

INSPECTION REPORT

OAKWOOD PARK GRAMMAR SCHOOL

Maidstone

LEA area: Kent

Unique reference number: 118894

Headteacher: Mr M Newbould

Reporting inspector: W Keast
1522

Dates of inspection: 31 January – 4 February 2000

Inspection number: 194561

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

| | |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Type of school: | Grammar |
| School category: | Community |
| Age range of pupils: | 11 - 18 |
| Gender of pupils: | Boys |
| School address: | Oakwood Park Maidstone Kent |
| Postcode: | ME16 8AH |
| Telephone number: | 01622 726683 |
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| Appropriate authority: | The governing body |
| Name of chair of governors: | Mr M D Stevens |
| Date of previous inspection: | 25 September 1995 |

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

| Team members | | Subject responsibilities | Aspect responsibilities |
|-----------------|----------------------|--|---|
| W Keast | Registered inspector | | How high are standards? How well are pupils taught? What should the school do to improve further? |
| N Ball | Lay inspector | | How well does the school work in partnership with parents? Community links |
| S McConville | Team inspector | English English as an additional language | |
| J Paddick | Team inspector | Mathematics Special educational needs | |
| M Newman | Team inspector | Science | |
| R Green | Team inspector | Design & technology | How well does the school care for its pupils? |
| D Gutmann | Team inspector | Information technology | |
| R Fox | Team inspector | Modern languages | How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils? Sixth form |
| S Jordan | Team inspector | Geography History Equal opportunities | |
| R Allison-Smith | Team inspector | Art | |
| R Coulthard | Team inspector | Music Religious education | How well is the school led and managed? |
| P Canham | Team inspector | Physical education | |
| S Morgan | Team inspector | | |
| P McGregor | Team inspector | | |

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Oakwood Park Grammar School caters for 700 pupils. It is smaller than most secondary schools. It is a boys' school with a small number of girls who have joined the sixth form so that they can study particular combinations of subjects. The school is on the same campus as a number of other educational establishments. The school works in co-operation with the adjacent non-selective school and the nearby girls' grammar school to enable students to follow their preferred choice of subjects. The local education authority operates a selection process through which between 25 and 30 per cent of each year's cohort are offered grammar school places. This is a wider range than in other selective schools. Pupils come to the school from a wide geographical area and from a large number of primary schools. The attainment of pupils when they come to the school is well above the national average for all pupils, as shown by their Key Stage 2 national testing. Their attainment is broadly average for pupils in Kent grammar schools. Twelve pupils are eligible for free school meals - this proportion is well below the national average for all schools. Thirteen pupils (2 per cent) come from ethnic minority groups - this is a little higher than most schools. Eight pupils have English as an additional language but none are at an early stage of language development and it is not an issue for the school. Twenty-four pupils in the main school and four in the sixth form are on the special educational needs register - this is well below average. The school has recently moved back into local education authority control and chosen community status. The change from grant maintained to local education authority funding has resulted in additional financial stringencies.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

The school is effective in promoting and achieving high standards of attainment. Most pupils make good progress in the majority of their subjects as a result of their good attitudes, their own application and the good teaching they receive. The leadership and management provided by the governing body, headteacher and senior staff is good. This has resulted in much improvement since the previous inspection and provides the capacity for this to continue. The school provides sound value for money.

What the school does well

- It provides a good quality of teaching, particularly in the sixth form
- It enables pupils to make good progress and achieve high standards
- It achieves a good standard of behaviour amongst the pupils, develops good attitudes to learning and enjoys good relationships
- It is well led with effective management and good governor involvement
- It cares for its pupils well

What could be improved

- The weaknesses in some individual and subject teaching which result in underachievement
- The weaknesses in the management of some subjects
- The co-ordinated development of pupils' use of information technology across the curriculum
- Those aspects where there is non-compliance with statutory requirements: design and technology at Key Stage 4, religious education in the sixth form, and a daily act of collective worship

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in September 1995 and has made good improvement since then. The school has maintained the high attendance and the good attitudes and behaviour reported. Examination

results at GCSE remain well above national averages and are increasing at the same rate as those nationally. At A level they remain broadly in line with the national average. There has been noticeable improvement in teaching and in other reported weaknesses. Weaknesses in management have been largely overcome and there is now a changed culture at subject management level, although two or three heads of subject remain weaker than their colleagues. School self-evaluation has developed through the work of the deputy headteacher responsible for assessment and regular reporting to governors. The governors' action plan addressed all the key issues identified in the previous report. Most of these issues have been successfully resolved, with resourcing and accommodation issues being addressed as far as financial restraint will allow, but some points remain to be achieved. There is still non-compliance with requirement for daily collective worship and religious education in the sixth form, although one solution was tried here but proved ineffective. The school is still working on a policy for promoting pupils' personal development, however actual practice has improved.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 16 and 18 year olds based on average point scores in GCSE and A-level/AS-level examinations.

| Performance in: | Compared with | | | |
|--------------------|---------------|------|------|-----------------|
| | all schools | | | Similar schools |
| | 1997 | 1998 | 1999 | 1999 |
| GCSE examinations | A | A | A | E |
| A-levels/AS-levels | B | C | C | |

Key

well above average A

above average B

average C

below average D

well below average E

It should be recognised that in grouping all selective schools together for comparative purposes no distinction is made between those schools that cater separately for boys and girls or are co-educational. Schools within the group teach pupils from very different proportions of the age cohort, depending on their geographical location and selection procedures. Nationally, girls demonstrate higher attainment than boys in all subjects except physics at GCSE. Since Oakwood Park is an all boys' school taking between 25 to 30 per cent of the age cohort, available comparisons with all selective schools are of doubtful value.

Results of the 1999 GCSE examination were above, or well above, the national average for all schools, in all subjects. Results in mathematics, English literature, and design and technology were above the average for similar schools with those in science and sports studies being broadly similar. Other subject results were below the similar school average with languages being well below. When pupils' attainment is judged against that of pupils with similar Key Stage 3 results in 1997, it is broadly in line with average. Within the school pupils have made greater progress in chemistry, physics, mathematics, history and geography, in at least two of the last three years, and less progress in art, double award science and German, in comparison with their progress overall. The trend over the last three years has been well above the national trend and rising at the same rate. The numbers in any subject in the sixth form have been often too small for sensible comparison with national averages. Results at this level have been broadly similar each year. Comparison of test and examination results at the beginning and end of the stages indicates that pupils' achievement was at least satisfactory and in Key Stage 3 and the sixth form pupils achieved slightly higher than their previous attainment predicted.

The school met the targets that it set in 1999 and has set itself a clear challenge for 2000. The challenge in the target for 2001 is not so clear.

Standards at the end of Key Stages 3 and 4 are, overall, well above national expectation for pupils of these ages. However, standards at the end of Key Stage 3 are below expectation in design and technology and religious education. They are in line with national expectation in information technology at the end of both key stages and in physical education at the end of Key Stage 4. Standards in the sixth form are in line with course expectations in music, art, German and design and technology. They are above in the other subjects inspected and well above in science, history and geography. From observation and work scrutiny pupils are achieving at least satisfactorily in most subjects in any stage and there is much achievement which is good or very good. However, there is underachievement in religious education, information technology and design and technology in Key Stage 3 and in German in Key Stage 4.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

| Aspect | Comment |
|--|--|
| Attitudes to the school | Pupils' attitudes to the school are very good. They enjoy attending, and work hard in the great majority of their lessons. They are very loyal to the school. |
| Behaviour, in and out of classrooms | This is very good. There have been no permanent exclusions. A pleasant working environment helps pupils' learning and makes younger pupils feel safe and supported. |
| Personal development and relationships | Relationships are very good, pupils work well together in pairs and small groups. Personal development is good, but the opportunity to show initiative or take responsibility for learning is limited, particularly for the younger pupil. |
| Attendance | Good. Above average attendance and below average unauthorised absence have been maintained. |

The attitudes of pupils to school and to their learning are a strength of the school. In lessons they work hard, concentrate on their tasks and produce good work. Oppressive behaviour is minimal and pupils feel that any reported incident is taken seriously and effectively dealt with. The very good relationships that exist both between pupils and between them and their teachers contribute to the good ethos within the school.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

| Teaching of pupils: | aged 11-14 years | aged 14-16 years | aged over 16 years |
|----------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------|
| Lessons seen overall 132 | Satisfactory | Good | Good |

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

Overall, 93 per cent of the teaching was satisfactory or better with 21 per cent being excellent or very good. Seven per cent of teaching was unsatisfactory. Most of the unsatisfactory teaching occurred in Key Stage 3 but was more closely related to the teacher than the key stage. Teaching in English was sound in Key Stage 3 and good in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form. In mathematics, teaching was good throughout the school and in science teaching, was good in Key Stages 3 and 4 and was very good in the sixth form. Teaching in most subjects was at least satisfactory at each stage and much was good or

very good. Teaching was unsatisfactory in German and religious education in Key Stage 3. A particular strength in the teaching was teachers' subject knowledge and their understanding of the requirements of the National Curriculum and examination syllabuses. Pupils have many opportunities to practise and develop their skills of literacy and numeracy and these are at a level which supports their learning. The learning of pupils with special educational needs is usually managed well in the course of normal lessons and pupils achieve creditable examination success. However many teachers are not fully aware of the targets in individual education plans. Pupils' learning is at least sound and most often good or very good in all but religious education in Key Stage 3. A particular strength in their learning is the effort that they put into their work in which they are interested and involved.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

| Aspect | Comment |
|---|---|
| The quality and range of the curriculum | Good. The range of courses offered is good and the time allocation generally appropriate. Great efforts are made to ensure that sixth-form students can study their preferred option choices. |
| Provision for pupils with special educational needs | This is satisfactory. Pupils have full access to the curriculum at all levels. Many of the pupils on the special needs register have additional programmes designed to overcome their problems. |
| Provision for pupils with English as an additional language | The small number of pupils for whom English is an additional language are not at an early stage of language development and this aspect is not an issue in this school |
| Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | This is good overall and has improved since the previous inspection. Opportunities for pupils' spiritual development are satisfactory and for the other aspects of development they are good. |
| How well the school cares for its pupils | The procedures for child protection, the priority given to health and safety issues, the monitoring of pupils' performance and development and the support and guidance given to pupils are all good. |

The school works in close partnership with parents and they have a generally favourable view of the school. The school provides a good quality of general information and parents are pleased with the reports on pupils' progress that they receive. The curriculum provision has many strengths including the provision of an effective short course in religious education for all Key Stage 4 pupils and the range of options available in the sixth form. The Key Stage 3 curriculum meets statutory requirements. However the school does not meet the statutory requirements for all pupils in Key Stage 4 to study a design and technology course, for religious education in the sixth form, and for all pupils to experience a daily act of corporate worship.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

| Aspect | Comment |
|--|--|
| Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff | The school is well led and managed. The headteacher and senior staff work well as a team. The management at head of subject level is less consistent. |
| How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities | Governors are fulfilling their responsibilities well. They know the relative strengths of the school and are committed to development and improvement. |
| The school's evaluation of its performance | The school monitors its progress well and plans appropriate action. Self-evaluation is developing and becoming more focused. |
| The strategic use of resources | Very good. Financial constraints have required prudent budgetary planning and control. Resources have been directed to address agreed priorities. |

Overall the number and experience of the staff matches well the needs of the curriculum despite some short-term problems in recruitment. Accommodation and learning resources are sufficient although not generous, with building development imminent. Leadership providing educational direction is good. The monitoring and evaluation of teaching, procedures for teacher appraisal and the linking of professional development to individual and school needs are good. The induction of new or newly qualified teachers is very good. There is a particular weakness in the management of German and difficulties in the management of design and technology. The school applies the principles of best value well in that it is very aware of its performance in local comparisons, and financial stringencies enforce questioning of all spending decisions and sources of supply.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

| What pleases parents most | What parents would like to see improved |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• That the school expects pupils to work hard and do their best• That they are able to approach the school with questions or a problem• That pupils make good progress• That pupils like school | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• They would appreciate a more interesting and extensive range of activities provided out of school• They would like homework to be consistently assigned |

The inspectors support the positive views expressed by parents and especially recognise the progress that is made by pupils in most subjects of the curriculum. The school provides an appropriate range of extra-curricular activities. However the inspectors share the parents' view that the range of extra curricular clubs offered to pupils, although valuable, is limited being predominantly related to sports and music, or to supporting pupils in their subject work. Homework provision is overall satisfactory but is not consistent in the quantity set through the week, resulting in unequal workloads on different days for pupils.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

- 1 In comparison with all schools nationally the attainment of pupils in the end of Key Stage 3 national tests in 1999 was very high. It has been so for the last three years, and shows a slowly rising trend. Attainment in each of English, mathematics and science was also very high. Over the same three years, the attainment of pupils in mathematics and science has been very high and has been increasing slightly faster than the national average. The attainment in English has been well above the national average and increasing much faster than nationally. In comparison with selective (similar) schools the attainment in 1999 was above the average. Within this overall picture, the attainment in the tests in science was below, in English was broadly in line and in mathematics was above, the respective averages. Pupils achieved an average level in these tests which was above that predicted by the well-established cognitive ability tests (CAT) that they had taken at the beginning of Year 7. The school had added value.
- 2 It should be recognised that in grouping all selective schools together for comparative purposes, because this is a relatively small number of schools nationally, no distinction is made between those schools that cater separately for boys and girls or are co-educational. Schools within the group teach pupils from very different proportions of the age cohort, depending on their geographical location and selection procedures. Nationally, girls demonstrate higher attainment than boys in all subjects except physics at GCSE. Selective schools also enter pupils for differing number of subjects, thus affecting the potential average point score per pupil. Since Oakwood Park is an all boys' school taking between 25 to 30 per cent of the age cohort, available comparisons with all selective schools are of doubtful value.
- 3 The proportion of pupils achieving five or more GCSE passes at grades A*-C in the 1999 national examinations was very high in comparison with the national average. The average over the last three years has also been very high in comparison with all schools. Using the average point score per pupil, the 1999 results and the three year average are well above the national averages and very high in comparison with the averages for boys. This indicator has shown a rising trend in line with the rising trend nationally. In comparison with similar schools in 1999 the average point score per pupil is well below the average. When pupils' attainment is judged against that of pupils with similar Key Stage 3 results in 1997, it is broadly in line with average. Overall progress was broadly as expected. Within the school, in comparison with all their subjects, pupils have made more progress in chemistry, physics, mathematics, history and geography in at least two of the last three years. They have made less progress in art, double award science and German.
- 4 The school has met the targets that it set for 1999. The school has set, and agreed with the local education authority, targets for the next two years. These targets are jointly based upon the predictions derived from the assessment data currently held and teacher experience. They provide a clear challenge for the pupils who will be examined this summer but the degree of challenge is not as clear for the subsequent year.
- 5 In the A-level examinations in 1999 the average point score achieved by students studying two or more A levels was broadly in line with the national average. The students achieved, on average, two points higher than their average GCSE point scores had predicted, based upon local educational authority data analysis. The school had added value.

