline, which ensures the immediate removal of a student thereby minimising classroom disruption. All incidents of harassment and bullying are efficiently recorded on the pastoral database. There was no evidence of any racial tension or bullying in the school during the inspection. Despite the school's success in minimising oppressive behaviour it is not complacent. This is evidenced by the recent introduction of 'peer pals' which provides Year 7 students with a Year 10 student mentor, who acts as a peer guide and support during the first year of secondary education.
59. The procedures for assessing students' attainment and progress are generally satisfactory, although there are weaknesses. There is a whole school policy on assessment, recording and reporting. This policy is currently undergoing development with a replacement draft policy being considered. Currently information on National Curriculum assessments is held within faculties, sometimes in different ways. This makes it difficult to disseminate this information so that it may be used effectively to gain a fuller picture of the strengths and weaknesses of individual students and guide their learning. The school has good plans in place to address this issue by making the information available through the Schools Information Management System (SIMS). The quality and effectiveness of assessment does vary across the school. In English, history and geography there are examples of good practice. In history and geography good use is made of a portfolio of standardised work in order to improve consistency and ensure that assessment is fair. Reports

to parents are however a weakness with very limited guidance which would help students understand what they need to do to improve their work and make progress. The same is also true of marking in exercise books which often fails to provide guidance to students on how to improve. Marking of coursework and assignments in some faculties, for example in geography, is however good.

60. The procedures for assessing students' attainment and progress are generally satisfactory. There are helpful structures in place for the monitoring of academic progress by heads of year and form tutors. At times, however, particularly in years 7-9 the data tends to be based more upon an evaluation of students' efforts than on how well they are meeting National Curriculum attainment descriptions. Monitoring of students' progress is still evolving but there is clear improvement since the previous inspection. From Year 10 staff have access to predicted grades which helps them to recognise where additional support is required. In all years students' personal development is well monitored.
61. Assessment of students with special educational needs is sound but again there are some weaknesses. There is an over-reliance on information gained from subject faculties. The quality of this information is insufficient to form the basis for assessment decisions on special educational needs. The formulation and management of individual education plans for students with special educational needs are satisfactory. Some targets identified are broad and too vague but, generally, they are appropriate and helpful. The school does not inform parents of students who are placed on the special educational needs register at Stages 1 and 2 resulting in a contravention of the 1994 Code of Practice.
62. Overall students are well supported within a caring and secure environment. There are good and improving links with the principle primary feeder schools. There is a constructive academic and pastoral transmission of information between Key Stages 2 and 3 which is used to place students in tutor groups. Where appropriate it is also used to brief teachers at the first staff meeting of each academic year. There are similarly good links with post-16 providers.

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

63. Links with parents are sound. Most parents are very supportive of the school and appreciate the care and support given to their children. They believe members of staff to be approachable and that any concerns that they raise are quickly dealt with. Information from parents' returned questionnaires and letters as well as the parents' meeting with inspectors did, however, indicate that there is a minority of parents who do not feel sufficiently well informed and feel the school could work closer to parents.
64. There are in fact well-established channels of communication including parents' evenings for each year group, occasional newsletters and other circulars on specific issues, particularly the Sports College development. Communication on a one to one basis, for example, when individual students need additional help or have problems, is generally good. Information provided to parents on fieldwork visits and residentials is clear and informative.
65. As was the case at the time of the previous school inspection, annual reports on students' progress meet the statutory requirements but do not always include sufficient details of students' attainment and progress or what they need to do to improve. Some parents said that they would value having more information about what is going to be taught in different subjects so that they can provide active help at home. Some parents felt that homework was an issue but observations and evidence during the inspection found that homework was generally appropriate

to the needs of students and regularly set. The introduction of homework organisers and implementation of the homework policy have been positive steps in enabling parents to get involved with their children's work outside school.

66. Currently there is no active parents' association and the school has been unable to attract widespread general support for some of the events organised. Parental involvement tends to be focused on events and issues relating to their own children. Some parents do help with sports coaching and the school is confident that this kind of involvement will increase as the Sports College develops.

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

67. Leadership and management are amongst the strengths of the school. Leadership is very good. The headteacher is a strong and effective leader, as he was at the time of the previous inspection, and he has been successful in bringing together an experienced senior management team. This team, comprising the headteacher and two deputy headteachers, works very well together and is having a strong and positive impact on the progress and development of the school.
68. The senior management team has a very strong commitment to improvement; to raising standards and improving the welfare of students. The strength of this commitment is resulting in a clear sense of direction being set for the school. This is effectively communicated through 'board' and faculty meetings and it is significantly contributing to the effectiveness of the school's middle management. Almost all departments and faculties are effectively led. The view, held by a large majority of parents, that the school is well led and managed is supported by the findings of the inspection. At all levels, leadership is making a significant contribution to the improvement of the school.
69. The school's positive and caring ethos has been maintained since the school was last inspected. In contrast to 1997, the main aims of the school have now been made explicit and are clearly stated in the school's prospectus. These aims are valuable and relevant, with a commitment to developing a challenging curriculum, effective teaching, good personal qualities, positive relationships with students, and effective partnership with parents. The aims are clearly informing and are reflected in the work of the school.
70. However, the main aims of the school are restricted to the domain of the school; they are silent about the world beyond school. For example, they make no reference to preparing students for adult life, for taking their place in society, both in the local community and the wider world. Although there is brief reference to these elements in the school's curriculum statement and improving links with the community is part of the school's plans for the future, this does not sufficiently compensate for the absence of an outward-looking dimension in the main aims. Currently, the main impetus for the school's development is provided by the desire to raise standards and to successfully launch the recently acquired Sports College dimension of the school. These are valuable and essential elements for progress, but there is scope for the school to be driven by a wider vision and this should be evident in its main aims.
71. The governing body is effectively carrying out its statutory responsibilities. The excellent working relationships with the headteacher and the senior management team identified in the last report have been maintained. This is helping the governors to play a useful part in setting a clear educational direction for the school. Governors have been actively involved in the formulation of school policies such as behaviour and sex education; governors linked to school faculties have

been able to focus on standards and current developments and there has also been some governor involvement in classroom observation and in-service training. The governing body is well informed about the strengths of the school.

72. Some aspects of the role of critical friend are being carried out well by the governing body. For example, governors have challenged the headteacher about results in modern foreign languages and sought clarification on exclusion procedures.
73. Although the governing body discusses the general progress of the school improvement plan it does not always have sufficiently detailed information upon which to systematically judge the progress of specific items within it. This makes it difficult for the governors to evaluate the cost effectiveness of some of the decisions they have made. There has been some improvement in the quality of the governors' annual report, but the school's progress on the key issues identified in the previous inspection report has not been clearly and usefully reported to parents. The governing body has not ensured that the statutory requirements for collective worship and for information technology are being fully met.
74. The school is well managed both at senior management and at faculty/departmental levels. Currently, however, the recently appointed special educational needs co-ordinator does not have sufficient time to engage in development planning or to monitor and evaluate the work of the department. The structure of management meetings is functioning effectively and there is an efficient system of communication. Generally, change is being well managed and the recently acquired Sports College status is a good example of this. There are very good relationships between staff which is resulting in a strong team spirit within the school and increasing its capacity to improve. The system for the impending statutory performance management of teachers has been set up and an appropriate policy is in place.
75. Financial management and control are good. Despite very low funding, the school has consistently balanced its budget and still maintained steady improvement. A monthly breakdown of finances is efficiently provided by the registrar and the main recommendations of the last auditors' report have been carried out.
76. There is scope for improvement in the school's process of development planning. With the exception of the Sports College dimension, planning continues to be a year-by-year process and the recommendation in the previous inspection report that there should be a longer-term view has not been taken up. At this stage in its development, the school is in need of longer term planning to maximise its potential improvement.
77. The school improvement plan contains a detailed review of the previous year's developments and is satisfactorily costed. The plan contains a very large number of issues and actions (56 currently) and there is no clear prioritisation. Consequently, it is difficult for governors to monitor them all effectively. There needs to be more precision in deciding priorities and the extent to which whole-school decisions are reflected in faculty development planning needs to be improved. At present, the process by which the school improvement plan is monitored and evaluated by governors is not clear.
78. Since the school was last inspected, there have been further developments and improvements in the school's systems to check the effectiveness of its performance. Students' academic progress, behaviour and attendance are being effectively monitored by the senior management team. In addition, a system of classroom observation has been introduced to monitor the quality of teaching; it is now in its third year and involves all departments and faculties. Staff are



observed in their teaching by their line managers and again by their peers. The senior manager responsible for the programme keeps a record of the incidence of the classroom observation. This has led to more informed discussion by staff on the effectiveness of teaching strategies. It is another example of change effectively managed. A large majority of staff are positive about the initiative and some valuable sharing of experiences is taking place. Good progress is being made in subjects with the exception of information technology, physical education and special educational needs. The progress made so far is sufficient for the monitoring of teaching to be a strength of the school.

79. Further development is required, however, if the school is to accrue full benefit from the process. A systematic means of recording the findings has just been established; the school is currently developing ways to share the outcomes with all staff, and to determine how to use the very good practice of its very successful teachers for the benefit of all. The school acknowledges these needs. An additional annual meeting of heads of faculty in order to discuss the outcomes of classroom observation is to be introduced and sharing the findings from the observations is included in the school improvement plan.
80. The governors are justifiably pleased about the ways in which the senior management monitors the performance of the school, but there are deficiencies. There is no documented evidence that the progress of the school improvement plan is efficiently evaluated, nor that the actual implementation of school policies is formally monitored. For example, there is no evidence that the senior management team is checking the quality of implementation of policies such as those for assessment and equal opportunities to determine strengths and weaknesses and to discover development needs. In consequence, neither governors nor senior managers have a totally secure base for determining the school's weaknesses, judging the cost effectiveness of spending decisions, or demonstrating accountability.
81. Overall the school is appropriately staffed to meet the requirements of the curriculum. There is a good balance of very experienced and more recently qualified teachers. Most subjects are taught by specialists although in science there is a heavy reliance on supply teachers due to maternity leave. A large number of non-specialists are involved in the teaching of information technology. They are sufficiently knowledgeable to deliver the programme of study for information technology but do not have sufficient opportunity to plan collectively. This at times leads to unchallenging lessons and the setting of low level tasks. There is an appropriate provision of support staff who are well used and make a valuable contribution in subjects such as design and technology. Sound arrangements are in place for the induction of new staff and the budget for the training and development of staff is well managed with training linked to faculty improvement plans.
82. The school is currently in the first phase of a major accommodation improvement programme which when completed will overcome many of the current accommodation problems and bring together faculties. Although for many subjects accommodation is adequate for the delivery of the curriculum there are major shortcomings in science, where laboratories are situated in different parts of the school with some in poor condition, information technology, music, where there is no space for group work and physical education, where there is a need for a dedicated classroom to teach theory. In addition much of the current accommodation is shabby and in need of decoration and there are limited hard play areas.
83. The resources for learning are adequate overall although there are significant variations across subjects. In subjects such as physical education the situation is positive with a wide range of equipment in good condition. In other subjects such as geography and modern foreign languages

the situation is either satisfactory or improving as new resources are purchased. However, resources in science remain inadequate and in information technology the ratio of computers to students is significantly below the nation average. Fiction stock in the library is also limited.

84. The accommodation improvement programme contains provision for a new library and improved information technology. In some areas purchases of new resources are being delayed pending the completion of these works.
85. The school is effective in applying the principles of best value. It is gathering and analysing available data about its performance and it is comparing its standards and costs with those of other schools. It consults widely about major spending and curriculum change. Parents, for example, were consulted about the application for Sports College status and about recent curriculum changes involving physical education and the humanities. These factors are helping the school to provide very good value for money.

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

86. Lancaster is an effective school. In order to improve standards further the governors, headteacher and staff should:
  1. Improve the development of information technology throughout the curriculum by:
    - improving access to information technology facilities both within the information technology suites but also within faculty areas in order to give students greater opportunity to use and develop information technology skills in a subject context; (paragraphs 34, 98, 102, 105, 115, 129, 135, 147, 148, 153, 178, 180);
    - providing sufficient planning time for teachers to produce a coherent approach in the delivery of information technology and to develop a programme to monitor the effectiveness of information technology across the school; (paragraphs 30, 147);
    - ensuring compliance with the National Curriculum for information technology with regard to the 'measurement' element of information technology; (paragraphs 48, 148);
    - ensuring that all staff receive appropriate professional development to make better use of the new information technology; (paragraphs 149, 152).
  2. Improve the school's procedures for assessment by:
    - completing the review of the current assessment policy and ensuring that it is consistently implemented in all subjects; (paragraphs 30, 124);
    - improving the quality of teachers' marking to provide sufficient information about students' strengths and weaknesses so that assessment contributes more effectively to students standards, progress and target setting; (paragraphs 30, 60, 97, 115, 134, 164, 178, 190, 199).
  3. Provide more coherence and progression in personal and social education by:
    - reviewing and extending the curriculum time dedicated to personal and social education; (paragraphs 39, 56);
    - ensuring that the provision for personal and social education has a greater degree of continuity which addresses the key components of health, sex, drugs and covers education as well as other relevant social and moral issues; (paragraphs 43, 56);

- encouraging greater participation by students in discussions on personal and social education issues; (paragraphs 16, 32, 35, 94, 199).

4. Improve the school's development planning by:

- using evidence from the school's self-review process to identify more sharply focused priorities for school and faculty developments; (paragraphs 73, 76);
- ensuring the school's improvement plan is systematically monitored and evaluated by senior managers and governors; (paragraphs 73, 77, 80);
- creating a longer term vision of how the school will work with its local community; (paragraphs 70, 76).

In addition to the key issues above, the following points should be considered for inclusion in the school's future plan for action:

- the application and extension of students' literacy and numeracy skills in a co-ordinated way across the whole school; (paragraphs 16, 17, 46, 94, 96);
- the statutory requirements for collective worship; (paragraphs 48, 54).

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	163
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and students	36

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
3	21	33	37	6	0	0

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

### Information about the school's students

#### Students on the school's roll

	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of students on the school's roll	1108	N/A
Number of full-time students eligible for free school meals	229	N/A

#### Special educational needs

	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of students with statements of special educational needs	39	N/a
Number of students on the school's special educational needs register	204	N/A

#### English as an additional language

	No of students
Number of students with English as an additional language	382

#### Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of students
Students who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	53
Students who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	61

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

	%
School data	6.7
National comparative data	7.9

#### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	1.5
National comparative data	1.1

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

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered students in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	1999	210	N/a	210

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of students at NC Level 5 and above	Boys	124	127	109
	Girls	N/a	N/a	N/a
	Total	124	127	109
Percentage of students at NC Level 5 or above	School	59 (61)	61 (63)	52 (56)
	National	63 (65)	62 (60)	55 (56)
Percentage of students at NC Level 6 or above	School	22 (31)	36 (40)	22 (25)
	National	28 (35)	38 (36)	23 (27)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of students at NC Level 5 and above	Boys	99	141	108
	Girls	N/a	N/a	N/a
	Total	99	141	108
Percentage of students at NC Level 5 or above	School	48 (51)	68 (64)	52 (49)
	National	64 (61)	64 (64)	60 (61)
Percentage of students at NC Level 6 or above	School	20 (21)	39 (42)	19 (28)
	National	31 (31)	37 (37)	28 (31)

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

**Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4**

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year	1999	203	0	203

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of students achieving the standard specified	Boys	93	171	185
	Girls	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Total	93	171	185
Percentage of students achieving the standard specified	School	46 (44)	85 (86)	92 (96)
	National	46.6 (44.6)	90.9 (89.8)	95.8 (95.2)

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

GCSE results	GCSE point score
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Average point score per student	School	36 (34)
	National	38

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

### ***Ethnic background of students***

	No of students
Black – Caribbean heritage	21
Black – African heritage	12
Black – other	2
Indian	247
Pakistani	47
Bangladeshi	9
Chinese	7
White	633
Any other minority ethnic group	33

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

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	10	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	2	0
Pakistani	5	1
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	51	2
Other minority ethnic groups	1	0

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

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

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

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	68.9
Number of students per qualified teacher	15.3:1

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

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

Total number of education support staff	16
Total aggregate hours worked per week	340

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

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	80.3
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#### **Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11**

Key Stage 3	26.5
Key Stage 4	24.7

### ***Financial information***

Financial year	1999
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	£
Total income	2434043
Total expenditure	2438968
Expenditure per student	2304
Balance brought forward from previous year	11260
Balance carried forward to next year	6335

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

## Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out

1108

Number of questionnaires returned

450

## Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	35	54	6	2	3
My child is making good progress in school.	35	51	7	1	6
Behaviour in the school is good.	34	49	8	2	7
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	24	50	15	5	6
The teaching is good.	38	51	4		7
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	32	40	19	3	7
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	47	41	7	1	4
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	61	35	2		2
The school works closely with parents.	27	42	18	4	9
The school is well led and managed.	38	51	2	1	8
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	39	47	5	1	7
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	38	39	7	3	1