- 6 Standards overall, at the end of Key Stages 3 and 4, as seen in lessons and through recorded work, are well above national expectation for pupils of these ages. The standards currently being seen in the sixth form are above the average standard expected for students on A-level courses.
- 7 Most pupils are articulate and rise well to the challenges in focused oral work, answering questions, justifying their opinions and giving formal presentations. They are courteous, listen politely and in all subjects they are respectful of the views of others. Pupils have high standards in reading a wide range of factual, reference and creative texts and they show good comprehension. Their use of the library is limited and there are too few books, but the Internet is used increasingly for reference. Standards in writing are varied. In history, geography and English, writing frameworks and templates assist pupils in structuring their extended writing. The use of correct technical vocabulary is stressed, particularly in science and design and technology. There is much good use of computers to word-process course work. Presentation of writing is often good when drafted and re-worked and pupils produce work of which they are proud. However, writing is not always of this high standard in day-to-day work in the classroom and can be disorganised and careless. Without a whole school policy for the promotion of literacy teachers are inconsistent in their expectation and approach.
- 8 Most pupils in the school have a well-above average grasp of number, algebra, geometry, and graph work of all types. There is good provision across the curriculum for them to develop and use these skills in new contexts. Pupils' high level of skills in all areas of mathematics helps them to understand new concepts in science, geography, and design and technology with considerable ease. They have confidence to use their numeracy skills in unfamiliar contexts across the curriculum whenever the need arises. Sometimes this results in rapid progress being made, as in A-level physics where high algebraic competence speeds the understanding of quantitative treatments of phenomena.
- 9 The National Curriculum requires pupils to develop their skills in using information and communication technology (ICT) in all subjects of the curriculum. Pupils have discrete lessons in Year 7 and then again in Year 10. This means that some pupils have insufficient opportunity to become autonomous users of ICT and by the end of Year 9 the majority of pupils have not sufficiently extended their ICT capability by applying their skills in a wide enough range of topics in subjects in the curriculum. No subject has formally assessed pupils' ICT capability in Key Stage 3. In Key Stage 4 few departments currently plan to include ICT in lessons or have reported ICT capability to parents. New monitoring procedures are being developed. Although overall improvement since the last inspection has been affected by shortage of computers and insufficient teaching time, recent increases in computers, curriculum time for Year 10 pupils and specialist staff mean that the school is now better placed to improve pupils' ICT capability in all subjects through analysing and supporting pupils' ICT needs.
- 10 In English, at the end of Key Stage 3, the standards are well above national expectation with most pupils working at or near their capacity in all aspects of the subject. At the end of Key Stage 4 standards are above and, sometimes, well above national standards. GCSE results in 1999 were below those for selective schools in language but there has been improvement since the previous inspection in the proportion of highest grades achieved. Results in literature are more variable but in 1999 were above those for selective schools. Standards in the sixth form are above the average for the course. Small numbers in the sixth form make comparisons uncertain but the results in the recently introduced language course have risen considerably. Pupils' achievement is good in Key Stages 3 and 4 and is very good in the sixth form.
- 11 Standards in mathematics at the end of Key Stages 3 and 4 are well above the national expectation. Results in the GCSE examination have risen since the previous inspection and in 1999 were above

the average for selective schools. Standards in the sixth form are above average for the course. Results at A-Level have been rising and are broadly in line with those in selective schools. The achievement of pupils is good in both key stages and the sixth form.

- 12 Standards in science at the end of Key Stages 3 and 4 are well above the national expectation. Results in the 1999 GCSE examinations were broadly in line with similar schools in all the examinations. There is an upward trend and a significant increase in the highest grades since the previous inspection. Standards in the sixth form are well above the average for the course with A-level results in 1999 being above the average for all schools in all three subjects. Pupils' achievement in Key Stages 3 and 4 is good and in the sixth form is very good.
- 13 End of Key Stage 3 standards in design and technology are below national expectation and pupils are underachieving due to their limited experience of materials and weak designing skills. At the end of Key Stage 4 the standards are good and pupils have demonstrated good achievement. Results in the 1999 GCSE examinations were above the average for all schools and for similar schools. Standards in the sixth form are average for the course and students' achievement is sound. The results of examinations at this level vary from year to year because of the small numbers involved. In 1999 results were good.
- 14 Attainment at the end of Key Stages 3 and 4 in information technology is broadly in line with national expectation but pupils' experience has not been consistent. The subject has not yet been examined at GCSE level. Standards in the sixth form are above average for the course. Results in the A-Level examinations in 1999 were a little above the national average. There is underachievement in Key Stage 3, but achievement in Key Stage 4 is satisfactory and in the sixth form it is good.
- 15 Standards in history at the end of Key Stage 3 are well above national expectation and pupils' achievement is good. At the end of Key Stage 4 standards are well above the expected level and GCSE examination results in 1999 were well above the national average but below the average for selective schools. Results are improving steadily. Attainment in the sixth form is above the expected level and examination results are above the national average.
- 16 In geography the standards at the end of Key Stages 3 and 4 are well above national expectation. The results at GCSE are improving and in 1999 were well above the national average although below the average for similar schools. In the sixth form standards are well above course expectations with examination results in 1999 being above the national average.
- 17 Standards at the end of Key Stage 3 are well above national expectation in French and above expectation in German. Pupils' achievement in French is good and in German is satisfactory. At the end of Key Stage 4 the standards in both languages are above national expectation with examination results being well above the national average in French and above the average in German but well below the average in similar schools in both languages. The results in German have been rising over the last three years but pupils have consistently performed less well in this subject than the other subjects they have been studying over the same period. The proportion of pupils gaining the highest grades is below average. The achievement of pupils in French is sound but unsatisfactory in German. Standards in the sixth form in French are above, and in German are in line with, expectation for the course. The number of students who have taken the examination is too small to make national comparison meaningful.
- 18 Standards in art at the end of Key Stages 3 and 4 are well above national expectation and pupils' achievement in these key stages is satisfactory overall. The progress that they make is greater earlier in each of the key stages than in the final year. The results in GCSE examinations have

been generally consistent over time and are well above the national average but below the average for similar schools. The proportion of pupils gaining the highest grades is low. A significant minority of pupils performs less well in art than in their other examination subjects. Standards in the sixth form are in line with course expectations and achievement is sound. The number of students taking the examination is too small to make meaningful national comparisons.

- 19 Standards in physical education at the end of Key Stage 3 are above national expectation for pupils of this age. At the end of Key Stage 4, standards are similar to national expectation for the basic course. Standards are above expectation for outdoor games, in line with expectation in other aspects of the course but below expectation in areas such as volleyball. Results for the examination course have improved steadily and are similar to those in selective schools. Standards in the sixth form are good and results in the recently introduced A-Level are in line with those in similar schools.
- 20 Standards at the end of both key stages in music are above the national expectation. In Key Stage 3, pupils compose confidently and singing is established as a worthwhile activity – an improvement since the previous inspection. Achievement is good. The small number of pupils following the examination course makes comparisons inappropriate but only one of the twenty one candidates over the last three years failed to achieve at least a GCSE grade C. The very small number of sixth-form students achieves in line with the school's expectation of them.
- 21 At the end of Key Stage 3 standards in religious education are below those expected by the locally agreed syllabus. They have a wide knowledge in outline of religious history but have insufficiently developed the other skills and understanding envisaged by the syllabus. They are underachieving in this key stage. At the end of Key Stage 4 standards are above expectation and results in the short GCSE course, which all pupils follow, are good, although there are no national comparisons available. Almost all the small number of pupils that follows the full GCSE course obtains the higher grades. Achievement is good in this key stage.
- 22 Pupils with special educational needs normally achieve creditable GCSE and A-level results. The special needs co-ordinator keeps a watching brief on their academic progress and helps them to make the right subject choices at option times. Pupils usually make at least satisfactory progress towards the targets in their individual education plans. There has been particular success with some pupils who had behavioural problems in Key Stage 4 and who have now settled well to sixth-form study, and are due to be removed from the special needs register. Some pupils in Key Stage 3 are making good personal progress through the help given by visiting specialists.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

- 23 Pupils' attitudes to school are very good. In discussion with inspectors, pupils speak highly of the school and show a loyalty towards it. A large majority of parents report that their children like coming to school. In lessons pupils' attitudes to their work and their response to the teaching they receive are at least good and in many cases, very good. They are engaged by the tasks that they are given to do and maintain concentration over long periods. They are not afraid to ask questions, they listen intently, contribute orally and generally become actively involved in the lessons. These very positive responses contribute to the pupils' learning. The short lunch break and restrictions of public transport at the end of the day limit the extra-curricular activities available but pupils show good involvement in those available, particularly the school teams. Pupils from all year groups were pleased to be involved in the many visits and trips organised on their behalf.
- 24 The behaviour of pupils is very good. This is particularly apparent around the school at break times. Pupils move around the building very sensibly, adhering to the one-way system. They are

polite and courteous. Younger pupils report that they feel safe. Pupils in all years recognise that some verbal bullying occurs but the younger pupils do not regard this as a concern and any instances reported to teachers are treated seriously and effectively dealt with. This coincides with the belief expressed by the majority of parents. Younger pupils report some boisterous behaviour in the queue for lunch but observation of other congested areas, such as narrow staircases or the bus queues after school, show a very good standard being maintained. The high standard of behaviour in the majority of lessons helps pupils gain as much from the teaching as possible. With one or two teachers, who are weaker than their colleagues in their ability to maintain discipline, the behaviour of a few pupils in the class deteriorates and this adversely affects the learning and progress of all. There have been no permanent exclusions for several years and the number of fixed term exclusions is broadly average for this size of school.

- 25 Overall, personal development and relationships are good. The relationships between pupils and their teachers are very good and this is apparent in the teaching situation. Pupils work co-operatively with each other in pairs and small groups in many subjects; they share tasks and responsibilities and support each other. In the more practical subjects pupils are well used to working independently and being responsible for the equipment they need and use. There are, however, few opportunities for the younger pupils to show initiative in their own learning or take wider responsibility in the school community. As pupils get older opportunities increase and pupils take full advantage of these through, for example, a year group's work with charity, through the prefect system, sixth-form links with primary schools and support of younger pupils through the 'buddy' system
- 26 Pupils with special educational needs have many good peer group role models to follow. The good attitudes of all pupils in class help them to develop academically and socially. Teachers are aware of pupils who are likely to disrupt the learning of the class, and most have efficient strategies for challenging them effectively. The small number of pupils with behavioural and emotional difficulties often learns to contain them through strategies learnt with the help of the LEA Learning Support Services.
- 27 The school has maintained the above average levels of attendance reported in the previous inspection. Levels of unauthorised absence are well below the national average. As at the time of the previous inspection, punctuality to lessons is good and lessons start on time.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

- 28 Overall the quality of teaching observed in the school was good. Teaching in Key Stage 3 was satisfactory, it was good in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form. Overall about one in five lessons were very good or excellent and three in five were good or better. There was a small amount of unsatisfactory teaching observed which was mainly in Key Stage 3 but which was often more closely related to the teacher than the key stage in which it occurred. Some teaching of the highest quality was observed in all stages, but mainly in the sixth form. In these lessons, combined with the commitment and involvement of the pupils, it resulted in excellent progress.
- 29 Teaching in mathematics was good throughout the school. That in science was also good and was very good in the sixth form. Teaching in English was satisfactory, overall, in Key Stage 3 where there was some unsatisfactory. It was satisfactory in Key Stage 4 and good in the sixth form. Teaching in French, and overall in geography and history, was good in all stages and very good in French in Key Stage 3 and geography in the sixth form.. In most other subjects the teaching was at least satisfactory and often good. However in Key Stage 3 teaching was unsatisfactory in German overall, resulting from the lack of guidance and support available for newly appointed and substitute teachers and in religious education because the requirements of the agreed syllabus were

not adequately reflected in planning or in teaching strategies. Teaching was best in all subjects in the sixth form except in design and technology where teaching was sound throughout the school.

- 30 The development of literacy and numeracy is an important aspect of several subjects and is a satisfactory aspect of teaching throughout the school. Pupils are required to research and extract information from written text in several subjects. In English they write for a wide range of purposes and are supported in this in history and geography where extended writing is expected. Discussions in small groups and in the whole class are encouraged with pupils being challenged to justify their first responses. In several subjects, science and technology for example, an emphasis is placed upon using the correct technical vocabulary. Together these strategies lead to increasing pupils' vocabulary and developing their oral skills. Pupils in all subjects are expected to listen intently and respond to what they have heard; this is developed to a high level in modern languages. Outside the teaching in mathematics pupils use and practise their numeracy skills through measuring, calculating, recording in tables and constructing and interpreting graphs in, for example, geography, science and technology. Although numeracy and literacy are being effectively promoted, much of this comes from good teaching practice rather than a planned school strategy. This shows itself in the comparatively weaker aspect of note-taking and the day-to-day presentation of work where the lack of an overall school strategy results in inconsistent practice.
- 31 Teachers usually manage the learning of the special educational needs pupils effectively in the course of normal lessons. However, many are not fully aware of the targets in individual education plans, and assume that progress towards them will be managed elsewhere in school.
- 32 There are many aspects that contribute to good teaching and ensure that pupils make as much progress as possible. A major strength of the teaching at Oakwood is the subject knowledge, and the understanding of syllabus and course requirements, of the teachers. The confidence in their subject allows teachers to provide clear explanations of new ideas and to draw upon example and experience to clarify understanding. It means that, in business studies, understanding can be developed from topical case studies. In modern foreign languages, lessons are conducted largely in French or German and so develop pupils' listening skills, challenge their understanding and provide good models for their own pronunciation. For example, Year 13 students were fully engaged in a perceptive debate, carried out entirely in French, on the reasons for, and possible solutions to, the feeling of isolation experienced by immigrants. During a lesson, teachers' questioning of pupils and observation of the work in progress allow them to determine pupils' knowledge and understanding, and then provide guidance or ask a supplementary question. Such questioning and additional examples, easily given, guide pupils' thinking and develop their understanding - and so they learn. As, for example, in a Year 10 religious education lesson considering the Christian attitude to war. This teacher intervention and support is another good feature of much of the teaching.
- 33 Teachers plan lessons which ensure coverage of all National Curriculum and examination requirements and use teaching strategies which develop the necessary skills and understanding. They are able to guide pupils towards the most effective techniques to gain credit in examinations. For example, well thought-out practical tasks in science develop investigational skills and allow pupils to consolidate their practical skills. In mathematics an emphasis is upon the need to show working to gain credit for understanding the mathematics even if the subsequent calculation is incorrect. The unsatisfactory teaching in religious education in Key Stage 3 results from an insufficient understanding of the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus and, therefore, very restricted teaching strategies covering only part of what is expected.
- 34 Teachers generally plan their lessons well, have clear learning objectives and choose suitable strategies to achieve these. On many occasions they plan a range of activities which develops

skills, maintains interest and contributes to the pace of the lesson. For example, in a Year 11 chemistry lesson on the earth, pupils recalled previous work; discussed the difference between a model and a hypothesis; watched and noted down information from a short video; different groups then extended one aspect of this work through research from a range of texts and began to report back their findings to the rest of the class. Each of these separate tasks was undertaken to a tight time schedule. Pupils learn well in these lessons as they gain additional knowledge and understanding.