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

### **ENGLISH**

88. Standards of attainment in English are in line with national averages. In 1999, A\*-C GCSE results in English and English Literature were in line with national averages. Results in both subjects were above national averages for boys. Unconfirmed results for 2000 indicate the same pattern. GCSE results for drama are above national averages and well above for boys. Results have been maintained at a broadly consistent level since the last inspection. At Key Stage 3, standard assessment tests (SATs) results for 1999 were in line with national averages and results for similar schools. They are above national averages for boys. The standards achieved in recent examination and test results are reflected in the standards of students' work seen during the inspection. Key Stage 2 results for students entering the school are well below national averages.
89. In speaking and listening, by the end of Key Stage 3, the most successful students make contributions, use appropriate vocabulary and listen carefully to the contributions of others. The lowest attaining students are less adept at adapting their contributions in response to the views of others. By the end of Key Stage 4, the highest attaining students structure their talk effectively and are able to use tone and register appropriate to context. In a Year 11 drama lesson where students presented a dramatised incident from World War Two, their contributions in role demonstrated how much they had considered the suitable tone and register of the characters during the planning. In reading, by the end of Key Stage 3, the highest attaining students read for meaning beyond the literal and are able to identify author's intentions and how they achieve responses from their readers. A Year 8 class reading "*Why the Whales Care*" identified the power of subtle difference in syntax. The weakest readers do not identify more than surface meaning. By the end of Key Stage 4, the highest attaining readers make both personal and critical comments justified by apt quotations and are able to select and comment upon crucial themes and issues from a range of texts. In writing, by the end of Key Stage 3, the most successful students write in a range of forms (e.g. newspaper stories, formal and informal letters, diaries and reports) for different purposes. In drama, most students successfully write in role. The weakest students are far less skilled in varying their writing according to purpose and have less control over grammatical features. By the end of Key Stage 4, the highest attaining students are able to adopt a variety of literary devices to produce writing that engages the interest of the reader. A Year 11 class writing narrative were able to move from heavily descriptive passages to a paired-down more immediate style as required. Lower attaining students are much less skilled at making significant changes to their writing during the drafting process. In all the above areas, the proportion of students demonstrating skills at the various levels is broadly in line with national averages.
90. Overall, progress throughout both key stages is good. Students enter the school with attainment well below national averages and have achieved figures in line with national expectations when they leave. The greatest progress is evident when tasks are most challenging and this is seen in Key Stage 4 when the opportunities for sustained writing in response to difficult questions produces work of a high quality. Thus, a Year 11 student writes, "The notion of Macbeth as a 'dead butcher' is ultimately misleading and does not inform us of his true character. His real self was masked by the evil that took over his life". The Year 7 curriculum takes account of the developments in literacy in primary schools and the focus on objectives in the National Literacy



Framework in the Year 7 literacy hour enables students to make good progress from the start of the secondary curriculum. Progress of students with special educational needs and for whom English is an additional language, is good.

91. The overall quality of teaching is good and in the range of strengths demonstrated has improved since the last inspection. It is good, or better in around two-thirds of lessons and in well over half of these is very good or better. There is virtually no unsatisfactory teaching. There are no significant variations between the key stages. The corporate approach to teaching is a major strength of the department. Nearly all lessons start with a clear statement of aims and objectives and this is often demonstrated in a lively manner to engage the interests of the students. In a Year 8 lesson involving group discussion and negotiation, the teacher gave an effective demonstration on how to encourage others to contribute and this was a major factor in the very high standards of group discussion that followed. Most lessons also contain a well-defined plenary session which in addition to allowing teachers to reiterate the main points also give opportunities to share and praise students' work which contributes to the positive ethos which is a feature of English lessons. Within most lessons, there is very successful use of a combination of open and targeted questions so that teachers are both able to evaluate learning taking place and extend students as necessary. In the very best teaching, high expectations of students has a positive impact. A low attaining Year 11 class reaching *Macbeth* was required to select and analyse quotations to a detailed level in planning an essay and they responded to the demand with high motivation and increased attainment. Teachers frequently spoke to many individuals during the course of a lesson but in less successful teaching did not bring common issues that emerged to the attention of the whole class. In a very small number of lessons, teachers' decisions to ask students to read aloud resulted in disjointed and unhelpful sharing of the text.
92. A number of areas were identified in the previous inspection as needing improvement. The teaching of spelling and planning was inconsistent but this has been comprehensively addressed in current schemes and classroom delivery. Likewise the need for target-setting has been considered and extended by the department. There is some inconsistency in target-setting for the least able whereby some targets are too generalised. Good induction arrangements for use of the library have been drawn up but fiction stock in the library is too limited to allow students to benefit fully. Although there are good plans for the development of information technology skills these are severely hindered by limited access to computers.
93. The addressing of social, moral and cultural development is a major strength of the department and this has a significant impact on attainment in a number of areas. Literature essays frequently benefit from the careful consideration of social and moral issues. In addition, extra-curricular drama activities including school productions, theatre visits and links with external organisations make very important contributions to students' cultural development. The department is efficiently and effectively managed with clear ongoing analysis of strengths and weaknesses. Monitoring and evaluation of lessons within the department has been a major factor in developing a consistent approach to teaching. The overall positive ethos fostered by the department is reflected in the very positive response by students in lessons.
94. Development of literacy in other curriculum areas is limited. In speaking and listening, good questioning techniques in mathematics provide opportunities for students to present their own ideas and there are opportunities for paired discussion work in modern foreign languages and design and technology. In other subjects, however, opportunities for oral work are restricted. In most subjects, reading is limited to textbooks and worksheets. In modern foreign languages, Key Stage 4 students are given many opportunities to develop dictionary skills and scan texts for key words. In mathematics good use is made of lists of specialist words. Some curriculum areas

provide a range of effective opportunities for developing writing. There is good quality report writing in mathematics in Year 10 whilst in history students are required to write newspaper stories and booklets. Within geography, there is widespread use of writing frames and students in Key Stage 4 produce successful extended writing. In design and technology, students' design folios contain both descriptive and analytic writing with relevant technical vocabulary. Overall, however, there are too few opportunities for varied and sustained writing. There is not yet a corporate approach to literacy across the curriculum.

## MATHEMATICS

95. Since the previous inspection standards have been maintained. However, the numbers of students achieving A\* and A grades and those achieving A\*-G grades have improved significantly. The improvement of A\*-G grades is a direct result of a faculty strategy to change the structure of the lower sets at Key Stage 4 to mixed ability sets and raise students' expectations. Standards of attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 remain in line with national figures for all students and those for boys. By the end of Key Stage 4, GCSE results are higher than national figures and those for similar schools. They are also higher than for boys nationally. Students make good progress. When they enter the school in Year 7 their attainment in mathematics is in line with national figures but by the time they leave the school Year 11 attainment is above these national averages
96. Overall, standards of work in lessons observed during the inspection and discussions with students reflect recent test and examination results. Standards of work in Key Stage 3 lessons are generally in line with those expected for students' age and ability. During Key Stage 4 standards of work improve particularly for the most able. These students are continually challenged to become young mathematicians whose knowledge and understanding of a range of algebraic skills and concepts, in particular, are good. Students who experience difficulties with key concepts and those who are on the register of special educational needs are given high levels of support to improve their confidence and to help them attain more highly. Middle ability students achieve appropriate standards and have been targeted by the faculty to ensure their attainment is as high as possible. Students' written work is methodical, well presented and generally well organised. Students make good use of mathematical terminology. The progress made by students, over a period of time can be clearly seen from their written work. All students are well prepared for the rigours of public examinations. They work in a challenging culture where the emphasis is to achieve as well as possible in an atmosphere of encouragement, praise and firm coaxing. Students generally respond well to their teachers and the majority of students of all ages and abilities remain on task and show interest in their work. Standards of numeracy remain good as at the time of the previous inspection. The department recognise the improvements in the standards of attainment of students on entry to Year 7 since the implementation of the National Numeracy Strategy in primary schools and have adjusted their schemes of work accordingly. However, these skills could be further enhanced by mental skills becoming a feature of all lessons. There are some limited examples of numeracy being used in other subjects such as in history where very large numbers were understood in Year 7 when the age of the earth (4.5 billion years) was discussed. Similarly Year 10 and 11 students were confident with the use of formulas needed for spreadsheets. In science some students had difficulty with statistics in Key Stage 3, however, these skills were greatly improved by Key Stage 4. The department is currently working with other subjects to improve the role of mathematics in servicing other subjects.
97. Since the previous inspection in 1997, the faculty has improved its levels of good teaching. At Key Stage 3 the majority of teaching seen was good or very good and at Key Stage 4 the

majority of teaching was very good. At the start of the majority of lessons objectives are shared with students although in some lessons the plenary is rushed and does not allow the teacher and student to check understanding. In the low ability sets at Key Stage 3 sufficient time is given to the plenary and understanding is demonstrated by good use of games and activities that involve many students. Successful lessons often used an investigative approach which involved skilful questioning and good use of students, prior knowledge. For example, in a Year 10 algebra class students were asked “What other information is needed to solve  $x+y=12$ ?” which led them through discussion and trial and error to the solution of simultaneous equations. Pace in lessons is created by good classroom management and by setting appropriate time targets. Tasks are clearly defined and a strong emphasis is placed on the correct mathematical terminology and appropriate language. Literacy skills are reinforced by the use of word lists and students explaining their thinking both orally and in written form when recording investigations. Direct teaching is good when it is interactive with students. For example, in a Year 8 lesson students were used to explain the rules for multiplying decimals using the board. In addition teachers build well on students’ previous knowledge, for example, in a Year 10 set where algebraic factorisation was built on an oral revision of factors and multiples. Across both key stages teaching is well matched to the needs of students resulting in high standards of learning and progress. Most teachers have high expectations and students have no doubts about the classroom code. For example, in a Year 7 class students were clearly told that “their best” was expected at all times and that they should always “ask for help”. In lessons boys did so and many took up the numerous faculty offers of help outside lessons. In one high ability Year 10 lesson students were encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning, when required to do as many homework questions as required to ensure confidence in the topic of factorisation. In the few instances where teaching is less successful this is often the result of teachers talking for too long, not in an interactive way, and when oral work involves too few students. As a result some students lose interest and concentration. The marking of student’s work is completed regularly but in many cases comments are often restricted and do not give students a clear indication of how they should improve. Not all members of the faculty give sufficient emphasis on the improvement of mental strategies as recommended in the National Numeracy Strategy three part lesson.