- 35 Most teachers have high expectations of what their pupils can do and this results in lessons that have a good pace, where pupils are challenged and make good progress. For example, in a Year 8 geography lesson at the conclusion of a topic on immigration, groups of pupils identified, from a newspaper article, reasons for the migration of people, some of the problems this caused them and the difficulties for border control. Sharing their work with the class enabled all to learn from each other. As a class, pupils were challenged to develop an empathy with the individuals involved and consider social and moral implications. The lesson concluded with pupils being required to write a letter to the newspaper encapsulating their understanding from the perspective of one of the groups, for example a migrant, involved in the situation. These challenges were addressed in a well-timed sequence. The challenge presented to pupils is a consistent feature in the teaching of mathematics. A comparative weakness in some of the teaching in art, and design and technology, is where the expectations are not high enough and pupils are not sufficiently challenged.
- 36 Relationships in the classroom are good and so is class management. These two aspects of teaching work together to provide an environment in which pupils feel at ease and secure. This environment encourages, for example, pupils to ask questions when they feel they do not understand. In many examples in English lessons pupils read aloud from quite difficult material, became involved in the characters in plays and willingly offered their own ideas and understanding of nuances of language and character because they knew that their thoughts and ideas would be a valued contribution to the lesson. In most lessons behaviour is good and pupils apply themselves to the tasks they are given. They concentrate well and for long periods, and are interested and engaged by their work. As they become older they take on greater responsibility for their own learning and become more independent. The instances where this independence is encouraged in the younger pupils are fewer. Weaker management skills, leading to unchecked poor behaviour and the resulting insufficient progress was the reason for some of the unsatisfactory teaching observed.
- 37 Homework is regularly set and the marking of this and classwork, in the best examples, includes helpful, subject specific guidance on how to improve attainment. This feature of marking is not uniformly strong across all subjects. Homework frequently provides good opportunities to consolidate and extend the learning that has taken place. For example, a Year 9 class had been investigating rates of reaction relating to the action of acids and in this context were given the task to research the reasons behind the remedies for wasp and bee stings, an upset stomach and the spreading of a white powder by 'downland' farmers. Insufficient use is made of homework in design and technology in Key Stage 3 to address the lack of progress that pupils make. In discussion, pupils indicated that the setting of homework is irregular during the week and tends to cluster: some days little or none to be followed by a heavier requirement, as reported by parents.
- 38 Significant changes have taken place since the previous inspection. A much higher proportion of teaching is satisfactory or better, with more of the highest quality. The improvement is most noticeable in Key Stage 4 where a quarter was previously reported as unsatisfactory. Greater challenge is provided for higher-attaining pupils, showing in an increase in the highest examination grades achieved in some subjects. Care needs to be taken, however, to ensure that in science and mathematics in Key Stage 4 the lower-attaining pupils are able to consolidate their learning sufficiently in this drive for challenge. Progress is no longer slow and pupils' learning and

application is significantly better. There is still variation between subjects but it is not as wide as previously reported and teaching in several subjects is of a consistently high standard.

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

- 39 The quality and range of learning opportunities are good at Key Stage 3 and in the sixth form and satisfactory at Key Stage 4. At Key Stage 3, all pupils, including those with special educational needs, have equal access to a full range of National Curriculum subjects enhanced by the addition of two foreign languages and three separate sciences. At Key Stage 4, a choice of subjects, including an effective short course in religious education, ensures greater variety. However, not all pupils follow a design and technology programme of study and in the sixth form, provision for religious education is inadequate. Consequently the school is not meeting its statutory requirements.
- 40 At the end of Key Stage 4, all pupils enter for GCSE examinations. In the sixth form, students have a wide choice and many combinations of subjects are possible. Courses include English language, computer studies, government and politics, music and general studies. The sixth form curriculum in mathematics is particularly broad and includes further mathematics. The majority of students begin to study four A levels. For those wishing to follow courses not offered at the school, such as sociology or music technology, these can be provided at neighbouring schools. Throughout the school, good strategies are employed for teaching numeracy and satisfactory strategies for teaching literacy. Planning supports the curriculum well. It is most effective in subjects such as business studies, French, history, music and physical education at Key Stage 4 and least effective in subjects such as German, design technology, religious education at Key Stage 3 and in supporting higher attaining pupils in art.
- 41 The total curriculum time is in line with nationally recommended figures. Time allocations for subjects are broadly in line with recommendations although curriculum time in geography and history in Year 7 is barely adequate to cover all aspects of the programme of study. There is an imbalance in the allocation of English lessons in Years 8 and 9 and too little time for physical education, either in Key Stage 4 or in Year 9, to ensure health related fitness. Although statutory requirements, with regard to information technology, are broadly met at both Key Stages 3 and 4, monitoring of that provision is insufficient. Several subjects such as English and mathematics, and business studies in the sixth form, include information technology effectively in lessons. Since the previous inspection, some modest progress has been made in art with the introduction of 3D work. There is some weakness in Key Stage 3 in design technology where the planned curriculum is not delivered and sections of the programmes of study, for example, structures, electronics and control technology, are not taught. In physical education in Year 11, some activities are unsupervised and the course lacks structure. In the sixth form, physical education is a voluntary activity.
- 42 Provision for extra-curricular activities is satisfactory overall. A number of activities support subject learning as, for example, extra time allocated for GCSE in several subjects, Oxbridge preparation, workshop sessions in technology, and oral practice in French and German. A range of conventional activities, such as team games in physical education, promotes high standards as does a variety of musical activities such as the jazz band, the orchestra and choir. The range of extra-curricular clubs is limited. A good variety of visits supports learning in modern languages, geography and history; pupils take part in a wide range of trips including field trips, residential opportunities and a forthcoming visit to China.
- 43 The school's curriculum includes a well-structured personal social and health education (PSHE) programme for all pupils which includes appropriate health and sex education, careers-related

education and consideration of drugs misuse. This is effectively delivered by tutors in regular timetabled provision in Key Stage 3. The programme is delivered, in Key Stage 4, through a series of regular half-day sessions, when the normal timetable is suspended, focused on a specific aspect and using a good range of visiting speakers. Provision in the sixth form is less well structured but is developing. There is an understandable concentration on preparation for higher education application and interview, with a number of other specific inputs. For example, Year 12 students attended an Understanding Industry conference organised by the business studies department with visitors from local businesses, and experienced a gripping theatre presentation on the dangers of careless driving. The school works closely with the local initial teacher training consortium to provide, annually, a number of training placements.

- 44 Pupils are offered careers advice from Year 9. A newly appointed careers teacher has plans to expand the careers library, to which all pupils have access, and join form tutors in careers lessons preparing Year 9 pupils for their GCSE options. Year 10 pupils have a well-organised two weeks work experience in local organisations and there is a smaller work shadowing programme in the sixth form. Most pupils continue in education at the end of Key Stage 4, although not necessarily at Oakwood, and are effectively guided in their option choice through discussion with school staff and using subject monitoring data to help target need. Opportunities exist, should students choose, to follow GNVQ options or additional A-level options at other local institutions. Interviews with the local careers officer are available and occur with some Year 11 and Year 12 pupils. Year 13 students are generally well prepared by tutors for university entrance, visiting several 'fairs' before applying.
- 45 Since the last inspection Governors have become more aware of curriculum issues and involved in understanding the work of departments. Although the school's aims and policies for the curriculum remain the same, significant progress has been made in addressing a number of the issues raised in the last report. Time allocation is now in line with national recommendations. To reduce the number of teachers teaching Year 7, the same teacher teaches the three sciences and tutors take personal and social education lessons. Time allowance for religious education is now satisfactory in Key Stage 3 and 4 and approximately half of the subject departments have schemes of work that are at least satisfactory.
- 46 Special educational needs pupils have full access to the curriculum at all levels. Some extra help is given by the school co-ordinator at the time of choosing option subjects. Many of the pupils on the special needs register have additional programmes designed to overcome their problems.
- 47 The provision for moral, social and cultural development is good overall and spiritual development is satisfactory. This provision has improved since the last inspection although some elements such as multi-cultural awareness remain under-developed. The school is currently working on a policy to address the issues raised in the previous inspection. Within the school generally good personal development is promoted by the encouragement given to pupils to work to the best of their ability and by fostering the enjoyment and excitement of learning. Assemblies focus effectively on moral and social issues, especially in the year group assemblies where short drama presentations are organised by tutor groups. A Year 8 tutor group presented a lively and thought provoking drama on the dangers of drink.
- 48 The provision for spiritual development is satisfactory. Through the religious education syllabus pupils are provided with a good understanding of the Christian faith and its development but less well explored are other world religions. Through other subjects such as English, geography, history and personal and social education, pupils have opportunities to reflect on their own and other people's lives. For example, a very moving English lesson was observed when year 10 pupils studied the 'I have a dream' speech by Martin Luther King. The requirements for a daily act of

worship are not met in the school although the structure provides opportunity. In whole school and year group assemblies a brief opportunity is provided for pupils to reflect on social and moral questions that are sometimes illustrated by biblical stories. Most tutors are not making provision for their forms when they do not go to assemblies.

- 49 Provision for pupils' moral development is good. Teachers provide good role models for pupils and expect them to behave well, care for others and have a clear sense of right and wrong. The vast majority of pupils meets these expectations well and shows a pride in their school. The school rules on behaviour provide a clear framework. There is good respect shown for personal and school property. Issues of morality are discussed in subject lessons and through the PSHE programme as in the sixth-form lesson when the Ape Theatre Company drama led to discussion on causing death by driving. Good work is also evident in history and geography as in the Year 8 class where pupils considered the issues surrounding Mexican immigration into the USA. In physical education pupils demonstrate fair play, and good sporting behaviour. There is a clear and consistent approach to sanctions and rewards and celebration of pupils' achievements are a regular feature of school assemblies.
- 50 Provision for pupils' social development is good. Sixth form students are well-linked to local primary schools and value their contact with younger pupils. Prefects show pride in the responsibilities which they undertake in the school and some have also undertaken training to act as mentors to pupils in Key Stage 3 as part of the school 'buddy' scheme. Through work experience in Year 10 and the good range of trips and residential visits available to all year groups, the social skills of pupils are carefully fostered and advanced. Pupils are positively encouraged to show concern and awareness for the needs of others beyond the school community and they do so with enthusiasm, especially in the support they give to charities. Many visitors support the curriculum especially in PSHE where the school nurse, local police officer and others contribute to the teaching programme. Pupils listen well to each other, work sensibly in pairs and small groups, enjoy discussions and sharing ideas and show respect for the views of others.
- 51 The provision for cultural development is good, especially in the range of interesting experiences given to pupils which encourage them to explore their own culture and that of other western European countries through music, art and literature. Opportunities to explore and value the multi-cultural dimensions of modern society are few and the school recognises that this is an area for development. Pupils are provided with opportunities to visit theatres and galleries and explore the cultures and amenities of a range of foreign countries through the well-planned school trips. In music, geography and history pupils are able to learn about the cultural traditions of such diverse societies as Zambia, China and Japan. Visitors also provide an important dimension to the awareness of other cultures and traditions such as the visit made by an Indian music group which gave pupils valuable first-hand experience of Indian musical instruments.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

- 52 Since the last inspection health and safety has been a priority in the school and good progress has been made. A comprehensive policy has been produced and a health and safety committee formed. The site manager, who acts as the health and safety officer, has a good understanding of the subject. He has produced efficient inspection and maintenance procedures and schedules, and acts quickly in following up reported incidents. Much of the responsibility for implementing and monitoring the policy has been delegated to heads of subjects. This works effectively in most cases although there is no regular feedback from heads of subjects to the committee or monitoring of their health and safety role. Consequently some issues still need to be addressed, such as the siting of welding facilities in design and technology and how the use of free-weights are supervised in

physical education. On the school site cars parked on the access roads, including the marked crossings, make it dangerous for pupils attempting to cross these roads.

- 53 Child protection procedures are good. Staff know who the designated teacher with responsibility for child protection is; induction for new staff ensures a consistent approach and links with outside agencies are effective.
- 54 The school's tutorial system is well organised and well regarded by pupils. Heads of school and form tutors work effectively together to provide a supportive and caring environment. A number of effective monitoring and support systems ensures pupils' academic and personal development. In Year 11, for example, pupils who are identified as potential underachievers at GSCE are mentored by staff, and a 'buddy' system where sixth-form students provide support and guidance to pupils in the lower school is seen as positive by all those involved. Tutor review days in Years 10 and 11 have recently been implemented and provide a good means of linking academic and pastoral support by allowing tutors to discuss academic progress with individual pupils.
- 55 The special needs co-ordinator (SENCO) has developed good programmes to support the learning of all special needs pupils, often with the help of the LEA Learning Support Services. Visiting specialists work with individual pupils and small groups who are withdrawn from lessons to receive their assistance. The SENCO keeps track of the development of all pupils on the register and there are suitable systems in place for the identification of pupils who are at risk. Class teachers, however, do not generally play a sufficiently active role in the promotion of progress towards targets in pupils' individual education plans.
- 56 The PHSE programme in Key Stage 3 is well structured, although its delivery is not monitored which means that pupils receive a varied experience. In Key Stage 4 the PHSE conference days are well planned and promise to be an effective strategy once they are fully operational.
- 57 The monitoring of attendance is good with regular register checks performed by the heads of school, and effective support, when necessary, from the education welfare officer. The school has good policies on behaviour and bullying which are clearly working well. Parents also feel that when incidents do occur they are effectively dealt with.
- 58 Since the last inspection the school has implemented a detailed central system of recording and monitoring pupils' progress. Individual pupil records are being developed, beginning with their Key Stage 2 test results and their CAT scores on entry. These records are most systematic and complete for the younger pupils and it is simply a matter of time before the system will have worked through the school. This enables the school to provide the annual and the interim report on progress to parents. The school makes effective use of the data supplied by the local authority's analysis unit to monitor the performance of the school in its local context and to set school targets. Further effective use is made of the information to predict individual performance and to use this in guidance and review procedures. Heads of subject are kept well-informed of these predictions and of analyses of their subject and the school's relative performance. The information is beginning to be used to set targets for individual subjects.
- 59 The value of the system is dependent on the accuracy of the data. The accuracy of assessment is generally good in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form where teachers know well the examination syllabuses' criteria and requirements. It is not so uniformly sound in Key Stage 3 where assessment against National Curriculum levels is required and practice in subjects varies. There is good practice, for example, in science, history and geography. In this key stage pupils are aware of their progress against national curriculum levels in some, but not all subjects. In the main, good records are maintained of assessments made and are used in discussion with individual pupils.

Subjects do not yet make sufficient use of this information to inform and focus their planning towards raising standards still further. Marking is thorough in most subjects and, in the best practice, annotations are used to guide pupils in how to improve their work.