98. At the time of the previous inspection it was noted that “*guidance on teaching and learning was not a priority*” and that monitoring was not taking place. Currently improvement of teaching and learning is a priority. A considerable amount of monitoring has taken place although the sharing of good practice is not fully developed and the outcomes of the monitoring are not used consistently in planning. It was noted in 1997 that a small minority of boys were not well behaved. During lesson observation in this inspection, on the rare occasions when boys were poorly behaved staff followed the school behaviour procedures which worked very well with a minimum of disruption to the class. Assessment of students’ work at the end of units of work and targets are used satisfactorily within the department. Although there are plans to improve formative assessment and student self-assessment, both these areas need further development. Information technology to support mathematics remains an area of weakness largely as a result of poor access to the network. Logo and spreadsheets are taught through the information technology curriculum and plans to deliver areas such as statistics through information technology are advanced.
99. The new head of department has a commitment to the school, students and mathematics and there is a good team spirit amongst staff. Progress has been made since the last inspection and the department recognise what needs to be done to improve standards in the future.

## SCIENCE

100. The attainment in science of students entering the school at the age of eleven is broadly in line with national figures. At the end of Key Stage 3 in 1999 students' attainment was close to the national average for all schools and also for similar schools with 52% achieving Level 5 or above and 27% achieving Level 6 or above. This compares with national figures of 55% and 23%. The figures for 2000, although still unconfirmed, show that 63% of boys achieved Level 5 or above compared to the national average of 61%. The improvement is broadly in line with that reflected in the results nationally. There are no significant differences in performance between students from differing ethnic backgrounds. At Key Stage 4 students are entered for double award science, single award science and some are entered for the "Science Plus" Certificate of Achievement, an approved non-GCSE award. In 1999 57% of the cohort were entered for double award science. Nationally over 82% of boys are entered for either double award or the three separate sciences and less than 8% for single award science. 75% of the students entered for double award science gained A\*-C compared to 47% nationally. However, less than 4% of students entered for single award science gained A\*-C compared to 13% nationally. Taking the schools two science results together, 43% of the cohort gained A\*-C in science. The science department entry policy has changed and more students are entered for a GCSE science examination with increasing numbers being entered for double award science. In 2000 72% of students were entered for double award and less than 10% for single award. The number not entered for any GCSE science exam is still high at 18%. Taking the school's two science results together, 41% of the cohort gained A\*-C in science in 2000. These are currently unconfirmed figures.
101. At the start of Key Stage 3 the students' practical skills are weak. This weakness is due in part to the number of lessons taught in inadequate accommodation in addition to the high proportion of temporary science teaching staff. Both of these factors should be short-term. The school's major building programme includes rationalisation of the laboratory accommodation and the provision of five new laboratories. The department has focused on improving practical skills in recent months. They have introduced new teaching materials in Year 7 to ensure all students are capable of accurately using simple equipment to record quantitative observations such as using a top-pan balance, measuring cylinder and thermometer. Top set Year 8 students are able to competently set up electrical circuits incorporating a digital multimeter and then use it to correctly take readings of current at various places in a parallel circuit. They are able to repeat the experiment for a range of voltages and tabulate their results clearly. They are able to use their results to correctly explain the flow of current around the circuit. At both key stages students have a safe and sensible approach to practical work and work together co-operatively sharing the tasks equitably.
102. At Key Stage 3 students' graphicacy skills are weak and they are given limited opportunities to develop the skills of graph plotting and interpreting and analysing data. However, at Key Stage 4 students show good progress in their investigative skills, which is an improvement since the previous inspection. Some of the work with lower sets is well above the national expectations for their abilities. At Key Stage 4 the students' planning is thorough and they make careful observations, which they present in graphs and tables. There is little evidence of the use of information technology for data logging or its use to present reports, graphs or charts.
103. Throughout both key stages and across the ability range, many students show pride in the presentation of their written work. The marking of students' work is varied. There is no consistency in approach between teachers. Some books show positive comments as well as useful diagnostic advice, whilst in others the marking is perfunctory. Students are articulate when answering questions and feel confident to initiate questions themselves and also raise

relevant points. They will ask for clarification when they are unclear. Most students show sustained concentration and application throughout the lessons. Most students have a good attitude in their science lessons and in most lessons the behaviour is good. Students continue to make sound progress at both key stages and across the ability range. Their curriculum is enriched by various annual science trips for each year group. However, there is no regular science club operating.

104. Teaching at Key Stage 3 is sound or better in nearly all lessons with 75% of lessons seen being good or very good. At Key Stage 4 the majority of the lessons observed were sound and 33% were good or very good. However, at times the range and variety of teaching and learning approaches used is limited and some of the lessons observed, particularly for the least able, were didactic with extensive teacher-led introductions and over-emphasis on students working from text books to produce their own notes. This failed to hold the interest of these students who subsequently made limited progress.
105. There is little evidence of the use of information technology in science at present and this continues to limit opportunities for developing students learning. In particular they are unable to develop search skills to obtain information from the Internet or CD-ROMs. They do not have regular opportunities to collect data with data loggers and sensors or interpret data using spreadsheets and graphing tools. They cannot easily access modelling software or produce reports or give presentations using information technology.
106. Many teachers demonstrate good management and organisation of the classroom. The students' movement around the laboratory is good and the teachers all emphasise the need for safe working and address the relevant safety issues. Despite many behaviour modification techniques being used effectively, in a minority of cases students are very slow to settle down and are allowed to continue to talk and remain inattentive although the teacher has begun to talk. A small number of lessons have insufficient pace and challenge and this contributes to some students' poor response.
107. In many lessons the learning objectives are clearly identified and shared with the students and there is an effective summary or review that is designed to enable teachers to identify the students' progress. This good practice could be followed by all science staff. In a minority of lessons the timing is mismanaged and the ending of the lesson is rushed. There are, however, examples of effective lesson planning with a good range of student activities and well produced, thoughtful worksheets as well as tasks targeted at individual students with specific learning difficulties. At times teachers often fail to use opportunities for student discussion and debate. In some lessons students' learning is helped by skilled teaching with effective questioning promoting their thinking; whilst other lessons require only simple recall of facts.
108. With over a quarter of the science teaching being undertaken by either supply staff or non-specialist teachers there is some imbalance in teachers' expertise in different areas of science at the moment, although overall staff are well qualified and show good subject knowledge. All students now have their own text-books and this should have a positive impact on learning in the future. The introduction of homework questions books in Key Stage 4 and in Years 7 and 8 should further enhance their learning opportunities. There have been recent equipment purchases but much of the existing equipment is elderly. Science equipment is inadequate but a replacement programme of key items has begun to ensure that equipment is sufficient for class sets and capitation for science has improved. The hardworking technicians endeavour to ensure equipment is transferred efficiently between the three separate locations where science is at present taught.

109. The department has begun to contribute to the school's literacy initiative and all laboratories have word walls with key words relevant to specific teaching topics. Student glossaries of scientific terms are also being introduced.
110. The department is effectively managed by the new head of science who has a clear vision of the direction in which he hopes to move the science faculty over the next couple of years as the new suite of laboratories become available. There is a comprehensive science faculty handbook which includes sections on health and safety, schemes of work and discipline policy and procedures. There is a clear policy on how science may be used to promote students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development with suggested worksheets for including in topics at both key stages. To further encourage students a reward scheme has recently been introduced into Key Stage 3.
111. The department has recently introduced a comprehensive student monitoring system based on 'Week 10' tests, students' consortium for assessment and testing in schools (CAT) scores and Key Stage 2 standard assessment test (SATs) results and their science assessments. This is a positive development designed to identify strengths and weaknesses of individual students. It has the potential to provide feedback to teachers so that they can improve the effectiveness of their teaching and also inform parents of their son's progress in science.
112. As part of the schools strategy for improving performance the department has chosen to focus on beginnings and endings of lessons through a series of observations of each other's teaching and the sharing of good practice.

## **ART**

113. By the end of Key Stage 3, standards in art and design are above national expectations in the statutory teacher assessments at the end of Year 9. At the end of Key Stage 4 in 1999, standards were well above the national average for art and design with 66% of students entered for GCSE gaining A\*-C grades passes against national average of 50% for similar schools. Standards fell in 2000 to below average with 42% of students gaining A\*-C grade passes, due largely to unfinished final examination work. Standards of work in lessons followed a similar pattern.
114. Students respond very well to the range of curriculum opportunities offered, and in Key Stage 3 produce lively and stimulating work in most two and three-dimensional media, including graphics, painting, various styles of drawing, card, ceramics and textiles. The use of sketchbooks by students is very effective with most of the topics undertaken in them based upon the work and styles of artists such as Magritte, Lichtenstein, Warhol and Christo. GCSE examination portfolios contain a good range of work including independent research studies taken from a range of sources including observational drawing and photographic images. Whilst the quality of most students' work is very good its scale is often limited by the size of their sketchbook paper and students should be given more opportunities to undertake large scale expressive work.
115. Standards have improved since the last inspection and are now well above average at both key stages, but with some areas requiring further focus and improvement. Monitoring of the work of the department is undertaken but there is a need to further develop assessment procedures to provide better feedback to students on the progress they are making, and to set targets for improvement. Students are set into ability groups throughout both Key Stage 3 and 4 which provides appropriate pace and challenge for most students. However, there is less challenge in

some average ability sets in Key Stage 3 resulting in less work being produced. The critical aspects of the subject are now taught effectively and students study the work of a range of 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century artists and a wide range of cultural contexts. Evaluation skills are now combined effectively in the study of the work of professional artists and through students reviewing their own work. There are some opportunities for students to engage in extended writing based on research about their work but this area of work is not well developed. Working in the outside world has been very effectively embraced in teaching and learning. For example, Year 9 students recently completed a set of sporting banners to celebrate the schools achievement at being awarded Sports College status; these were displayed in a public shopping mall. Access to information technology facilities remains very poor which is restricting the quality of the preparatory research and extended writing undertaken by students in both key stages.

116. Teaching is very good overall and is a strength of the department. There are a number of very good aspects, which when combined produce an effective stimulus for learning for students of all ages and abilities. Lessons are very well planned and taught using clear learning objectives and focused tasks. The pace of teaching is very good and the management of students and learning resources is excellent. The art and design schemes of work meet the needs of students of all ages, abilities and ethnic backgrounds. Most higher attainers are well extended by the work they are given, but further extension is possible for some. Students on the register of special educational needs are well supported and reach their full potential. Lower attainers are strongly encouraged by continuous praise in support of their achievements. This has a considerable influence upon their motivation, confidence and progress. Learning is well managed and the expected outcomes are made clear to students and task sheets are displayed for students to refer to throughout the lesson. There is good one-to-one support given to all students to ensure they are achieving and are being challenged by the theme of the lesson. As a result, creative thinking skills are well developed and students achieve original work from the topics and themes they are set. Students enjoy their work, grow in confidence, trust in their peers and teachers and therefore learn very effectively.
117. The faculty is led and managed very effectively by a very experienced senior member of staff. However, more monitoring of teaching and the sampling of students' work is needed within the department to ensure that progress and standards are consistent in all years and across all abilities. The analysis of the results achieved by the expressive arts faculty is very thorough and provides accurate data to inform planning of work. The continued use of this information linked with the further development of assessment and marking procedures should improve achievement and standards further. The provision and management of learning resources and visual source material are excellent and a tribute to the work of the teaching staff and their technician. The current problems with the inadequate art and design accommodation should be resolved when the faculty occupies a new suite of rooms in 2001.

## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

118. Overall standards in design and technology are lower than those expected nationally. However, there has been significant improvement in the last few years. By the end of Key Stage 3, standards measured by teachers' assessment are below those reported nationally with 39% of boys being awarded Level 5 or higher against 56% nationally (1999). Although this is lower than reported at the last inspection the majority of students start Year 7 with very low level of knowledge and skills. Students' work seen during the inspection suggests the overall standard of work is similar to that found in other schools. The best work at Key Stage 3 was seen in graphics and textiles lessons.

119. At Key Stage 4 the number of students achieving grades A\*-C is significantly below standards nationally compared with all students and with boys. 1999 figures were 29% compared with 41.2% for boys nationally. Set against this a slightly higher proportion of boys achieve A\*-G grades, 96.6% against 95.5% nationally. Low A\*-C results were reported in the last inspection but there have been significant improvements in standards during the last three years from 24% in 1998 to 38% in 2000.
120. Students in all years are good at devising alternative designs to solve real problems and communicating these through a range of graphic techniques. Formal drawing techniques are taught well and students produce high quality drawings and presentation graphics. Freehand sketching is used effectively but in some Key Stage 3 projects students' designs are not carried through to a final product. This deprives them of the opportunity to properly evaluate their own designs.
121. Students are able to make well-finished products in a range of materials but there is a limited range of rendering techniques available to students. High quality textiles work was seen including ties, toolbelts and soft toys.
122. Overall, and in both key stages the quality of teaching is good and has contributed to an improvement of standards within the subject although they are still below national standards. All lessons observed were satisfactory or better with 40% being judged good and 30% very good. Quality of teaching is a strength of the subject and a significant improvement since the last inspection. Teachers' subject knowledge and skills are very good and they manage the students well. This enables all students including those for whom English is not their first language to produce quality designs and well made products. Good teaching has resulted in very good work seen in the form of designing and making soft toys in textiles. Products in resistant materials are also good although design folders for this material area are of a lower standard than other materials. Effective use of classroom support staff for students with special educational needs ensured they had access to the same work as other students. Teachers share objectives with students and monitor whether these are being achieved during the lesson. The pace of most lessons is good, an improvement since the last inspection. In a few lessons the pace slackened where lengthy periods of practical work took place and shorter interim targets were not used to maintain the momentum of these lessons. Overall, teachers challenge students appropriately. The use of graphic techniques to illustrate designing in the different materials has improved since the previous inspection. However, opportunities for students to engage in significant design work using resistant materials are restricted.
123. Research techniques often involve students looking through catalogues and surveying the views of potential users. However, there were few strategies to give students opportunities to take more responsibility for their learning. There were missed opportunities for students to investigate design classics and evaluate the work of their peers. The limited range and number of books in the school library is also a factor in restricting students' opportunities to explore design in a wider context.
124. Students respond well to lessons working conscientiously to achieve the desired outcome. Homework is used effectively to support the work in class, for example, "research ten items made of aluminium found at home", "make pictorial sketches of several storage systems". However, the marking of students' work is not consistent and in some cases significant amounts of work were not marked. Best practice was seen in textiles and GCSE work where, in addition to grades, teachers add comments that clearly indicate how students can improve their work.



125. Excellent graphics and textiles displays of work were seen particularly in corridors. These make a significant contribution to creating a stimulating design environment. Display is used to celebrate students' success as in the case of free gift ties for a restaurant and point of sale displays in graphics. Display was seen being used to directly support students' design work. Display was not used in the resistant material rooms.
126. Accommodation provides an adequate learning environment in most rooms, an improvement in textiles since the previous inspection. However, the flagstone floors create significant noise levels and this has a detrimental impact on the learning environment particularly in graphics. The storage of machinery in workshops is inappropriate and presents safety issues.
127. The subject is well managed with effective formal and informal strategies for sharing information. This and the quality of teaching have been the main reasons for the recent rise in standards. There have been opportunities for staff to monitor the teaching of colleagues but currently the sharing of good practice has been limited. Technical support is very effective in ensuring efficient use of resources and support for teaching. This is noticeable in allowing teachers to concentrate on their teaching.
128. All practical activities seen were carried out with safety a high priority. However, risk assessments are not recorded and this should be done urgently to help ensure current levels of safe working are maintained and to comply with safety legislation.
129. The faculty has already identified systems and control and the use of information technology as areas for development. Computer aided design and manufacture should be a priority within this to support students work in designing and making. Both of these have significant resource and training implications but are a requirement in the new programmes.
130. Standards in design and technology have risen steadily over a number of years. Strong management and good teaching have played a key role in this and means the faculty is well placed to continue this improvement.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

131. Standards of attainment overall in geography are good at Key Stage 4 and satisfactory at Key Stage 3. In the 1999 GCSE examination, 63.1% of candidates gained an A\*-C grade compared with 49.9% nationally for boys and 53.1% for all candidates. In 2000, 53.8% of candidates achieved an A\*-C grade, which although lower than the 1999 result compares favourably with national outcomes. In addition this figure is higher than the target of 52% set by the department. At Key Stage 3 results of National Curriculum assessments indicate performance broadly in line with national averages. In 1999, 50% of students were assessed as achieving Level 5 or better. In 2000 52.5% of the cohort achieved Level 5 or better, this is slightly lower than the national averages for boys (56%) and all candidates, (61%) based on 1999 data.
132. In lessons seen at Key Stage 3 achievement was in line with or better than national expectations in top and middle ability sets. In lower sets, achievement in lessons is well below national expectations, though in most lessons progress made was appropriate and achievement based on ability was at least satisfactory. At Key Stage 4 achievement in all lessons was good, particularly when students have some opportunity to demonstrate their own ideas and evaluate processes, apply techniques and analyse data.