- 60 The last inspection reported that the school provided a friendly, secure and caring environment. This has been maintained and further developed. The school has started to link academic assessment and monitoring to the successful pastoral system. Progress since the last inspection has been good.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

- 61 Overall, parents have a good view of the school and appreciate the fact that their children regard school as a friendly and caring place that they like. Parents feel comfortable to approach the school with concerns and problems. They see it as a place where their children can make good progress because they are encouraged to work hard and to do their best. Some parents were unhappy about homework. The inspection found that homework provision overall was satisfactory but it was not consistent in terms of the quantity set through the week resulting in unequal workloads for pupils on different days. Parents would also welcome a more extensive range of interesting activities out of school. A good range of visits and trips is arranged for pupils in all year groups both in this country and abroad. Such trips are often linked to curriculum work but they also provide valuable social and cultural experiences for pupils and make an important contribution to their personal development. However the inspectors did share the parents' view that the range of extra curricular clubs offered to pupils, although valuable, was limited.
- 62 The school has developed good and effective links with parents, especially the informal links between staff and parents. Parents do find the school approachable and staff ready to help and support both pupils and parents, and the school assigns a high priority to this area. Both concerns and pupils' successes are shared quickly with parents by the school. The quality of information provided by the school is good. Publications are clear, well presented and informative. Comprehensive information packs, for example one for potential sixth-form students based on the booklet 'Stepping Up a Gear', are available for parents and pupils at the important key points through the school. Regular information is also provided through the friendly newsletter format. The information provided for parents in the annual report of governors is clear and helpful but omits one statutory requirement because it does not address the school's approach to pupils with disabilities. The school has made good improvements to the range of information provided for parents on the progress made by pupils - an annual report, a mid-year report, and a consultation evening for parents. All pupils are monitored on a regular basis and parents receive letters advising them of the results of this interim monitoring and drawing attention to any concerns. However, although generally helpful to parents, the annual report was of variable quality with significant inconsistencies in content and presentation between departments and also between different staff within departments. A notable difference in the grading system used in different subjects is also confusing.
- 63 Parents' involvement with the work of the school is satisfactory. The contribution made by the Parent Teacher Association (PTA) continues to be as valuable as noted in the previous inspection. Recently the PTA has made a significant contribution to the cost of refurbishing the sixth-form common room. The contribution made by parent governors and the parents who support extra curricular sports activities is valued. Parents have been widely consulted in the drafting of the home-school agreement, now successfully implemented. Parents are also well involved in the current school debate about changing the times of the school day. The school does not plan regular consultation with parents on major spending or curriculum decisions but parents involved with the

PTA are seen by the school as a useful sounding board when considering new initiatives for the school.

- 64 The contribution made by parents to their children's learning at school and home is satisfactory. The pupil's planner gives parents an understanding of the homework to be done and also provides an informal medium to communicate with school. Use of the planner as a link between home and school is inconsistent and although the school encourages its use, it accepts that not all parents will use or even regularly sign their child's planner. In addition to the good information provided for parents on the subjects taught at each key stage, the school also organises, on a regular basis, a parents' evening to consider drugs issues. The information provided by the school for parents is not extensive but is good in quality and enables them to provide support for their children at home
- 65 There is good liaison with parents in the provision of individual education plans for pupils who need them and parents are fully involved in annual reviews.. However, more frequent information about progress towards meeting the targets in these plans would be advantageous to pupils and their parents.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

- 66 The work of the school is strongly rooted in its aim, which is: 'to develop confident adults whose academic qualifications and personal qualities enable them to establish themselves in the world'. This aim is regularly reinforced with pupils and parents and made clear to staff who join the school. The head provides strong leadership based on this aim and has guided the school through a difficult period of development since the previous inspection. During this time the school has secured its future by increasing the annual intake of pupils, and has successfully negotiated the change from grant maintained to local authority controlled status. The standard of teaching is significantly better than at the time of the previous inspection. The school has a clear educational direction, and plans to build on its existing good level of achievement as a grammar school by increasing the number of subjects pupils may take at GCSE level next year. The head employs an open style of management, consulting widely with staff on major issues. In addition, he is strongly concerned to promote the professional development and the personal welfare of all staff, teaching and non-teaching.
- 67 The responsibilities of staff are clearly defined in job descriptions. The head allocates responsibilities on a 'delegate and trust' principle, and has devolved the organisation of curriculum, finance, admissions and staff development to senior colleagues. In addition to guiding and supporting colleagues, he retains responsibility for staffing. The deputy heads and other senior staff discharge their responsibilities effectively. There is a well-organised and effective pastoral support structure. Senior staff are conspicuous around the school and contribute strongly on a day-to-day basis to the school's positive ethos and to the achievement of its aim.
- 68 The special needs programme is well managed by the school's SENCO who has good individual knowledge of the pupils. However, there is insufficient insistence that teachers plan the strategies which they intend to use in individual cases, and that subject teachers provide a regular update on progress towards targets in IEPs.
- 69 Staff are well informed on issues affecting the school's development, and decisions are made, where appropriate, by consensus. Staff were consulted, for example, about the proposed change to the school day. They are fully aware of the current budgetary constraints. The school's development plan was compiled after wide consultation at department level and with the governing body. Departmental development plans are carefully linked to priorities for whole-school development. The success of financial bidding in subject areas depends on its relevance to the school's overall

planning. The effectiveness at middle management level varies. There is a high standard of management in mathematics, physical education, French, history and music but shortcomings in the management of design and technology, art, religious education and German.

- 70 There has recently been considerable change in the composition of the governing body, triggered partly by the school's change of status. A significant number of the governors are newly appointed. The governors are very well informed about the school through a schedule of regular meetings which have increased in number this year, and through documentation and reports which are of very high quality. The chair maintains regular contact with the head. Individual heads of subject make presentations at governors' meetings as part of a three-year rolling programme. Governors are linked with individual subject areas as a way of monitoring the school's provision and showing their interest and concern. However, procedures are inconsistent and have not been formalised, and governors do not report on their visits. At subject level, therefore, the governors are not systematically discharging their function as 'critical friends' of the school. While the governors respect the professionalism of the head, they rigorously scrutinise the school's results and planning. They closely monitor the school's finances and have played an informed and responsible part in negotiating the school's current negative budget. The governors regularly review all school policies.
- 71 The monitoring of teaching is thorough and well established at a senior level. The head has observed and reported back to each teacher at least twice in the eighteen months preceding the inspection, and the deputy heads and other staff have between them observed over a hundred lessons. At department level, the standard of monitoring and evaluation of teachers' performance is mixed. It is good in mathematics, physical education, history and music, but unsatisfactory in design and technology, art, German and religious education. A successful pilot scheme to monitor and set targets for pupils who need closer guidance is being extended to include Year 10 as well as Year 11 this year. In-service training events and the appraisal process are used constructively to enhance the effectiveness of teaching.
- 72 A wide-ranging three-year strategic plan for school improvement has been implemented. The plan emphasises the partnership between school, governors and parents, and takes account of the school's need to develop through a period of growing financial stringency. Progress in the implementation of the plan is well monitored and annually reported. The plan, though thorough, is lacking in detail overall. Its ten areas of development are not prioritised. A close monitoring is maintained of school's position in comparison with other local selective schools. The school achieved its GCSE target grades in 1999, is well on the way to achieving those for 2000 and may need to review those for 2001 in the light of progress in the school and a rising national trend.
- 73 A very high standard of financial planning is maintained. Planning has, of necessity, to be prudent. Financial administration is efficient and all financial systems are soundly in place. Despite tardiness in extending the use of ICT across the curriculum, the school is employing computers to increase efficiency in many areas of administration. The school receives a number of specific grants and these have all been appropriately and effectively applied for the purpose they were received. The capital development work, achieved and in progress, and the operation of its own catering provision are very well managed. The overall standard of teaching is high, the school is well managed, and there is unanimity of purpose between school, parents and governors. The school is well-placed to develop further and has a good capacity to do so. The positive outcomes have been achieved at a little above average cost per pupil and represent sound value for money.
- 74 Overall the school has a good match of teachers and staff to support the curriculum and enable the detail of day-to-day school management to run effectively. There are positive relationships between teachers and technical staff and a supportive team ethos. Roles and responsibilities are now more

sharply defined than at the time of the previous inspection, providing a more effective decision-making structure. However, the present lack of technical support for design and technology has a negative impact on learning.

- 75 Since the last report, improved systems have been introduced by senior staff to ensure there is a better match between staff development, targets identified through teacher appraisal and priorities identified in subject development plans. There are now strong links with the former but weaknesses in the structure of the subject plans make the identification of training and the impact on pupils' learning more difficult to monitor. Considerable progress has been made in implementing an appraisal system. Appraisers are fully trained and a cycle of meetings, observations and reviews has been established.
- 76 There has been a significant cut in the training budget in recent months and great efforts are employed to ensure the best possible use is made of limited resources. Much of the in-service training attended by staff during the current academic year has been focused on changes in examination requirements.
- 77 The quality of support given to newly qualified teachers and other new staff is very good. A programme of induction meetings, lesson observations and feedback is very effective. Some subject leaders, for example science, provide particularly good support and exercise professional leadership, whilst others are less effective.
- 78 Overall, the accommodation is satisfactory but there are important weaknesses in the poor state of repair of some areas. Reference was made to these in the previous report and since then insufficient funding has become available to address even the priority areas the school has identified. Repairs to the roof, the fencing around the tennis courts and some internal decoration, are a few of the items urgently needing attention. A major building project due to commence later in the year will begin to address some, but by no means all, of the weaknesses identified. However some very poor quality temporary accommodation that is currently in use, and having a negative impact on standards and the quality of education, will be removed.
- 79 The resources for learning are adequate in most subjects and are good for mathematics. The planned replacement of ICT resources has brought the number of computers per pupil to levels that are above average but in most subjects there are too few computers available to provide the level of access required for the curriculum. In English there is a shortage of resources to replace worn out texts and there are shortages of consumable materials and equipment in practical subjects. In art the use of cheaper materials, and in design and technology the limited range of resources, skews the curriculum. Pupils have to purchase some materials.
- 80 The library is small for the age range and the size of the school. Despite efforts to up-grade the furniture and the layout, it is still cramped. The formal atmosphere required for silent sixth-form study is not welcoming or stimulating enough to encourage reading and active enquiry by younger pupils. The library is bustling at break and lunch times but is not open, to encourage wider use and independent study, before or after school. Computer resources have been increased recently and a good range of CD ROMS is available. The library receives an appropriate share of the restricted resources available and has been specifically supported by a sponsored activity. However, overall expenditure on the library is low. The allocation of resources to subjects is carefully planned and budgeted and recent additions to the books for sixth-form students have helped to address areas where provision was inadequate.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

81 To continue the development within the school and to further improve the quality of education provided and continue to raise standards the governors and the school should:

- 1) improve the areas of weak teaching and underachievement by:
 - developing teachers' classroom management skills in the few instances where these are weak
 - ensuring a better understanding of the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus in religious education in Key Stage 3 and that teaching methods are developed to deliver these requirements;
 - ensuring that all subjects have, and implement, curricular plans which cover the full requirements of the National Curriculum for the subject;
(paras 13,21,24,28,29,33,35,36,41,100,125,129,132,135,146,148,156,171,175,178, 186,192,193,194,195)
- 2) build on current good practice to achieve greater uniformity of effective management in all subjects by:
 - ensuring that all subjects have schemes of work which meet the school's requirement that any new or supply teacher should immediately know what to teach next to maintain pupils' progress;
 - ensuring that all subjects have, and implement, development plans which focus upon raising standards;
 - ensuring that assessment in all subjects clearly reflects National Curriculum criteria and that marking includes annotation which will provide guidance to pupils on how to improve their attainment
 - a more formal monitoring by senior teachers.
(paras 29,37,40,56,60,69,70,71,72,100,123,130,135,137,147,147,173,175,178,179,180,190,193,196)
- 3) build on current planning to ensure that pupils experience their full entitlement of opportunities to develop their skills in the use of information and communication technology by ensuring that:
 - pupils' experience is planned and co-ordinated across the subjects of the curriculum;
 - their attainments are assessed, recorded and reported;
 - subjects have the resources, and teachers have the expertise, to deliver this requirement.
(paras 9,79,143,154,162,163,166,172)
- 4) respond to the current non-compliance with statutory requirements, namely:
 - that all pupils in Key Stage 4 should follow a course in design and technology;
 - that students in the sixth form should have religious education
 - that all pupils should experience a daily act of collective worship.
(paras 39,48)

In addition the governors and school should consider addressing the following lesser weaknesses in their action plan: a literacy policy (*para 7,30,95*); increasing opportunities for independence in learning and taking responsibility (*para 25,36*); wider knowledge of, and progress, towards IEP targets (*para 31,55,68*); ensuring lower attaining pupils have sufficient opportunity to consolidate understanding (*para 38,110,120*); some accommodation and

resourcing shortfalls (*para 78,101,130*); safe working practice in DT and PE (*para 52*); management structure in design and technology and provision of technical support (*para 74,138*); greater recognition of the multi-cultural dimension of pupils' development (*para 51*); curriculum time issues (*para 41*); prioritise and provide greater detail in the annual action plans drawn from the three year strategic plan (*para 72*); the increasing extra-curriculum club activities (*para 42,61*); adherence to a homework timetable that gives a more uniform daily workload (*para 61*).

OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES

The sixth form

- 83 The sixth form is small and to widen the opportunity of option combinations the school works effectively in close co-operation with two nearby schools. Students at any of these schools may study a course at one of the other schools. This co-operation allows Oakwood students the opportunity to follow a GNVQ course if they wish. More students currently come to Oakwood to study a course than go from Oakwood to study elsewhere and the school therefore achieves a little financial gain. Student choice at the end of Key Stage 4 results in a small number of girls either enrolling at the school or studying a course there. They report that the school is welcoming and they feel happy and well-supported. There is equality of opportunity and experience in the sixth form for all students.
- 84 The curriculum provision is good; the choice is broad and allows a wide range of possible subject combinations. All the courses are directed towards an A-level examination although there is the possibility for a student, struggling with the demands of a particular course, to be finally examined at AS-level. All subjects in the Key Stage 4 curriculum continue into the sixth form with the addition of business studies and a government and politics option in the history area. This year a human biology course has been introduced.
- 85 The results in 1999 were in line with the national average. Groups in any one subject tend to be small making comparison with national averages of little meaning. Using the data analysis carried out by the local authority across all Kent students, the school is able to sensibly predict the potential examination achievement of a student based upon the individual's GCSE results. Students examined in 1999 achieved, on average, a point score that was two higher than predicted. This is good and equates to students achieving an average of one grade higher than predicted. Teaching in the sixth form is the best in the school. The standards in the sixth form are above the national expectation for many of the courses and students' achievement is good.
- 86 All students start following four subjects even if, later on, this is reduced to three. The structure is therefore ready to cope with the anticipated national changes in September. The broadening of the curriculum beyond academic courses is limited. Students have an opportunity to enter the general studies examination but not as the result of a specific course of study. The PSHE programme covers university application and entrance procedures well. Beyond this the programme includes isolated events involving visiting speakers or groups but it lacks structure, although planning is underway. The programme does not include religious education and therefore does not meet statutory requirements.
- 87 The governors are committed to maintaining the sixth form. They do this by allocating, to the sixth form, a slightly higher proportion of the staffing resources available than the number of

students would initially justify. This imbalance is not unduly large. Overall the sixth form is a cost-effective provision.

Community links

- 88 The school has a satisfactory range of links, both to the local community and to the wider commercial community. This is an area that the school wishes to develop and has appointed a member of staff with responsibility to expand community links and secure sponsorship for the school. The school has welcomed sponsorship from several organisations. New initiatives linking sixth-form students to local primary schools have been very successful and are greatly valued by the students. Also making a significant contribution to the social and personal development of pupils are links beyond school to the world of work in Year 10 with the very well organised work experience programme. In the sixth form there is a smaller but still valuable work shadowing programme, as well as visits to commercial and industrial sites such as Fords at Dagenham. Visitors to the school from the local community, both socially as in the Christmas party organised for local elderly residents by Year 8 pupils, and to contribute to the teaching programme, also enhance the personal development of pupils. The PSHE programme is enriched by contributions from local paramedical staff, prison officers and police. In music there have been visiting musicians such as the Indian band. The school has links with teacher training institutions and provides regular placements for teachers in training. Less well developed are links with tertiary colleges of education.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed

132

Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils

45

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

| Excellent | Very good | Good | Satisfactory | Unsatisfactory | Poor | Very Poor |
|-----------|-----------|------|--------------|----------------|------|-----------|
| 4.5 | 16.7 | 37.9 | 34.1 | 6.8 | 0 | 0 |

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll

| | Y7 – Y11 | Sixth form |
|---|----------|------------|
| Number of pupils on the school's roll | 540 | 160 |
| Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals | 9 | 3 |

Special educational needs

| | Y7 – Y11 | Sixth form |
|---|----------|------------|
| Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs | 0 | 0 |
| Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register | 24 | 4 |

English as an additional language

| | No of pupils |
|---|--------------|
| Number of pupils with English as an additional language | 8 |

Pupil mobility in the last school year

| | No of pupils |
|--|--------------|
| Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission | 4 |
| Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving | 11 |

Attendance

Authorised absence

| | % |
|---------------------------|------|
| School data | 92.9 |
| National comparative data | 91.0 |

Unauthorised absence

| | % |
|---------------------------|-----|
| School data | 0.0 |
| National comparative data | 1.1 |

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3

| Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year | Year | Boys | Girls | Total |
|--|------|------|-------|-------|
| | 1999 | 108 | 0 | 108 |

| National Curriculum Test/Task Results | | English | Mathematics | Science |
|---|----------|----------|-------------|-----------|
| Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above | Boys | 107 | 108 | 108 |
| | Girls | n/a | n/a | n/a |
| | Total | 107 | 108 | 107 |
| Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above | School | 99 (100) | 100 (100) | 100 (100) |
| | National | 63 (65) | 62 (60) | 55 (56) |
| Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above | School | 90 (49) | 100 (99) | 86 (88) |
| | National | 28 (35) | 38 (36) | 23 (27) |

| Teachers' Assessments | | English | Mathematics | Science |
|---|----------|----------|-------------|-----------|
| Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above | Boys | 107 | 108 | 108 |
| | Girls | n/a | n/a | n/a |
| | Total | 107 | 108 | 108 |
| Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above | School | 99 (100) | 100 (100) | 100 (100) |
| | National | 64 (62) | 64 (64) | 60 (62) |
| Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above | School | 75 (72) | 99 (99) | 89 (87) |
| | 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

| Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year | Year | Boys | Girls | Total |
|--|------|------|-------|-------|
| | 1999 | 117 | 0 | 117 |

| GCSE results | | 5 or more grades A* to C | 5 or more grades A*-G | 1 or more grades A*-G |
|---|----------|--------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified | Boys | 108 | 116 | 116 |
| | Girls | N/a | n/a | N/a |
| | Total | 108 | 116 | 116 |
| Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified | School | 92 (88) | 99 (98) | 99 (99) |
| | National | 46.3 (44.6) | 90.7 (89.8) | 95.7 (95.2) |

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

| GCSE results | | GCSE point score |
|-------------------------------|----------|------------------|
| Average point score per pupil | School | 54 (53) |
| | National | 37.8 (36.8) |

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

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

Attainment at the end of the sixth form

| Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A-level or AS-level examinations | Year | Boys | Girls | Total |
|---|------|------|-------|-------|
| | 1999 | 69 | 3 | 72 |

| Average A/AS points score per candidate | For candidates entered for 2 or more A-levels or equivalent | | | For candidates entered for fewer than 2 A-levels or equivalent | | |
|---|---|--------|-------------|--|--------|-----------|
| | Male | Female | All | Male | Female | All |
| School | 16.7 | 20.7 | 16.9 (17.2) | 6.3 | n/a | 6.3 (5.2) |
| National | 17.7 | 18.1 | 17.9 (17.6) | 2.7 | 2.8 | 2.8 (2.8) |

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

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

Ethnic background of pupils

| | No of pupils |
|---------------------------------|--------------|
| Black – Caribbean heritage | 1 |
| Black – African heritage | 2 |
| Black – other | |
| Indian | 6 |
| Pakistani | |
| Bangladeshi | |
| Chinese | 4 |
| White | 687 |
| Any other minority ethnic group | |

Exclusions in the last school year

| | Fixed period | Permanent |
|------------------------------|--------------|-----------|
| Black – Caribbean heritage | | |
| Black – African heritage | | |
| Black – other | | |
| Indian | | |
| Pakistani | | |
| Bangladeshi | | |
| Chinese | | |
| White | 11 | |
| Other minority ethnic groups | | |

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y13

| | |
|--|------|
| Total number of qualified teachers (FTE) | 43.7 |
| Number of pupils per qualified teacher | 16 |

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y7 – Y13

| | |
|---|-----|
| Total number of education support staff | 7 |
| Total aggregate hours worked per week | 213 |

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13

| | |
|---|------|
| Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes | 77.2 |
|---|------|

Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

| | |
|-------------|------|
| Key Stage 3 | 21.0 |
| Key Stage 4 | 20.2 |

Financial information

| | |
|----------------|--------|
| Financial year | 1998/9 |
|----------------|--------|

| | £ |
|--|---------|
| Total income | 1828003 |
| Total expenditure | 1855408 |
| Expenditure per pupil | 2684 |
| Balance brought forward from previous year | 14135 |
| Balance carried forward to next year | -13270 |

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

| | |
|-----------------------------------|-----|
| Number of questionnaires sent out | 708 |
| Number of questionnaires returned | 268 |

Percentage of responses in each category

| | Strongly agree | Tend to agree | Tend to disagree | Strongly disagree | Don't know |
|--|----------------|---------------|------------------|-------------------|------------|
| My child likes school. | 39 | 49 | 9 | 2 | 1 |
| My child is making good progress in school. | 45 | 49 | 4 | 0 | 1 |
| Behaviour in the school is good. | 25 | 62 | 5 | 0 | 6 |
| My child gets the right amount of work to do at home. | 18 | 62 | 15 | 3 | 2 |
| The teaching is good. | 28 | 66 | 2 | 1 | 3 |
| I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on. | 32 | 45 | 17 | 3 | 3 |
| I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem. | 47 | 48 | 2 | 1 | 2 |
| The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best. | 60 | 38 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| The school works closely with parents. | 25 | 53 | 16 | 2 | 4 |
| The school is well led and managed. | 37 | 53 | 3 | 1 | 7 |
| The school is helping my child become mature and responsible. | 38 | 52 | 6 | 0 | 4 |
| The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons. | 22 | 42 | 17 | 3 | 16 |

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

ENGLISH

- 89 Results of national tests, at the end of Key Stage 3 in 1999 were very high compared to all maintained schools and broadly in line with similar selective schools. Over the last three years, there has been a rising trend of success faster than that nationally. The proportion achieving the higher levels in the tests has improved since the last inspection, although the results of teacher assessments are lower.
- 90 Results in GCSE English language in 1999 were very high in comparison with the national average for all maintained schools, but below results in selective schools. In literature, for which most but not all, pupils are entered, the results have been erratic. They were well above average for all maintained schools in 1999 and were above the average for selective schools. The proportion of highest grades in English language has been stable over the last three years while the proportion in literature is rising.
- 91 In the sixth form, GCE English literature A-level grades A and B have declined over the last three years, but in GCE English language A-level, an examination introduced since the last inspection, the results have risen considerably. However, the relatively small number of students makes meaningful comparisons with national averages difficult.
- 92 In lessons and in work seen, standards at the end of Key Stage 3 are well above expectation. Most pupils are working at or near their capacity in all aspects of the subject. Pupils are articulate and confident in spoken tasks, in answering questions, justifying opinions and in making more formal presentations to the class. Generally, they listen well and are respectful of the views of others. They read a variety of demanding texts independently and with understanding. Stories are seen as a source of pleasure and provide good stimuli for the study of English language. Writing is very good, particularly when pupils build up and improve their work with careful planning and drafting. Most pupils pay attention to accurate spelling and punctuation but a number of pupils become careless and disorganised as they move through the key stage. The small number of pupils with special educational needs achieves well.
- 93 At the end of Key Stage 4 standards are above expectation and sometimes well above. Higher achieving pupils engage in discussion and debate with self-assurance. All pupils are confident in structured oral work, though some are more at ease in answering direct questions that allow them to give straight answers. The high standard in the reading of demanding literature results from constructive and detailed guidance from the teachers. Most pupils are able to select appropriate quotations to illustrate their essays. Finished writing can be of a very high standard when carefully planned, drafted and word-processed and there are examples of very perceptive and impressive coursework essays. However, a minority of pupils in Year 11 begin to struggle with the demanding texts and their hand-written work lacks detail and accuracy. Their presentation deteriorates during the key stage.
- 94 At the end of the sixth form, the standard of work is always above, and sometimes well above, expectation. Students confront a wide range of texts critically. A-Level English literature students collaborating in a study of the play 'Light Shining Over Buckinghamshire' spoke their lines aloud with assurance and gained fresh insight into interpreting the motives of the characters at the time of the Civil War. A-Level English language students examine the language with precision and

recognise and explain the nuances involved. Students effectively use the study of different professional writers to enhance their own writing. Work of the highest attaining students showed a high standard of fluency, expression and maturity.

- 95 Standards in literacy across the curriculum are good overall. Speaking and listening skills are very good. Pupils are usually fluent and articulate in their use of standard English throughout the school, encouraged by good oral activities, sensitive teaching and skilful questioning. Pupils are courteous and listen politely. They are able to work effectively in groups, discussing ideas and agreeing on outcomes. Pupils have high reading standards in all subjects. They show competence and comprehension when handling a range of factual, reference and creative texts in class. Wider independent reading has improved since the last inspection, and the reading records kept by Years 7 and 8 offer a good support. However, pupils' use of the library is limited. The accommodation is small and there are too few books. Standards in writing vary. In history and geography, writing frameworks and templates assist pupils to structure extended writing and the benefit shows as pupils move through the school. Good use is made of computers in some subjects to word-process, re-work and produce finished pieces of which the pupils are proud. The use of correct technical terms is stressed, particularly in the sciences and in design and technology. There are good examples in most subjects of writing for different purposes and audiences, though writing is sometimes hurried and careless in day-to-day work in the classroom. In the absence of a whole school policy, teachers are inconsistent in their expectation and approach.
- 96 As they move through the school, pupils' achievements are good. As a result of the emphasis placed on studying literature of worth, pupils' reading shows clear improvement over time. In Year 7, for example, pupils' reading of 'A Christmas Carol' enabled them to bring together several themes in the narrative and appreciate the descriptive vocabulary used by Charles Dickens. Year 8 pupils, reading the novel 'White Fang' by Jack London, cleverly transposed the description of the cheerless Fort Yukon into a persuasive travel article. Pupils developed their understanding of a writer's choice of language and how it contributes to meaning and form. In Year 9, in a close study of 'Romeo and Juliet', pupils displayed a progressive awareness of the subtleties in the dialogue and the complications in character. As they move through the key stage, pupils show a growing appreciation of the craft of the writer which helps them read other texts with more critical awareness and become more confident in their own writing.
- 97 The majority of pupils continue to achieve well through Key Stage 4 where they are quick to develop analytical skills helped by the assessment of both oral and written work against GCSE criteria. The highest attaining pupils write with increasing independence and skill and rise to the demanding challenges they are given. However, basic errors in spelling and punctuation flaw the work of a significant proportion of the school's average attaining pupils.
- 98 Achievement in the sixth form is good. A-Level English literature students improve their skills in the analysis of texts, acting out extracts from plays in order to understand better their meaning and performance needs. They develop an increased awareness of the impact of language and image in communicating meaning and nuance. The relatively new English language A-Level is attracting more students who are finding success and enjoyment in the detailed study of language. Progress throughout the two-year course is underpinned by effective guidance from the teachers in good class teaching and detailed, constructive marking of students' work. The students develop the ability to work independently, primarily as a result of very good teaching strategies.
- 99 Pupils and students have a serious and enthusiastic approach to their work. They behave well and are conscientious, sustaining their efforts in lessons and rising to the teacher's expectations. They work productively in pairs and there are many examples of pupils in all years who make significant efforts to achieve good results. Most respond well when given opportunities to use their initiative

in lessons. A few average attaining pupils in Year 11 begin to lose a sense of purpose and urgency in their work, but the majority work hard to refine their final GCSE coursework submissions.

100 Teaching in Key Stages 3 and 4 is satisfactory and often good. It has improved since the last inspection with successful strategies adopted to engage pupils actively in the lessons. It is good in the sixth form where groups are small and work is tightly focused. Some teaching of younger pupils was unsatisfactory in a few instances when expectations of behaviour were too low and there were weaknesses in class management. Generally, teachers are reassuring, enthusiastic, good humoured and seek to boost the pupils' self esteem. There is rigour, sharp focus and a sequence of suitable, short, inter-related tasks. Skilful questioning and interventions by teachers, observed in most lessons, promotes a high challenge. The swift pace and varied tasks create a positive climate for learning and result in the good progress most pupils make. However, as in the last inspection, there is still a tendency to regard all pupils as if they were of equal ability and, when teachers plan lessons in terms of subject matter to be covered, this leaves some pupils behind. Individual education plans for the small number of pupils with special educational needs have no subject specific targets. A good start has been made on collecting assessment data on all pupils to support monitoring progress. However, there is still much to be done on interpreting and using the results to help individual pupils identify exactly what they must do to improve their work.

101 Drama is newly introduced in an extra English lesson each week in Year 8, but the school lacks a long term plan on how, or if, drama is to develop within the curriculum. No teacher has drama qualifications and accommodation for teaching drama is unsatisfactory. Regular visits are organised to the professional theatre for all years in the school and this often supports the play reading done in class. A successful production of 'Much Ado About Nothing' was performed last term by students in the sixth form together with girls from a nearby school.

102 Management is efficient with clear directives particularly focusing on examination requirements. Much has been done to address the issues raised in the last inspection. There has been improvement in curricular planning in Key Stage 3, in raising attainment at the highest grades and introducing good teaching methods which actively involve the pupils. The sixth-form A-level English language course is a good development and is gaining in popularity. The teachers in English show commitment and dedication, but a significant imbalance in teaching experience makes the sharing of responsibilities difficult.

MATHEMATICS

103 In 1999, standards of attainment in mathematics in the end of Key Stage 3 tests were very high compared with all maintained schools. Results have improved since 1996, and in 1999 they were above average for selective schools.

104 GCSE attainment in 1999 was very high compared with all schools and above average for selective schools in terms of the proportion of the cohort achieving grades A*-C. Results have improved considerably since 1997, particularly in the highest grades. Pupils made greater progress in mathematics than in the other subjects they studied

105 A-level results in 1999 were above average for maintained schools both in the proportion of students achieving the higher grades A and B and achieving a pass. There has been a rising trend of A-level grades and pass rates over the three years from 1997 to 1999, which place the school in a broadly average position compared with other selective schools.