133. Overall teaching at Key Stage 3 is satisfactory and often good. Lessons are planned well and have clear learning objectives that are shared with the class and revisited during and at the end of lessons. Teachers are secure in their subject knowledge and have planned courses that while structured, are supportive of the learner and clearly achieve good geographical knowledge and understanding. Teaching is less effective in Year 7 because not enough attention is given to the students' prior learning at Key Stage 2. Teaching is best when teachers provide opportunities for students to work independently while offering guidance through discussion or through writing frames. At Key Stage 4 all teaching seen was satisfactory or better. Lessons are well planned, they have a clear focus and the resources offer careful guidance to help students make progress.
134. Although marking of GCSE coursework is good, marking overall is a weakness at both key stages often lacking any clear focus. Marking is neither accurate nor supportive of the learner. It fails to offer direction for improvement and needs to be regularly monitored by the department. Assessment procedures at Key Stage 3 are accurate and detailed and the information is shared with students. However, the use of subject specific targets for students does need further development in order to inform them of what they need to do to improve.
135. The written work of students in lower sets in both key stages continues to be weak. Writing frames help provide a context for improving these skills. The use of key words and technical vocabulary provide guidance for poor writers. Writing for a range of audiences is developing well within some units of work at both key stages. The use of information technology is improving and is well planned but access to information technology is a problem. This currently restricts further progress in this area.
136. The subject has planned units of work for delivery to all year groups, they are appropriate and challenging. Access to facilities, however, is poor. Currently it is difficult for the subject to fully meet the requirements of Curriculum 2000. Current stock in the library is poor quality and insufficient to meet the demands of a resource based subject like geography.
137. At both key stages students learn well and are positive about geography. Sometimes students are expected to be passive for long periods of time without engaging in activities that stimulate and challenge. More opportunity should be given to students to work independently and at their own pace, especially the more able. The development of fieldwork has however encouraged independent and investigative work. At the end of both key stages students have a knowledge and understanding of geographical processes, they can make connections and interpret data. The department is well led. The geography area is well presented, display is of a high standard and a corporate pride exists in the level of display which is used effectively in teaching. A broader range of resources would benefit the subject as it tries to develop a wider range of teaching strategies.

## **HISTORY**

138. Attainment at both key stages is in line with those found nationally. GCSE results are comparable to national averages as they were at the time of the previous inspection. In the provisional results for 2000, there was a slight increase in A\* and A grades. Achievement of students taking the Certificate of Educational Achievement examination is satisfactory. Results of standard assessments at the end of Key Stage 3 in 1999 matched national figures although they were above boys nationally. In 2000 students achieved well, higher than the faculty's target and in line with boys nationally.
139. On entry students' historical knowledge and understanding is below that found nationally.

Literacy skills are poor. However, students make good progress during Key Stage 3 to match national levels by the age of 14. Students in Year 7 are aware of the work of archaeologists and understand the meaning of pre-history. The high achievers have a good understanding of mathematical number, which helps them to comprehend the difficult concept of time. Most students are able to use decade, century, generation and millennium correctly. Year 8 students know about the land, people and religions of India and remember that Babur was a strong leader, intelligent and truthful. Year 9 students are able to make appropriate use of the dates from 1730 to 1790 through their study of the inventors in the textile industry. Year 10 students can identify multiple causes of the First World War and can describe the mood of Europe in 1919. These students wrote very good detailed essays on one of three broad themes related to the US-UK alliance - 'Honour the Past Enlighten the Future,' - these illustrated clearly the impact of the alliance and wartime experiences on families, friends and communities. Year 11 students are able to explain the impact of hyperinflation in Germany from 1918-1923 and identify its significance on German politics.

140. The quality of teaching and learning is good at Key Stage 3 and very good at Key Stage 4. This is an improvement since the previous report. Good lessons set very clear objectives, provides historical content which is accurate and reflects up to date knowledge and understanding of the periods, events and personalities being studied. All teachers have a secure knowledge and understanding of the subject and use good historical terminology, sharing key words to be used in the written work. Teaching is often intellectually demanding, for example, in a Year 8 lesson on the Mughol Empire, students had to explore, analyse and explain the reason for the Emperor Babur's success in battle. They did this 'in role' and demonstrated good analytical and oral skills. Teachers have high expectations and have developed successfully strategies to deepen students' understanding of key historical events. In a Year 10 lesson on the peace settlement students were able to describe the key areas of disagreement and compromise over Woodrow Wilson's fourteen points. Good questioning techniques are used to check and reinforce understanding as well as to build upon prior knowledge. There is also effective use of humour and praise to encourage students. Homework is used effectively to extend and reinforce learning in all lessons. Students with special educational needs are taught well and very good relationships exist in most lessons. Teachers support students' learning with tasks that match their capabilities although on occasions the work is too general or consists of relatively low-level tasks and at times insufficient notice is taken of work completed in Key Stage 2, e.g. the work on chronology. Overall, with some notable exceptions there is little evidence of debating, sustained oral discussion and group work.
141. All the teachers in the department are competent and confident with the teaching of information technology. There are timetabled slots within the information technology suites and the department has begun to draw up plans to develop information technology in history. However there is as yet no evidence of monitoring, assessing and recording students' progress in information technology.
142. The history department is well led and has made good progress since the previous inspection having addressed the key issues raised in that report. There are higher expectations of students and work is more effectively matching the individual needs of students. A few new resources have been purchased but with the help of the learning advice department more suitable materials have been produced within the school targeting the levels for the lower achievers. As a result students with special educational needs as well as those for whom English is an additional language, make good progress. The department has also produced some good pamphlets and booklets covering the whole ability range, for example, 'The English Civil War 1642-49', 'United Nations', 'The Cold War,' 'Urbanisation', and 'The Moguls in India'. These are having a

positive impact on standards.

143. The curriculum experiences for students have been enhanced through fieldwork and site visits and these have helped to give students more opportunity for independent investigation and enquiry. Homework is set regularly and consistently, its quality and effectiveness is now appropriate. Assessment practices are well developed at Key Stage 4, but there is still limited use made of assessment to set targets for students' progress at Key Stage 3. The department has been very successful since the previous inspection in establishing mutually beneficial links with Leicester University and the Initial Teacher Training programme.

## **INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY**

144. Teachers' assessment at the end of Key Stage 3 indicates 55% of students achieve Level 5 or above. This is in line with the national average for boys but slightly below the average for boys and girls overall. All students have a timetabled information technology lesson throughout this key stage
145. All students follow an examination course at Key Stage 4, either full or short GCSE course. 1999 GCSE results are in line with national averages for the subject and are above the school average for all subjects. The unconfirmed results for 2000 indicate that this progress has been maintained. Teachers involved in teaching these groups have good knowledge of the subject and examination requirements, they also give a considerable amount of their own time at lunchtime to work with students.
146. Students are able to log onto their user areas, load and use generic applications. Progress is made by all students especially in Key Stage 4 where more sophisticated use is made of software. There is no difference in achievement of students from different ethnic backgrounds and targets set for students in Key Stage 3 are appropriate and achievable. Students with special educational needs are well integrated into teaching groups and differentiated work is provided for some students. Students enjoy using computers and many concentrate for long periods during practical sessions. There is little evidence of assessment this early in the school year but samples of work show consistent and effective marking especially at Key Stage 4. There is a detailed assessment scheme, currently mapped to the old National Curriculum statements, which needs to be updated.
147. The school has made some progress since the last inspection, there has been an improvement in the quality and range of equipment available, and this should be further developed when the planned building developments are complete. The school has purchased replacement computers for the two computer rooms with a small number of computers in other areas of the school. However, the student computer ratio is still high, 15:1 compared with the national average of 8:1. This creates problems of access to computers and limits further progress. The delayed building plans currently underway have hindered some curriculum planning but there is a need to urgently address this in order to meet the requirements of Curriculum 2000.
148. Opportunities to use computers for control are limited to Logo in Years 7 to 8 and there is no evidence of computers being used to measure or monitor events in either Key Stage 3 or 4. Students are therefore not receiving their full entitlement to the national programme of study for information technology. This non-compliance issue should be addressed once the recently purchased data loggers and science department computers are in use.

149. Accommodation has improved. The two computer rooms are well equipped with a computer for each student and efficient video projectors in each room. This helps with classroom management and the standards achieved by students. However, these rooms are timetabled for 75% of lesson time, which leaves little time for other subjects to make use of computers in their teaching. The use of information technology across the curriculum is still under developed. Departments have plans to develop information technology within other subjects and there is timetabled time available, but this is often too little to develop an activity across the whole year and needs to be well planned in advance. There is little opportunity for spontaneous use of information technology or using information technology to enhance lesson delivery in most classrooms.
150. The quality of teaching at Key Stage 3 is variable but satisfactory overall. There are a large number of non-specialists involved in teaching the information technology course in Key Stage 3 causing inconsistency in sharing of lesson objectives, review of work, subject knowledge and skills of generic applications. To support this number of staff, there is a considerable training requirement. At times work is too pedestrian, unchallenging and involves a lot of copying work from sheets. Teaching at Key Stage 4 is at least satisfactory and often good, subject specialists are well used and give their time to teach extra lessons at lunchtime.
151. Relationships in most lessons are good and there was some appropriate use of targeted questions and differentiated worksheets. It is difficult currently to share this good practice with other information technology teachers due to lack of time. The standard of behaviour is high in most lessons. The information technology co-ordinator has worked hard to provide lesson activities, support materials and training for staff, however, the timetable is such that there is little opportunity for him to monitor teaching. Assessment of work is closely monitored by the information technology co-ordinator, he moderates results and intervenes and supports non-specialists to carry out information technology assessment. At times lessons are teacher led with few opportunities for students to develop their own work. There is, however, an expectation of high standards, especially at Key Stage 4 and the style is effective for many students.
152. The information technology department is well managed, however, there is only one information technology expert in the school leading to a lack of direction for information technology across the curriculum. There is a clear scheme of work with anticipated levels of achievement provided by the information technology co-ordinator, supported by a significant level of in-service training and support for the large number of staff involved in the delivery of information technology. The school has not yet selected New Opportunities Fund (NOF) providers for information technology training for teachers and few staff appear to be aware of this entitlement to training. National Grid for Learning (NGfL) money has been combined with capital money to enhance spending.
153. Extra curricular use of information technology is limited as computer rooms are used at lunchtimes for extra lessons for GCSE groups in Key Stage 4. Rooms currently lack display but they are in a transient stage and it is still early in the term. There is a detailed and clear information technology handbook with some sections shared on the network. A number of departments including modern foreign languages, English and history use information technology for display and preparation of worksheets. There are also examples of students using information technology at home to complete course and project work. The school has yet to map students' experiences in information technology and share this information with other subject areas so that they can plan appropriate information technology experiences within their teaching.