106 Standards, judged through class observation and the scrutiny of written work, are well above national expectation by the end of Key Stages 3 and 4 and above average by the end of the A-level

course. Pupils enter the school with well above average levels of competence in mathematics. They make good progress through Key Stage 3, and by the end of Year 9 they are all approximately two full National Curriculum levels more advanced than they were on entry to the school. By the end of the key stage, pupils are generally confident with topics such as the applications of the theorem of Pythagoras, simultaneous equations, the use of trigonometrical ratios in right-angled triangles, and standard form index notation. Their work in number and algebra is particularly strong. The lowest attaining pupils understand the same topics but they work rather slowly. Often their skills are not being sufficiently consolidated before the class moves on. These pupils sometimes exhibit less than competent skills in the four rules of number related to decimals and percentages.

- 107 The vast majority of pupils continue to achieve well in Key Stage 4. Teachers give them the opportunity of studying at the highest levels of the National Curriculum, and the majority are able to respond by producing work consistent with the highest GCSE grades. Topics such as work with the cosine rule are clearly understood, and the algebraic manipulations related to changing the subject of a formula are usually tackled with ease, as are algebraic fractions. The lowest attaining pupils find difficulty with the work at this level but teachers have recently given them the opportunity to consolidate their skills with easier exercises so that they will be confident at GCSE at around grade B or C. Course-work is of a good standard and it supports the achievement of good overall examination results. Pupils with special educational needs generally make at least satisfactory progress towards the targets in their individual education plans.
- 108 A-level groups start from an entry requirement of A*-B grades on the higher paper at GCSE, as is the case in most schools. Achievement is good, and students' files contain vast quantities of worked and marked examples of above average standards in pure mathematics, statistics and mechanics. Standards at the end of the sixth form course are above average; in fact, some students have already achieved grades A and B in A level mathematics after only one year's study, and are now confidently proceeding towards good further mathematics qualifications.
- 109 Most pupils in the school have a well above average grasp of number, algebra, geometry, and graph work of all types. There is good provision across the curriculum for them to develop and use these skills in new contexts. Pupils' high order skills in all areas of mathematics help them to understand new concepts in science, geography, and design and technology with considerable ease. They are confident to use their numeracy skills in unfamiliar contexts across the curriculum whenever the need arises. Sometimes this results in rapid progress being made, as in A-level physics where high order algebraic competence speeds the understanding of quantitative treatments of phenomena.
- 110 Pupils' attitudes are good throughout the school, and they contribute well to the good pace of learning and progress. There is no evidence of the passive response accorded to many pupils in Key Stage 4 at the time of the previous inspection. Quite the opposite is evident because pupils are alert and discuss points in a mature manner with their teacher. Only in one A-level group are the students too passive. Pupils of all ages listen well to the teacher, and respond very positively to questions posed orally. In producing written work and working with computers they usually exhibit independence and extended powers of concentration. Records of work covered are extensive and detailed, but some pupils in Key Stages 3 and 4 do not make enough effort with the general standard of presentation, or with the precision needed for good quality graphs and geometrical diagrams.
- 111 Teaching is good throughout the school, and is the main significant factor underpinning the good rates of learning of pupils of all ages. The quality of the teaching varies from excellent to satisfactory with the vast majority of lessons being of good quality. Most of the weaknesses

mentioned in the last report have been eliminated. Teachers present their material in a challenging and interesting manner, and manage a very productive learning atmosphere in their rooms. The sequencing of points in explanations is particularly good, as is the careful questioning of the class to ensure that understanding is complete before moving on. Management of pupils is good and unobtrusive. Teachers have a good knowledge of their subject and often present the work in a fashion which allows the pupils some room for independent experimentation, but at the same time ensuring that learning and consolidation are complete. Comparative weaknesses in the teaching in a small minority of lessons relate to untidy presentation of work by the teacher, either on the board or on the overhead projector, and linked to this, insufficient insistence on good standards of presentation by all pupils. The pace of lessons is sometimes too great to allow the lowest attaining pupils to fully understand and consolidate their understanding and skills. This was evident at the last inspection, and it is characterised through gaps in pupils' work, incomplete exercises, and sometimes rather slow and deliberate attempts at doing examples in class.

- 112 The subject is managed and organised well, and targets set for pupils' attainment are high. Staff morale is good, and the teachers' easy humour and welcoming disposition provides the pupils with lessons which are strong in quality and good relationships. The subject area contains attractive displays of good work from pupils; these provide a strong message about expectation and quality to which the pupils respond positively. These factors combine to explain the high standards of education in mathematics in this school.

SCIENCE

- 113 In 1999, standards in science in the end of Key Stage 3 national tests were very high compared with all maintained schools. The proportion of pupils at National Curriculum levels 6 and 7 were broadly in line with similar schools although the average point score was below. Results have shown a rising trend.
- 114 GCSE attainment in 1999 was above the national averages in all three sciences. This attainment was close to the average in selective schools. Pupils made comparatively better progress in their science subjects than in the other subjects they studied. Standards have been rising over the last three years. There has been a dramatic increase in the proportion of pupils gaining grades A* and A at GCSE
- 115 A-level results in 1999 were above average for maintained schools. There has been a significant increase in students gaining the highest grades. There is also an increase in the numbers choosing to study science at A-level. The highest attaining students do very well in investigatory coursework where there were some creative projects including, for example, a colorimeter made from Lego to investigate chemical reactions.
- 116 Standards, judged through class observation and the scrutiny of written work, are well above national expectation at the end of each stage of education. Pupils enter the school with well above average levels of competence in science and make good progress through the key stage. By the end of the key stage pupils are generally confident with topics such as data handling and graphical work, fair testing, balancing chemical equations, investigation of microbes, food chains, and in understanding of electricity. The lower than anticipated outcomes at the highest levels in the most recent national testing is believed to be due to a lack of planned revision. This will be addressed this year.
- 117 The vast majority of pupils continue to achieve well in Key Stage 4. Investigatory work is good. Topics such as enzyme action are clearly understood, and graphical work in physics is tackled with ease. Higher attaining pupils show good understanding of the composition of the atmosphere and

of industrial processes. A small minority of the lowest attaining pupils finds difficulty with the work at this level. Coursework is of a good standard and well moderated. It supports the achievement of good overall results at GCSE.

- 118 A-level groups include students from other schools who have not studied three separate sciences. Detailed early testing ensures that they are well integrated. Achievement is very good. Students carry through experiments at a brisk pace and show very high ability in data handling and concept manipulation in chemistry project work, neurology and energy studies.
- 119 Pupils' attitudes are good throughout the school, and they contribute well to the good pace of learning and progress. No evidence was seen of the slow pace and lack of independence described in the previous inspection. Pupil behaviour is very good. They show respect, within the science block, to each other and to the environment. Although two technicians were ill during the week, practical work continued effectively due to the co-operation of pupils and the help of sixth-form students.
- 120 Teaching is good in Key Stages 3 and 4 and is very good in the sixth form. Teachers know their subjects well and used this knowledge to plan lessons which are well-focused on examination requirements. They use their knowledge both to question pupils carefully, to determine their understanding, as well as to introduce additional examples. For example, in a sixth-form human biology lesson when the discussion moved onto multiple sclerosis, interesting issues were raised. Explanations are very clearly given. An emphasis upon the correct use of vocabulary helps reinforce and consolidate pupils' understanding. Overall there is a good balance between teachers giving knowledge and seeking to draw out explanation and ideas from pupils. Lessons which could be described as 'theory' lessons are illustrated and enhanced by good quality resources, a range of activities including discussion and role play and, when appropriate, computer simulations or models. For example, in a Year 10 biology lesson on reflexes, the lesson began with a discussion to determine pupils' prior knowledge before moving on to a demonstration with pupils taking notes. A question sheet was followed by further explanation and a role play demonstration. The lesson finished with a further worksheet requiring the selection of information from data provided in a range of ways. The pace of the lesson and the change between linked activities sustained high concentration and involvement and led to good learning. The pace of some work in Key Stage 4 is so great as to potentially leave insufficient time for the lowest attaining pupils to consolidate their knowledge and understanding.
- 121 Pupils are well motivated, co-operative and show good learning of science skills. They handle equipment very well and are well used to collecting and recording data accurately. The standard of written work is good. Pupils are articulate and good at handling data and interpreting results. The quality of learning within the sixth form is very good and some excellent investigatory work was in progress. The mathematical capability of a group of sixth form physics students was of a very high level and this helped them to grasp and then develop their science work with apparent ease.
- 122 Assessment is good. Pupils are given an understanding of their progress against national curriculum levels and against the requirements of examination boards. Challenging and extending homework is regularly set and thoroughly marked. Teachers are well qualified, conscientious and have a wide range of skills and experience. The faculty is well led and the head of faculty is well supported by the heads of subject. Teaching and support staff work as a team. Two newly qualified teachers have been very well supported at the beginning of their careers.
- 123 There are some inconsistencies in practice between the subjects, for example differences in approach to practical work, assessment and reporting to parents. Some variation in expectation between teachers leads to varying quality of work. Monitoring the work of the faculty is not

sufficiently formalised to ensure the sharing of different examples of good practice shown by different teachers.

- 124 Learning resources and the specialist accommodation, although ageing, are adequate for the delivery of the curriculum and are treated well by the pupils. The maintenance and safety of the accommodation has improved since the appointment of the site manager.

ART

- 125 In the most recent GCSE examinations the percentage of pupils who gained A*-C grades was well above the national average and below those of other selective schools. However the percentage of higher A*-A grades was low when compared with results nationally and very low compared with the results of selective schools. A significant minority of pupils performed less well in art than in their other examination subjects. Apart from one year, when standards fell well below the levels of previous years, attainment has remained fairly static over the past 3 years. The numbers of students taking the A-level examination vary widely from year to year making overall judgements about attainment and comparisons with other schools inappropriate. In the most recent examinations all the students passed and some gained the higher grades.

- 126 Teacher assessments of attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 show the majority of pupils reaching standards above those reported nationally. Based on the work seen in classes, samples of work provided by the school and from discussions with pupils, attainment overall is well above expectation at the end of Key Stages 3 and 4 and is in line with course expectation in the sixth form. Pupils use computer programs to carry out research tasks and write and speak fluently about their own work and the work of others. When questioned closely many offer more thoughtful and reflective responses than is sometimes evident in their written work where detailed biographical information is recorded rather than evidence of analysis and personal comment.

- 127 Year 8 pupils could use visual elements effectively to express their ideas and feelings about poems by William Blake and Year 7 pupils could give biographical details and examples of work by Salvador Dali. Pupils were able to use the knowledge to good effect in aspects of their practical work. Throughout Years 7, 8 and 10 standards are very high and progress is good. However a significant minority of pupils in Years 9 and 11 do not sustain the same rate of progress that they made in previous years and consequently may not achieve the predicted, very high, standards by the end of the key stage. Some become less productive and focused and the fall in motivation results in more mechanical work undertaken without question and curiosity. Where fresh ideas or experiences require creative and intellectual effort pupils rise to the challenge. Many work independently and achieve much higher standards. Overall achievement in these two key stages is satisfactory. The progress made by students taking A-level examinations is sound overall. Their work shows a developing awareness and understanding of the wide-ranging social and cultural influences on artists' work. Their personal assignments, shaped to reflect individual interests, encourage students to read widely and maintain a high level of involvement in their own progress.

- 128 Throughout the school and in the studios there are examples of technically skilled and imaginative work by pupils of all ages. However pupils' independent learning skills and the standard of work in sketchbooks are not high enough.

- 129 The quality of teaching and learning is sound overall. The strengths of the teaching are in the subject knowledge and enthusiasm that teachers have for the subject and the positive relationships they foster, particularly when working in one-to-one situations. Good use is made of the work on display to support teaching and learning and reinforce high expectations. Teaching is more effective where pupils are given clear information about the longer-term assessments and the short-

term objectives of a given piece of work. Pupils can track their progress and undertake independent inquiry in the full knowledge of how it contributes to their overall grade. In most of the lessons seen, learning objectives had not been identified and pupils followed instructions. The outcomes therefore tended to be predictable and teacher-directed and failed to reflect the breadth of achievements in the class as a whole. A significant minority of pupils were not making sufficient progress and were not intellectually challenged and fully engaged in their work. The methods used to set homework and work in lessons do not check pupils' progress regularly enough, on the one hand to enable teachers to make on-going assessments of pupils' work and on the other to target their teaching to meet specific needs.

- 130 The subject teachers have a shared commitment to raising standards. However, the steps taken so far, to improve examination performance, have not had the hoped for effect. Internal moderation has been used effectively to agree standards but monitoring activities in the future need to focus more sharply on teaching strategies and the impact on pupils' attainment. For some pupils the work they are given fails to build sufficiently on what they have already experienced and achieved. Since the last inspection improvements have been made to curricular planning and subject documentation but budget constraints have limited the opportunities, particularly for younger pupils following the National Curriculum. The introduction of ceramics is an important addition to the curriculum but other areas, like printmaking and computer generated imagery, are very restricted and this has a negative impact on pupils' motivation and the standards they achieve.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

- 131 Not all pupils study design and technology in Key Stage 4, but of those who did last year, the proportion gaining A*-C grades at GCSE was above the national average for similar schools, and well above that for all schools. It is difficult to be precise about trends over the last few years because of changes to the syllabus, but there does appear to be a rising trend, with a dip in 1998 when the new syllabus was examined for the first time. At A-level, small groups make statistical comparisons even more difficult, but last year's results were well above the national average for both similar and all schools.
- 132 At the end of Key Stage 3 standards are below national expectation. Pupils are competent and confident when making products in wood and metal but have little experience of using plastic or other materials. They have good practical skills and sound knowledge of materials and processes and are also able to use ICT effectively to enhance the presentation of their work. However, overall achievement in this key stage is unsatisfactory. There are few opportunities for pupils to demonstrate creativity by designing their own solutions to problems. Designing skills are not taught systematically and are weak as a result. The use of exercise books for design work tends to encourage written communication at the expense of sketching and drawing and this work is often untidy and poorly presented.
- 133 Standards at the end of Key Stage 4 are above national expectation. Pupils' confidence in using tools and equipment comes from a sound grounding in Key Stage 3, but their effectiveness in designing remains much weaker than their making skills. Therefore, when working on their GSCE design projects, they have to be guided through the process step-by-step, which consumes too much time in Year 10 and results in teaching that is lacking pace. The initial research stages are comprehensive and well presented using ICT although much of this work is superfluous and is not used to inform design decisions. In comparison, the presentation and generation of design ideas is weak. However, overall achievement in the key stage is good. From a low starting point, by the end of the key stage pupils are able to design and make large-scale projects that are usually well crafted and finished. They know about constructional techniques and have the necessary practical skills, including brazing, turning and joint cutting, to successfully put these into practice.