## **MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES**

154. Standards in modern foreign languages are below average at both key stages but they are improving. At Key Stage 4 in the 1999 GCSE examinations, 67% of a relatively small entry obtained GCSE grades A\*-C. However, students achieved lower grades in French than in their other subjects at this level. Similarly in German, although the number of candidates achieving grades at GCSE was in percentage terms higher than national average, the numbers actually entered were small.
155. At Key Stage 3, in 1999, standards were below national figures. They did, however, show an improvement over previous years and results for 2000 also show steady improvement but, as yet, these are unconfirmed results. Work within lessons observed and evidence from other observations and students' prior attainment indicate that standards currently are more in line with standards nationally than past results suggest.
156. Since the last inspection results have improved slightly for students achieving grades A\*-C and steadily for students achieving grades A\*-G. Evidence from lesson observation, scrutiny of students' work and interim results for the modular GCSE course suggest that steady improvement is being maintained with a likely significant improvement in the percentage of students achieving grades A\*-C. The majority of students in Year 11 are now entered for a course leading to national accreditation. The faculty target is that 81% of students will achieve such an accreditation.
157. Lesson observation and the scrutiny of students' work show that in all years students are now making satisfactory progress. Progress by students in Year 11 top sets is good. Students are generally enthusiastic and well behaved.
158. Teaching is satisfactory overall. Teaching at Key Stage 3 is satisfactory overall and sometimes good. The same is true at Key Stage 4. During the inspection, no unsatisfactory lessons were seen and this is an improvement since the last inspection.
159. Teachers' management of students is good. Teachers invariably insist on high standards of behaviour and deal with rare incidents of poor behaviour calmly but insistently. Teachers have imaginative ways of presenting new material and revising vocabulary. Good use is made of the overhead projector and visual material is striking. The use of games to reinforce the learning of new vocabulary is often ingenious. Homework is set and marked regularly, is usually appropriate to the needs of the student and invariably builds on what has been learnt in the lesson. The development of reading skills is a strength of the faculty. Students are taught how to use dictionaries at an early stage. In Year 11 students have developed good strategies for dealing with difficult written texts. They have learnt to scan for gist understanding and to look for key words in difficult sentences. Most students used dictionaries in an active way by the time they had reached Year 9. They took the initiative in looking up unfamiliar words rather than relying on the teacher to tell them.
160. There is a lot of emphasis on didactic teaching in the faculty. At times this leads to a lack of variety in the lesson and has a detrimental effect on students' enthusiasm and motivation. There are, however, examples of good practice in the faculty, which should be shared. Several examples were seen where a lively introduction to the lesson by the teacher was followed by oral exercises in the form of games where students had to practise the new material. In these lessons students made significant progress.
161. The times there is a lack of differentiation at Key Stage 3 which is inhibiting the progress of middle and lower ability students. There is a tendency to follow the course book, covering all the

work in the order that it is set out. This is not always appropriate for middle and lower ability students. In one lesson, for example, the teacher of a Year 9 bottom set was having great success revising school subjects. Instead of building on this she followed the course book and introduced a new topic halfway through the lesson. Students were unable to cope with this and lost concentration.

162. Most teachers do not use the target language as the means of communication in the lesson. Consequently students do not see it as significant and do not use it themselves. There is good practice within the faculty and this needs to be shared. Only when all members of the faculty can agree and apply strategies for using the target language in the classroom will standards of oral work improve.
163. Extra-curricular opportunities are good. All students have the opportunity to visit France or Germany. The visit of the Whisper and Shout Drama Company is a positive way of improving student motivation.
164. There have been improvements in the use of summative assessment in the last two years. Students are now regularly assessed at the end of each unit of work and careful records are kept. This allows teachers to have a clear view of students' achievements in relation to National Curriculum levels and permits them to see where improvement is needed. This, in its turn, has contributed to improved standards, particularly at Key Stage 3. This year a new system designed to improve motivation is being introduced which allows students, in consultation with the teacher, to assess their own progress in relation to National Curriculum levels. However, in terms of on-going formative assessment there is less evidence of progress, particularly in marking of students' work where there is insufficient use of diagnostic comments which can help students improve. Most lessons began with an overview of the sessions but did not state clearly what they expect students to achieve nor did teachers review achievement at the end of the lesson. Only when this becomes a routine part of teaching will student self-assessment become really successful and only then will genuine formative assessment be achievable.
165. Since the last inspection there has been a significant improvement in the use of homework to support learning in lessons. The achievement of middle and lower ability students has improved mainly due to improved systems of assessment. Further improvement will depend on the extent to which work is differentiated.
166. The early breakfast sessions, in which higher ability students are taught the second foreign language need reviewing. Frequently they are not effective and students are making only limited progress. This is in part due to the perception among many students that the session is an extra lesson, in part due to the frequent interruptions of other students entering the room to give in work and lateness of many students in arriving to the lesson.
167. The linking of modern languages with design and technology for examination entry purposes means that many able linguists are restricted from following a full two year course of study and this prevents them achieving good GCSE grades. Both these factors may contribute to the perception, already present in the minds of many boys, that a modern foreign language is not as important as other subjects and there is a danger that this will affect their progress, particularly at Key Stage 3.
168. The head of faculty is providing effective leadership. Teachers are mutually supportive and work well as a team. Communication within the faculty is good. Faculty meetings take place regularly and are effective. Documentation is clear and helpful.



169. Although lesson observation is now part of the monitoring process and is designed to help teaching there are no coherent criteria for judging and evaluating the teaching and the impact of such observation is therefore limited.
170. Staffing in the department is good. All are well-qualified to teach their subject. The appointment of a French assistant is a significant step in promoting the use of the target language.
171. Resources have greatly improved since the last inspection and are now good.

## MUSIC

172. Results of recent Key Stage 3 statutory assessments are close to national averages. Work seen during the inspection was slightly below national expectation. Overall the standards achieved at the time of the previous inspection have been maintained.
173. The proportion of A\*-C grades at GCSE is slightly below the national average for boys only, and well below that for all students. Results have, however, risen consistently and considerably since 1997. The number of A\*-G passes is well above the national average although the cohort is very small.
174. Composing is a strength of the department. In a Year 10 class all students were able to invent interesting musical motifs and develop them using a range of techniques. A Year 11 song demonstrated students' confidence in melody and instrumentation; a 'rap' composed for the GCSE expressive arts course was inventive and had a good sense of style.
175. Students in all years have a secure grasp of musical concepts. Members of a Year 8 class were able to describe musical intervals; Year 11 students knew the particular features of music from different periods. Keyboard and rehearsal skills are variable, with many students achieving below expectations. Class singing is enthusiastic but lacks control.
176. Teaching in Key Stage 3 is satisfactory overall; the standards of the previous inspection have been maintained. Key Stage 4 teaching is good overall and has improved since the previous inspection. At both key stages teachers show good subject knowledge, for instance in illustrating concepts and techniques at the keyboard, and in emphasising key vocabulary. Classroom management is generally good. Questioning techniques are searching but need to be targeted so that more students are engaged in discussions.
177. Attitudes to learning are good; students work hard and show pride in their achievements. The more able students show high levels of initiative and independence. At Key Stage 3 students make good progress in composing and listening although they make less progress in performance. At Key Stage 4 progress is very good in composing, and satisfactory in other areas. Students on the register of special educational needs are well supported and make good progress. Key Stage 3 students have frequent opportunities to write about the music they hear, but the structure of worksheets limits students' responses and therefore make only a limited contribution in developing students' literacy skills. The Key Stage 4 expressive arts course provides good opportunities for a range of creative and evaluative writing.
178. The department is well led and the quality of management indicated at the previous inspection has been maintained. It is well organised and teachers work closely as a team. Monitoring of teaching and students' progress is, however, at an early stage and departmental development planning is insufficiently focused on improvement in standards and teaching. There are difficulties in access to information technology and this inhibits students' progress in using information and communication technology to enhance the music curriculum. Assessment strategies are not used sufficiently to ensure a balance between different aspects of the curriculum and do not give a clear indication of levels achieved. It is not used to inform future curriculum planning. Informal oral feedback to students however, is effective in helping them to improve their practical work, although apart from some good practice in the expressive arts course marking does not provide sufficient guidance on written work. Students regularly evaluate their own achievements, which has a good effect on their progress. Homework makes a positive contribution to students' learning. The outcomes of assessment are not used

sufficiently in planning different aspects of the curriculum to ensure a balance and give clear indications of levels achieved.