- 134 In the sixth form standards are satisfactory overall but are higher in year 12 than in year 13. The Year 12 industrial case studies are impressive, with very good research and analysis of real problems. The students demonstrate relevant knowledge and have good presentation skills supported with effective use of ICT. Year 13 students design and manufacture engineering and furniture projects and achievement is satisfactory. However the standard of design and making is variable. Some of the projects have been carefully researched whereas others are simply made from available materials, even if these may not be the most appropriate.
- 135 Teaching and learning is satisfactory in Key Stages 3 and 4 and in the sixth form. Teachers have sound classroom control, good subject knowledge and teach the practical, making aspect of the subject very effectively. The associated knowledge of materials, processes and techniques are also well taught. As a result of learning these aspects of the subject pupils are able, in Key Stage 4 and above, to successfully construct large-scale projects such as beds, desks, coffee tables and fishing stools. Teachers ask challenging questions which help the pupils to think more deeply about their project work. Assessment of pupils' work is variable. In Key Stage 4, folders are regularly marked against examination criteria and information fed back to pupils. This helps them identify targets for improvement and aids progress. However the format and recording of these assessments is not consistently applied within the department. In Key Stage 3 assessment and recording is very inconsistent. National Curriculum attainment levels are only used just before the end of Year 9. Consequently this information cannot be used to identify strengths and weaknesses in designing and making which could then inform teaching and planning of future work. Not all teachers' record books are effective documents because attendance and marks are not always fully recorded. Although Key Stage 3 pupils make satisfactory progress with their practical work they are insufficiently challenged when designing, and teachers too often accept work which is of poor quality. In all years, homework is not always used appropriately to extend and support the class teaching.
- 136 In all key stages pupils are motivated, interested and remain on task. Their behaviour is good even when access to resources, such as computers, is limited or accommodation is cramped. They work well in teams and show perseverance where necessary. Sixth-form students demonstrate a very mature approach. They listen attentively when others are talking, ask pertinent questions and are challenging yet very supportive of each other.
- 137 The curriculum is unsatisfactory in both Key Stages 3 and 4. Curriculum time in Key Stage 3 is below the national average, group sizes are large, there is no technical support and workshops are untidy and poorly maintained. The combination of these factors has a negative impact on pupils' achievement and standards. The present scheme of work over-emphasises craft skills and under-emphasises design skills. However, this is currently under review. In Key Stage 4 not all pupils follow a design and technology course and the school is not meeting statutory requirements.
- 138 Leadership and management are unsatisfactory because staffing arrangements have created a management structure where the head of subject does not actually teach design and technology. The ability to impose a clear sense of purpose and direction is subsequently impeded, and some of the roles of a head of department in planning and implementing change are made much more difficult. In addition the subject development plan is insufficiently detailed to act as an effective management tool and fails to address key issues for the department, such as raising standards in Key Stage 3. Resources are unsatisfactory with the lack of new textbooks affecting the ability of pupils to work independently, particularly on homework. The stock of consumable materials lacks variety and results in pupils experiencing a limited range of resistant materials.
- 139 Since the last inspection the health and safety issues which were identified have been addressed. However, standards at the end of Key Stage 3 have declined and other inspection issues, such as

the unsatisfactory Key Stage 3 scheme of work and the lack of pace in Key Stage 4, still remain. Consequently, overall improvement since the last inspection has been unsatisfactory.

GEOGRAPHY

- 140 Standards at the end of Key Stage 3 have improved since the time of the last report. Teacher assessment in 1999 indicates significantly higher attainment than that reported nationally. Pupils' achievement in relation to prior learning is good, those with special needs and high attaining pupils making appropriate progress. Standards, as observed and from a scrutiny of work, are well above national expectation. A particular strength is pupils' proficiency in subject skills; they make good use of atlases, for example they are able to use latitude and longitude to find places, and their grasp of map-skills is very well developed. They produce accurate work, which is well presented, and reflects very good knowledge and understanding.
- 141 GCSE results have improved and in 1999 were well above the national average for all schools though below that of selective schools. Pupils have made greater progress in this subject than in the rest of their subjects. Standards at the end of Key Stage 4 are well above the expected level. Pupils make appropriate progress in this stage and achievement in relation to prior learning is good for all but a small minority. For these the department has organised lessons at the end of the day. In all stages teachers are aware of specific learning needs and include such information in their lesson preparation.
- 142 Results at A-level in 1999 were well above the national average with over half of the pupils gaining A and B grades and all achieving a pass. Current standards are well above the expected level; students make very good progress in relation to their prior learning and achievement is very good.
- 143 Support is given to the development of pupils' literacy skills and the importance accorded to practical work means that there are many opportunities for pupils to apply and practise their numerical skills. The under-use of information technology, referred to in the last report, has not been addressed sufficiently.
- 144 Four-fifths of all teaching at Key Stages 3 and 4 was good or better and it was good overall. Teaching was best in the sixth form where there were examples of inspirational teaching as when students worked at a decision making exercise centred upon the High Atlas mountains of Morocco. The very good subject knowledge of the teacher was evident in the quality of exposition enabling all to interpret the data provided and apply their very well developed skills in completing the task.
- 145 Pupils' learning was most effective when lessons included a range of activities matched to their needs and which challenged them. In producing a 'Wealth Map' of Italy, Year 11 pupils were able to work independently to interpret and represent data in map form. They practised a range of important skills advancing their knowledge and understanding of regional diversity and the inter-relationship of processes.
- 146 Weaknesses in the teaching occurred where exercises did not match the capability of pupils and there was insecurity in the teachers' knowledge of the topic. The range of resources used has improved since the time of the last report and the provision of a book for each pupil contributes to the success of homework in extending the pupils' learning. In an excellent lesson about migration between the United States and Mexico pupils advanced and consolidated their learning, were able to practise their skills and produce a good piece of written work as a result of very good planning, a feature of almost all lessons.

- 147 Teachers keep good records and the thorough marking of pupils' work supports learning. A start is being made in the use of assessment information in the setting of targets and more accurate prediction of grades with a view to increasing standards still further.
- 148 Classrooms were most often calm and orderly with an atmosphere conducive to learning. Pupils showed interest in the subject and geographical events, and in the best lessons were enthusiastic learners. Behaviour was good except in the occasional lesson where the teacher's pupil management techniques were weak.
- 149 The leadership of the subject is good and management is sound although some strategies and procedures lack precision, for example there is good practice regarding the development of pupils' literacy skills but the policy of the department is not clear. The focus upon the improvement of teaching and learning and the raising of standards is not always evident and the strategic plan lacks detail. Learning is insufficiently systematically evaluated utilising the valuable outcomes of assessment. Schemes of work are adequate and good provision is made for fieldwork, geographical enquiry and practical work.
- 150 The department has, since the time of the last report, improved standards of attainment at all key stages. There has been an improvement in the accommodation and resources available.

HISTORY

- 151 Teacher assessment in 1999 indicates pupils' attainment to be well above that reported nationally. Standards at the end of Key Stage 3 are well above national expectation. Pupils make good progress in all key elements at Key Stage 3 and achieve well in relation to their prior learning. Pupils produce written work which is accurate, well presented and indicates a good grasp of chronology. They have the skills required to select and use sources and are aware that events, actions and changes can be interpreted in different ways.
- 152 In 1999, GCSE results were well above the national average for all schools but below that of selective schools. Although results have fluctuated over the last three years there has been a marked improvement since the previous report and the overall trend is upward. Standards at the end of Key Stage 4 are well above the expected level and pupils' achievement in this key stage is good.
- 153 Results at A-level in 1999 were significantly higher than the majority of other subjects; all students were successful and the proportion achieving higher grades was markedly above the national average. Standards in the sixth form are well above the level expected at this stage; the students' levels of knowledge and understanding are very good as is evident in their considered and well-substantiated response to oral questioning and in their written work. Government and Politics is an increasingly popular option at A-level. Attainment is well above the national expectation. Students make good progress and achievement is good in relation to prior learning. They secure the skills necessary for individual study and in both their written and oral work express their views clearly and accurately. The teaching observed was good and, taught by the same teachers, has similar strengths to the geography course at this level. Teachers have very good subject knowledge.
- 154 The department makes a very substantial contribution to the development of pupils' literacy skills. Pupils are encouraged to write in a variety of forms, reading is accorded appropriate emphasis, and they are encouraged to listen carefully and to explain their answers fully. Pupils have opportunities to discuss their work and make presentations. Pupils have less opportunity to practise their numerical skills. The potential for the use of information technology in the teaching

of the subject and opportunities for the development of pupils' skills in this area are under-developed.

- 155 Pupils have positive attitudes to learning. They are willing and tractable. In lessons they respect the contributions of others, their offerings being valued by the teachers. Behaviour in classrooms is good and pupils sustain their concentration and listen carefully. Pupils develop as increasingly independent learners who bring a critical curiosity to their studies. They respond to good teaching. In a Year 11 lesson there was real enjoyment and enthusiasm; pupils advanced their learning and understanding of the 'League of Nations' as a result of the excellent subject knowledge of the teacher and the expert choice of imaginative tasks.
- 156 Overall, the quality of the teaching observed was good; in the sixth form it was very good, and this contributes hugely to the effective learning which takes place. Pupils are encouraged to learn and use appropriate historical terms throughout the school and their recall of dates is unusually good. Pupils rehearse and consolidate their knowledge as a result of the very good questioning; they feel able to contribute freely to lessons. They write accurate notes. Further strengths of the teaching include the teachers' very good subject knowledge, expert classroom and pupil management skills, thorough planning, challenging tasks matched to the needs of the pupils and high expectations. For example, a group of sixth-form students were provided with a range of very good resources in a thoroughly planned lesson on the reign of Louis XII. Through challenging questioning a dialogue developed which resulted in the drawing up of a very good overview which, in turn, provided the framework of an essay. Where there were comparative weaknesses in the teaching these resulted from a failure to match activities and tasks to the needs of the pupils who, as a result, were restless and failed to make the progress expected.
- 157 Pupils' work is marked regularly and provides useful information as to how improvement may be achieved. Comprehensive records are kept and an increasing emphasis is being placed on the prediction of levels of achievement and target setting. This is good practice and should contribute to a further raising of standards. The marking of A-level work is detailed and supportive. Homework is set regularly providing opportunities for extending the learning, and the response of pupils is very productive.
- 158 The enthusiastic leadership and effective management provided by the head of subject is a strength, as is the professional expertise and subject knowledge of the team. The department has the commitment and capacity necessary to achieve further improvement. Curriculum planning is thorough, the recently re-worked schemes of work give detailed guidance and contribute to the quality of teaching and learning.
- 159 The department reacted positively to the issues raised in the last report; there have been improvements in the range of methods and resources used in the teaching, the accommodation and the display of pupils' work. The teaching of the subject is better and standards have improved at all stages.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

- 160 Teacher assessment in 1999 indicates that pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is higher than that reported nationally. Pupils have not yet been examined at GCSE. In 1999 the results in A-level computer studies were a little above the average for all schools but below that for selective schools. Results since 1995 have been variable, reflecting the ability of students on entry to the course.

- 161 Standards at the end of Key Stages 3 and 4 are generally in line with national expectation. The majority of pupils, including those with special needs, use the main types of software quite fluently and make satisfactory progress in developing their knowledge and skills in the limited lesson time available. Most pupils use mailmerge facilities to combine word processed letters with a simple database of addresses, and produce interesting projects using desk top publishing, simple graphics, databases and spreadsheets. Since the previous inspection there have been improvements in pupils' ability to apply relatively new software such as *powerpoint*, owing to teachers' better subject knowledge and the increased availability of computers. Standards at the end of the sixth form are above the nationally expected level.
- 162 Pupils in Key Stage 3 have not had a continuous experience of ICT lessons. The overall provision has not fully met statutory requirements because pupils have not made sufficient use of ICT in curriculum subjects to solve problems involving analysis and challenge, communicate with a wide range of audiences, set up complex models to test their own investigations or use control devices. This has resulted in underachievement in this key stage. The allocation of time is better in Key Stage 4 with all pupils in Year 10 now following a short course in the subject. Achievement is satisfactory in lessons. As in the previous key stage, the same judgement applies to the cross subject use of ICT although pupils do use computers outside their timetabled lessons. For example in a Year 7 design and technology lesson pupils used a *Draw* program to design board games and pieces and in a Year 9 lesson pupils used the same program very competently to produce packaging nets as part of their product research. Year 10 pupils presented the results of a consumer survey on types of CD cover using pie charts and Year 11 chemistry pupils used *powerpoint* to present reports on atmospheric pollution to their class. A-level students are proficient in programming *Turbo Pascal* and use a variety of applications to design stock-control systems and import complicated flow charts and diagrams into text. Business studies students present case studies of local companies' finances using spreadsheets well to show cash flow.
- 163 Teaching was at least satisfactory in all lessons. It was good in the sixth form. The good relationship between teacher and pupils is underpinned by the teachers' good subject knowledge which helps pupils get to know new applications and develop their own ideas. Teachers give good support to individual pupils and have high expectations of what pupils can achieve. Well-planned lessons in which pupils practise basic applications to consolidate theory and apply their skills to challenging projects with work-related topics result in good learning taking place. Tasks are matched to pupils' needs and pupils are clearly aware of what they have to do. The pace of learning for some pupils in both Years 7 and 10 is reduced when they have to share computers.
- 164 Assessment and management of pupils' work is less secure. Homework is seldom given in Key Stages 3 and 4, although most pupils do now have computers at home. Teachers check classwork promptly and give pupils encouraging verbal feedback so they know how to improve. Self-assessment procedures have been introduced for Key Stage 3 pupils since the last inspection but National Curriculum levels are not always fully assessed in all four strands required. Assessment in Key Stage 4 towards GCSE requires similarly tight control. Assessment procedures meet examining board requirements very well in the sixth form for A-level computer studies.
- 165 Pupils' attitudes to the subject are good in both key stages and in the sixth form. They behave well with good self-motivation to succeed. Pupils co-operate very well with each other and their teachers, concentrate well and remain engaged with their work. They handle equipment safely and with care. Pupils with special needs are adequately supported when working on their own.
- 166 The subject is well managed and teachers and technician work as a committed team. There are currently insufficient machines for larger classes but a new computer room with better Internet access is planned. Facilities are heavily used at lunchtimes by pupils to extend their research

skills, well supported by teachers. Teachers in several subject areas are being effectively helped by the IT teacher to develop their expertise to extend pupils' ICT capability. Overall improvement since the last inspection has been limited because of shortage of computers and insufficient teaching time. However, recent increases in the number of computers, in curriculum time in Key Stage 4, and in specialist staff mean that the school is now better placed to improve pupils' ICT capability in all subjects.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

French

- 167 Results in the 1999 GCSE examinations at the end of Key Stage 4 were well above the national average but well below average when compared to similar schools. The proportion of pupils attaining the higher A* and A grades was broadly in line with national averages but well below average for similar schools. Over the past three years, standards in GCSE have remained fairly constant although numbers entered have increased.
- 168 Results in the 1999 A level examination were well below average when compared to similar schools for the higher grades but in line with similar schools for A-E grades. Results improved slightly in 1998 but dropped in 1999. However, very small numbers mean that accurate comparisons cannot be made.
- 169 Pupils, including those with special educational needs, achieve good levels for their abilities at Key Stage 3 and in the sixth form, and satisfactory levels in Key Stage 4. Gifted and talented pupils achieve well. At the end of Key Stage 3, standards are well above national expectation and are above at the end of Key Stage 4. Sixth form students achieve good standards overall in relation to national expectation; the current cohort of Year 13 students is achieving standards well above expectation. Teacher assessments, in both languages combined, for the end of Key Stage 3 in 1999 show pupils achieving levels that were well above those reported nationally.
- 170 In Year 9, higher attaining pupils write interesting reports on cars using a variety of tenses with excellent agreement of verbs and adjectives. Lower attaining pupils use the imperfect tense, with few mistakes, when talking about activities. In Year 11, higher attaining pupils prepare accurate oral presentations on their future plans while lower attaining pupils practise role-plays about buying petrol involving several exchanges. A-level students write on a variety of topics, for example the problems concerned with the violence facing teachers in French schools. In Year 13, students listened to a Georges Brassens song and drew out the main message, using it as a basis for debate on racism. One boy made the link between the message of the song and the character of Meursault in *L'Etranger*, which he had read independently, and was able to draw out the similarities between the two. All pupils have well-developed skills in reading, writing and listening. Speaking skills are less well-developed across Key Stages 3 and 4 but are good in the sixth form.
- 171 Since the last inspection, standards have improved in Key Stages 3 and 4 and have remained constant in the sixth form. There are very positive attitudes to French throughout the school and pupils fully understand the elements contributing to language learning and ask perceptive questions about grammatical constructions. There continues to be some disaffection in Year 11 where a group of pupils lacked motivation because the content of lessons at this stage did not fully meet either their interests or their needs. This was not evident anywhere else in the school.
- 172 Teaching ranges from excellent to good but is very good overall. Strengths of the teaching include very good subject knowledge and fluent use of French, which promote listening and speaking skills

well. The fast pace in most lessons means that pupils do not have time to slacken, and learn effectively. Regular homework is set. Teachers have high expectations and insist pupils use the language being taught. Many lessons are characterised by clear aims and objectives and this is a particular strength in the sixth form, where challenging lessons and enthusiastic teaching results in fluent, colloquial French. The new schemes of work have ensured that teachers rely less on textbooks. Overall weaknesses relate to the fact that the department makes no use of information technology to enhance provision, a strategy that would improve the motivation and independent learning skills of older pupils. Lesson planning contained a variety of work to match the differing abilities of pupils but this was not being used consistently within the department. Although lessons are now taught within the main building, a small number of lessons are taught in non-specialist rooms.

- 173 Management is good. The clear educational direction being provided is contributing to a steady improvement in standards, particularly in Key Stage 3. Monitoring and evaluation of pupils' progress is good, although assessment procedures lack consistency and are not as helpful as they might be in identifying pupils' strengths and weaknesses. As yet, there are no formal structures in place to ensure regular evaluation of teachers' strengths and weaknesses. Provision for extra curricular activities is very good, including an exchange and a visit. The foreign language assistant provides good support to the department and helps encourage pupils to speak the language.

German

- 174 Results in the 1999 GCSE examinations at the end of Key Stage 4 were above national averages but well below averages for similar schools. Over the past three years, standards in GCSE have risen steadily with a marked improvement between 1997 and 1998. The proportion of pupils gaining the highest grades however has been below national average and well below the average for similar schools, with the exception of 1998 when it was slightly above. Pupils have made less progress in this subject, in comparison with their other subjects, over the past 3 years although there was an improvement in 1998. Results at A level have been very low over all three years. Very small numbers mean that accurate comparisons cannot be made.
- 175 Teacher assessments, in both languages combined, for the end of Key Stage 3 in 1999 show pupils achieving levels that were well above those reported nationally. Standards at the end of Key Stages 3 and 4 are above national expectation. In the sixth form they are in line with expectations for the course. Gifted and talented pupils achieve satisfactory standards. However, a significant number of pupils, including some with special educational needs, are underachieving in Key Stages 3 and 4, most particularly in Year 11. Recent staff absence has resulted in unsatisfactory learning over part of this academic year for some pupils in all year groups. General unrest and lack of respect for the teacher restricts progress in Year 11, not only of those pupils involved but also of the higher attaining pupils within the group. Sixth-form students achieve satisfactory standards in relation to national expectation at A-level. Pupils' attitudes to the subject, with the exception noted above, are good.
- 176 Year 9 pupils practise asking questions using a variety of structures. They answer questions with support from the textbook. Higher attaining pupils write extended descriptions about themselves and their home life in present, past and imperfect tenses while lower attaining pupils are also beginning to use the past tense with support. Higher attaining Year 11 pupils use future tenses well, when speaking about travel, and include sub clauses accurately. They know the grammatical rules and use them well. A significant number of pupils in Year 11, however, have difficulty remembering work that was covered in Key Stage 3. Their productive skills, particularly their speaking skills are poor. A-level students make measured, perceptive comments about the political

situation in Germany using conversational link phrases well. They are fully confident in their ability to communicate in German.

- 177 Since the last inspection standards have improved slightly at GCSE in relation to national averages but have remained low when compared with selective schools. The proportion of pupils attaining A and A* grades in 1999 was lower than the proportion for all maintained schools. Pupils continue to have significant difficulties remembering vocabulary and verb forms, particularly in Year 11. Lessons continue to be dispersed across the school, with some taking place in a mobile classroom.
- 178 Teaching is unsatisfactory in Key Stage 3, is satisfactory overall in Key Stage 4 and is good in the sixth form. Strengths of the teaching include good subject knowledge and appropriate use of the overhead projector and flashcards to illustrate activities and to encourage pupils to speak. In the sixth form, there is good use of new technology to support learning, as when an article drawn from the Internet was used as a basis for discussion on current news items. Where there are weaknesses, there is some overuse of English, which means that pupils do not have the opportunity to develop the higher skills of listening and speaking. Where books have been marked, there are few comments to show pupils how to improve and where there are comments, some of these are abrasive and unhelpful. There have been inadequacies in providing cover for the absence of one teacher. These relate to work having been set for several weeks with no teaching in the subject and the lack of a scheme of work or effective handbook to underpin the work of substitute teachers. In Year 8, for example, three similar groups of pupils are at very different stages of the course, with enormous differences in the work covered and the progress made. In some Key Stage 4 groups, pupils are covering work that was initially taught six months ago, with no extension or variety of content.
- 179 Management of the subject is poor. The head of subject has provided insufficient direction and has left the subject in a position where the teachers covering for his absence have little planning to guide their work. Documentation is unsatisfactory and does not adequately support pupils or teachers. There is good provision for extra curricular activities. A variety of exchanges and visits are organised and the department provides revision classes.

MUSIC

- 180 Only small numbers have taken GCSE each year and comparison with national figures is inappropriate. In the past three years all except one of the 21 pupils taking the examination achieved A*-C grades. Last year, three candidates gained grade A and four grade B. The few students who have taken A or A/S level have achieved in line with the school's expectation of them.
- 181 Standards at the end of Year 9 are above the national expectation. Pupils compose confidently, often for electronic keyboards. They are familiar with relevant musical theory, such as notation and chords, and higher attaining pupils can improvise song accompaniments. This was well demonstrated when they accompanied a modern folk song, The Dalesman's Litany. Pupils have a secure working knowledge of the elements of music prescribed in the National Curriculum that they have developed through a wide range of practical activities. Singing is now well established as a worthwhile activity and a useful means of developing pupils' musicianship. This was not the case at the time of the previous inspection. Pupils now tackle a good range of songs during the key stage. Pupils have well-developed skills of musical analysis and write well-expressed evaluations of the music they compose. At the end of Key Stage 4 standards of performance are good. Composing is stylish. Pupils show a good understanding of the medium for which they compose. In 1999 they composed a wide variety of pieces, which included a Christmas carol, a clarinet suite, pop music and music devised with the aid of computers. Pupils revealed a well-developed and

consistent sense of style. Pupils in the current Year 11 are achieving well in all aspects of the course.

- 182 Pupils generally have very good attitudes to lessons in Key Stage 3. While a few pupils do not always cope purposefully with the freedom they are allowed when working creatively, most possess good learning skills and are committed to high achievement. They work on electronic keyboards with confidence. Pupils treat equipment with respect and collaborate productively with each other in pairs and other groups. In Key Stage 4 and the sixth form, pupils are following what is for most of them both a recreation and a study. They are always very responsible and well motivated. Pupils achieve high standards in relation to their abilities.
- 183 Teaching is satisfactory overall in Key Stage 3, with some lessons being good and very good. Teaching is very good in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form. All lessons are carefully prepared. Teachers use their own performing skills to very good effect. They challenge pupils of all levels of ability suitably, and are supportive to the small number of pupils with special educational needs. All pupils receive carefully targeted help to enable them to achieve high standards, and teachers make good use in lessons of the practical talents of the more accomplished musicians. Teachers display a high level of musical scholarship in the teaching of academic music.
- 184 An experienced teacher, who is employed half time, leads the department very well. Day-to-day organisation is painstaking. The scheme of work is full and imaginative and reflects the requirements of the National Curriculum and the examination boards. It offers pupils a great range of musical activities at each level. Procedures for assessment are very well developed and pupils play an important role in their own assessment. There is a good variety of extra-curricular instrumental activities. These include brass groups and an orchestra and are directed to a very high standard. A jazz band has recently been formed and it is directed impressively by a parent who is a professional musician. These ensembles and a choir perform regularly at concerts and provide pupils with very worthwhile opportunities for social and cultural development.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

- 185 Results in the 1999 GCSE examinations at the end of Key Stage 4 were well above the national average for all schools and just above average when compared to similar selective schools. There has been an improving trend in recent years and the pupils' performance has been significantly better than that reported in the previous inspection. Pupils perform better in physical education than they do in most of their other examinations. The results of the small number of students who took the recently-introduced A-level examination were similar to the national average. The extra-curricular programme provides pupils with good opportunities to develop their skills and interests further in conventional team games. These experiences have a positive influence on standards in lessons, particularly in outdoor team games.
- 186 In keeping with the findings from the previous inspection, standards achieved in game skills by pupils at the end of Key Stage 3 are above those expected for their age. In both rugby and basketball, pupils are confident when participating in team games and they pass the ball with accuracy. In rugby, pupils develop good techniques and are familiar with several of the game's strategies. Pupils are articulate and have good listening skills; in consequence they express themselves well when working in groups, share ideas and work successfully towards a common goal. Higher attaining pupils are particularly good at identifying weaknesses in their performances, refining their own work and supporting others. Standards at the end of Key Stage 4 are above those expected in rugby, and they are similar to age-related expectation in badminton and some aspects of health-related fitness. Pupils understand the importance of preparation for physical activity and, when given the opportunity, they can demonstrate a satisfactory range of

warm-up activities. However, a significant proportion of pupils are underachieving in several activities in Key Stage 4 due, in part, to timetabling arrangements and the lack of focused support from subject specialists. In addition, limited indoor facilities, inhibit pupils' skill development.

- 187 For those pupils studying the GCSE course, standards in the practical work seen in volleyball were underdeveloped because pupils lacked the experience of playing on a full-size court. However, pupils' written work is of a high standard and it reflects a good understanding of the tactics used in team games and the principles of health-related fitness. Pupils studying for the A-level examination are developing a good understanding of the course requirements such as the body's mental preparation for, and reaction to, competition and sport.
- 188 There have been several significant changes since the previous inspection. A different head of department who has reviewed the provision and developed the schemes of work manages the subject. A post-16 examination has been introduced, standards in the GCSE examinations have improved significantly, and the Key Stage 4 programme of activities has been extended.
- 189 The quality of teaching and learning is judged to be good overall. In almost all lessons, pupils benefited significantly from well-managed activities and from seeing accurate demonstrations accompanied by well-informed explanations. Throughout the school, pupils are responsive, mature and willing to work by themselves or in groups. In several lessons, the teachers' good subject knowledge was used particularly well to frame thought-provoking questions that stimulated pupils' thinking. In rugby and basketball, pupils achieved particularly well and substantially improved their understanding of the games' principles, because the skills and expectations were made very clear through effective teaching. However, higher attaining pupils do not achieve as well as they could because they are not sufficiently stretched by the tasks.
- 190 The subject continues to be well-managed despite the difficulties caused by the limited use of the available indoor accommodation. Pupils benefit from the use of grass pitches located in the school grounds. The strength of the department is its emphasis on the effectiveness of teaching and the high quality of the extra-curricular provision. However, the subject's action plan contains insufficient information for it to be a useful working document

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

- 191 Very small numbers of pupils take the full GCSE course and almost all of these achieved A*-C grades in 1999. Almost all pupils in Key Stage 4 took the GCSE short course. Results in 1998 and 1999 were very good, with most pupils gaining the higher grades. Statistics for national comparison are unavailable.
- 192 Standards at the end of Key Stage 3 are below the expectation of the locally agreed syllabus. The course is heavily information-based. In Year 7 and 8, pupils receive much information about the life and works of Jesus and the development of Christianity in Great Britain. In Year 9, pupils learn about many world religions. Lessons generally follow a similar pattern; information is presented orally to the pupils, who discuss it, then note down the chief features. By the end of Year 9, pupils have a wide knowledge in outline of religious history. However pupils do not develop the kinds of skills and understanding envisaged in the locally agreed syllabus. In particular, pupils do not develop adequately their skills in: relating sympathetically to other people's values and beliefs; reflecting on their own experiences, their identity and relationships, discussing religious ideas and moral questions; and expressing their ideas through art, drama, role-play and writing. Standards are good at the end of Key Stage 4 where, in the GCSE course, there are more opportunities for pupils to develop their own views of moral and social issues, such as drug abuse, prejudice and wealth and poverty.

- 193 In Key Stage 3, pupils' learning skills are adequate for the demands of the lessons, but unsatisfactory in relation to their perceived capacities to learn. In particular, they understand the knowledge that they receive and develop the skill of note taking. Creative skills are inadequately tested in the small tasks they undertake for homework in Key Stage 3. There are inadequate opportunities for pupils to evaluate their work and improve it. They do not engage in collaborative work and, because of the short allocation of time for religious education, they do not develop the habit of sustained independent learning. In Key Stage 4, where pupils are focused on examination requirements, pupils' working skills are well developed.
- 194 In Key Stage 3, pupils' attitudes to learning were unsatisfactory overall in lessons observed. Many pupils showed interest in the topics being discussed and at least a minority was prepared to ask and answer questions. There was often background noise, however, which in some lessons became obtrusive and limited all pupils' progress. In Key Stage 4, there was sometimes lively debate, which increased pupils' understanding. Pupils were also able to work quietly and studiously when required.
- 195 The teaching in Key Stage 3 is unsatisfactory, since the objectives are too limited. The teacher has a thorough knowledge of all topics tackled and an impressive general knowledge to draw on when answering pupils' questions. However, lessons proceed on a formulaic basis, are usually self-contained, and involve pupils in making notes on topics, which are usually completed in one lesson. No use is made of artefacts. Pupils watch a video from time to time. Otherwise the only resources in use are textbooks. Teaching is very good in Key Stage 4, where the objectives of an externally accredited examination prescribe the contents of the course. Here the teacher supports the pupils' learning strongly and uses his scholarship to further their understanding. Assessment is underdeveloped, and, where work was marked, comments were appreciative, rather than challenging.
- 196 Religious education forms part of the humanities faculty, but the only teacher of religious education works in isolation and teaching methods which appropriately meet the needs of the locally agreed syllabus have not been developed. The overall management of the subject remains unsatisfactory. Accommodation is better than at the time of the previous inspection, and the subject is now taught much more successfully in Key Stage 4. Other recommendations have not been carried out. Assessment is inadequately developed; resources and teaching methods remain too limited. The allocation of time for religious education is well below that envisaged for full coverage of the locally agreed syllabus. Successful conferences have been held from time to time to provide some religious education for the sixth form, but these have happened only twice in the past year, which does not amount to substantial enough provision to comply with statutory requirements.