179. The work of the music technician ensures good access to electronic equipment, and two support assistants are effective in enabling students on the register of special educational needs to achieve at the same level as their classmates.
180. Presently, the quality and range of information technology resources are poor. Current accommodation limits the quality of group work and hinders flexibility in lesson planning and standards of performance. The provision of new accommodation and facilities should however solve these problems in the near future.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

181. Attainment displayed by the majority of students in physical education is in line with national expectations in Key Stage 3 and often higher in Key Stage 4. The achievement of talented and gifted students in physical education, as indicated through representation and success in local and national sporting competition, is high which played a part in the acquisition of Sports College status.
182. The majority of students in Key Stage 3 are able to demonstrate appropriately skilled activity across a range of core activities with the best performances observed in football and gymnastics. In these activities students were able to effectively plan and make decisions about their intended actions. In football, for example, groups of students were able to devise strategies to outwit an opponent when attacking the goal. In gymnastics, students worked successfully with a partner to devise combined movement sequences in answering a task involving travelling and counter-balance. Striking skills in tennis are under-developed whereas the existing ability of some students to reflect upon their performance with a view to improvement is not always evident. This was most apparent in rugby football where a number of students experienced difficulty when passing and receiving a ball on the move.
183. In Key Stage 4 the results achieved by students in GCSE physical education are impressive and significantly ahead of national and local averages when related to the percentage of students attaining grades A\*-C in the subject. In the theoretical aspects of GCSE physical education students demonstrated a sound understanding of factors relating to the prevention of injury in sport and were able to confidently discuss how they would set about applying this knowledge to their own sporting activity. In practical activity the majority of these students were able to effectively analyse their own performance and that of others in seeking improvement when given appropriate prompts from the teacher. Skill levels were generally good in football and basketball although the ability of less able students to control and distribute the ball in small side games of football sometimes lacked consistency.
184. During discussion students in both key stages recognised the value of physical activity in promoting physical fitness, particularly in relation to the development of stamina, but were less confident about its contribution to a broader understanding of health and well-being.
185. Students with special educational needs are well integrated into the work of the sports study faculty and achieve appropriately across the full range of activities.
186. Standards in physical education were judged to be good at the last OFSTED inspection. Students in Key Stage 4 continue to attain well and make good progress in the subject. In Key

Stage 3 attainment is generally in line with national expectation with more able students demonstrating high levels of attainment and progress across a range of activities. The expansion of the sports studies faculty to include an additional number of newly qualified teachers within its staffing has marginally reduced the overall quality of teaching. Good induction procedures, put in place by the faculty, provide support for these less experienced teachers. More opportunities are now given to students to take control of their own learning through a range of challenging tasks, as in gymnastics and football in Key Stage 3, with students making a more active contribution towards their own assessment through written self-evaluation of progress.

187. Extra-curricular provision for sport remains a major strength and enables further participation; for example, excellent practice was observed at a lunchtime basketball session catering for large numbers of Year 7 students. In addition there is more focused work with school team squads.
188. The teaching of physical education in Key Stage 4 is good and impacts significantly upon learning. Teaching in Key Stage 3 is more variable. Students' progress across both key stages is encouraged through comprehensive schemes of work. The schemes clearly articulate what students at all stages are expected to do and understand across the range of activities offered by the school in physical education and fully meet the requirements of the National Curriculum.
189. The strongest teaching observed tended to be, though not exclusively, in Key Stage 4 where teachers demonstrated a firm grasp of the activity being taught and were able to give to students high quality feedback about their performance. In invasion games, for instance, such as football and basketball, students were constantly challenged to evaluate their actions and suggest ways to improve their effectiveness as players in retaining possession of the ball. Where teaching was less confident it was not always made sufficiently clear to students what the learning outcomes of the lesson and the activity were, resulting in lack of focus and progression. Joint teaching arrangements involving a newly qualified teacher and a local tennis coach were observed to be highly effective in developing basic tennis skills with Year 8 students.
190. Assessment procedures in physical education provide a useful record of individual students' achievement both within the provision offered by the school and in the local sporting community. Re-alignment of the 1-5 grading system, currently used in order to fully reflect the levels as defined within the attainment target for physical education in the National Curriculum, together with the need for more analytical written comment when recording annual progress, are needed to further enhance student learning. The 1-5 grading system currently used does not fully reflect the levels defined for physical education within the National Curriculum. In addition written comments do not ensure that students know what they need to do to improve.
191. Students apply themselves well in physical education. They collaborate effectively within groups and with a partner, as in a tennis lesson, for example, where students were required to sustain a rally of several shots and were supportive of each other's efforts. They compete fairly and regulate their own activity responsibly as witnessed in small side games of tag rugby in Key Stage 3. Levels of attention and concentration are mostly high. Enthusiasm for the subject remains strong partly evidenced in the negligible number of non-participants.
192. The faculty of sports studies is well led and displays clear direction as identified through its action plan outlining its priorities and targets for improvement. Structures are in place to address the training needs of teachers through systematic monitoring and collaborative teaching arrangements. Improved facilities, together with the appointment of additional administrative staff has greatly enhanced the school's role in serving the local sporting community. Work in supporting the teaching of physical education in local primary schools has made a good start in

raising attainment levels on entry to the school.

## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

193. The attainment of students by the end of Key Stage 3 is broadly in line with the expected outcomes within the local agreed syllabus. By the end of Key Stage 4 standards are above local expectations. Standards achieved by the students entered for the GCSE examination are well above the national average. Standards in Key Stage 3 have been maintained while in Key Stage 4 standards are better than those reported in the last inspection.
194. By the end of Key Stage 3 most students have a reasonably secure knowledge of a variety of religious traditions including Christianity, Judaism, Buddhism, Sikhism, Islam and Hinduism. Some students show a subtle awareness of similarities and differences between faiths. For example, some students show a clear awareness that in Islam Jesus is a prophet but that this description would not be accepted within the Christian faith. Generally, their knowledge is limited to factual information. For example, in response to questions like 'Why is the Bible important to Christians?' or 'Why do Muslims pray?' the students tend to give cautious answers which lack detail like, 'It's their religion' or 'It's in the Qur'an'.
195. By the end of Key Stage 4 standards are generally above expectations. With the exception of only one year, GCSE results have been consistently well above the national average since the last inspection. Many of the students have a strong faith commitment and well-established beliefs which, when asked, they confidently enjoy sharing and discussing. The majority of students show a genuine sense of respect for the religious beliefs and values of others and show a willingness to extend and deepen their knowledge and understanding. Generally, students demonstrate a secure knowledge of the religions they are studying. However, they do continue to make vague generalisations in response to questions about the meaning or purpose surrounding religious belief and life. When encouraged some students are able to provide answers combining thoughtful understanding as well as knowledge. For example, one student in Year 11 suggested that in Islam regular prayer could 'make you more humble', while another thought 'you would be less likely to forget God'.
196. Satisfactory progress has been made with regard to the issues raised in the previous inspection. Colleagues involved in teaching religious education are now well supported and monitored. The range of religions studied is good resolving concerns raised in the previous inspection. Increased opportunities have been introduced to allow students to show initiative and to engage in individual research. For example, students in Year 9 undertake an extended assignment on art in religion. Generally a positive attitude towards the subject has been developed so that the majority of students are engaged and do listen to each other. Differentiated resources have been purchased to support the learning of the less able students. Only limited progress has been made towards implementing an assessment policy although there are clear plans to make progress in this area. Also insufficient progress has been made towards relating the learning of the students to their own experience.
197. The overall quality of the teaching at both key stages is satisfactory. On occasions the teaching is good. Most students make satisfactory progress. Students who are engaged in the GCSE full course make good progress. Where teaching is good didactic imparting of information is minimised in favour of allowing the students to comment, respond and share ideas with each other. Activities are confined to very short time targets giving the lesson an added sense of pace and variety. For example, in one lesson, students in Year 11 observed a variety of brief video clip based on the life of Gandhi. Rather than explain to the students what was happening the

teacher invited the students to discuss each video clip and identify for themselves what issues it raised. Where lessons were less successful teaching tended to be rather formal with the teacher making an over-dominant oral contribution. Activities tended to lack variety and to be largely passive. For example, students read aloud extracts from books or responded to oral or written questions. Some activities failed to challenge the students in order to extend their learning or requiring them to think. For example, a Year 7 class was invited to copy out sentences displayed on an overhead projector and then later were asked to draw pictures to illustrate the text of a story, which was provided.

198. Generally, however, the teaching is meeting the needs of students of different ages, backgrounds and ability. Satisfactory activities are arranged for students with special educational needs and satisfactory special support is given for students who are gifted or talented. The teaching of literacy skills is also satisfactory. The subject is well led by a newly appointed subject leader who has given the department new and positive energy and a clear sense of direction. There is a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the work of the subject team.
199. National accreditation opportunities have been extended with the introduction of a GCSE short course. Organised visits to places of worship have also been developed together with improved contacts with members of local faith communities. Accommodation is satisfactory although insufficient use is made of the available space to support learning and raise the status of the subject. The range and frequency of challenging activities are insufficiently developed in order to ensure that skills like recalling and describing do not disproportionately dominate lessons. Opportunities for students to critically think, evaluate, reflect on their own beliefs and consider questions, which explore purpose and meaning, do take place but not on a sufficiently regular basis. Although work is marked regularly guidance to students of how they might improve is insufficiently developed.