

# INSPECTION REPORT

**THE CAVENDISH SCHOOL**

EASTBOURNE

LEA area: East Sussex

Unique reference number: 114605

Headteacher: Mr M S Dawkins

Reporting inspector: Dr A R Beaver  
20224

Dates of inspection: 10-14 January 2000

Inspection number: 194567

Inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11 to 16
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Eldon Road Eastbourne East Sussex
Postcode:	BN21 1UE
Telephone number:	01323 731340
Fax number:	01323 739572
Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr J Macdonald
Date of previous inspection:	11 September 1995

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Anthony Beaver	Registered inspector		What sort of school is it?
			The school's results and achievements
			How well are pupils taught?
			How well is the school led and managed?
			What should the school do to improve further?
Brigid Quest-Ritson	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development?
			How well does the school care for its pupils?
			How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
			Community links
			How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils? Personal development
Martin Ash	Team inspector	Modern languages	
Geoffrey Hunter	Team inspector	Mathematics	
Keith Hopkins	Team inspector	Design and technology	
		Information technology	
Thelma McIntosh	Team inspector	Music	How well is the school led and managed? Learning resources
Jennifer Radford	Team inspector	Religious education	
William Robson	Team inspector	English	
		Special educational needs	
		English as an additional language	
Michael Sewter	Team inspector	Science	

Janet Simms	Team inspector	Art	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
Barry Smith	Team inspector	Geography	How well is the school led and managed? Staffing
David Wasp	Team inspector	History	
		Equal opportunities	
Anthony Weaden	Team inspector	Physical education	How well is the school led and managed? Accommodation

The inspection contractor was:

Chapel House Inspection Unit Ltd

The Old Chapel House  
Pound Hill  
ALRESFORD  
Hampshire  
SO24 9BW

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

The Cavendish School, Eastbourne, is a comprehensive school of average size for 1024 girls and boys, aged 11 to 16 years. Most pupils join the school from local primary schools. Sixty pupils either joined or left the school, other than at ages 11 or 16. The school has increased by 60 pupils since 1995. The attainment of pupils on entry spans the full range of ability, and is broadly average. One hundred and twenty-eight pupils are on the school's register of special educational needs, an average proportion. Fifteen pupils have statements of special need, a proportion below average. Four per cent of pupils are from ethnic minorities, 17 of whom are from homes where English is not the first language, a number slightly above average. An average number take up their eligibility for free school meals.

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

This is a very good school. It is popular and over-subscribed. There is a strong commitment by all to ensuring that pupils achieve their highest standards. The school achieves standards well above those of similar schools. Governors and senior staff monitor the quality of teaching and learning closely, and work to ensure standards are consistently good. The school gives very good value for money.

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

- Pupils achieve very high standards in Key Stage 3 national tests, overall, and the average points score per pupil at GCSE is in the top five per cent of schools of its type, an outstanding achievement.
- Teaching is of very good quality and has some excellent features. It stimulates pupils to gain worthwhile knowledge and skills to extend their understanding.
- Strong leadership by governors, headteacher and senior and middle management is effective in ensuring high standards are maintained and pursues further improvement with imagination and vigour.
- Pupils want to learn and have very positive attitudes to school. Relationships between pupils and staff and between pupils themselves are very good.
- The school provides very well for pupils' personal development. Provision for pupils' social and cultural development is of high quality.
- Provision for the arts, and the quality of work achieved is exceptionally high.
- Care of pupils through the house pastoral system and support and encouragement for them to excel are strong features of the school.
- There is a positive ethos in which the achievement of each individual is recognised and prized by all.
- The induction of new teachers and newly qualified teachers is of very good quality. Student teachers receive very good training.

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

- The use of computers across the curriculum.
- The amount of information to parents on how pupils are getting on.
- Greater consistency in use of homework across all subjects and teachers at Key Stage 3.

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

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

The school has improved considerably since its previous inspection in September 1995. Pupils' attainment in Key Stage 3 national tests has remained above average. They regularly progress to attain well above average GCSE results, overall. The school's standards of attainment compare exceptionally well with those of similar schools. The quality of teaching has been maintained at a high standard and some has excellent features. Overall, the school has managed the key issues of the previous inspection well. In general, policies are implemented effectively in practice, technical support in information technology has improved, more able pupils including boys are, in most cases, well challenged. Health and safety concerns have been resolved. Matters arising from equal

opportunity considerations are generally well managed. Although there has been significant improvement in provision, all pupils do not have the opportunity of an act of worship each day. The school has a very good capacity to improve further.

## STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 14 and 16 year olds based on average point scores in national Key Stage 3 tests and GCSE:

Performance in:	compared with				Key
	all schools			similar schools	
	1997	1998	1999		
Key Stage 3	B	A	B	A	very high A* well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E
GCSE examinations	A	A	A	A*	

*\*\*Please note: reference to similar schools refers to schools which contain a similar proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals. This is considered to be a valid indicator by which to compare schools containing pupils of similar backgrounds.*

Pupils' attainment in Key Stage 3 national tests has been consistently above average year-on-year, including 1999, in the three subjects tested, English, mathematics and science. In comparison with similar schools, standards are well above average, with mathematics achieving exceptionally well. Girls outperform boys in English. Boys' and girls' results in mathematics and science are of a similar standard.

GCSE results have remained consistently well above average since 1995. Both boys and girls achieve results well above those of boys and girls nationally. Girls attain standards ahead of boys overall. During the last three years, art, design and technology, history, mathematics and music have maintained very high results.

The average GCSE points score achieved per pupil in 1999 was in the top five per cent of similar schools nationally. The percentages of pupils achieving five or more GCSE grades A\* to C and five or more A\* to G grades are well above the results for similar schools. In 1999 all candidates for five or more subjects achieved at this level.

The school's targets for achievement at GCSE are suitably challenging for different year groups.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Most pupils of all ages are keen to learn. Their attitudes in lessons are very good. They enjoy school.
Behaviour in and out of classrooms	Pupils behave very well in most lessons and out of classrooms.
Personal development and relationships	Pupils are willing to take on responsibility and exercise this maturely. Relationships are very good overall among pupils of similar and different ages and between pupils and teachers, so that learning becomes an enjoyable experience.
Attendance	Attendance is broadly in line with the national average. The percentage



	of unauthorised absence is below the national figure.
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**TEACHING AND LEARNING**

Teaching of pupils:	aged 11-14 years	aged 14-16 years
Lessons seen overall	Very good	Very 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.*

Over both key stages, 97 per cent of teaching was satisfactory or better. Teaching was very good or excellent in 37 per cent of lessons. Three per cent of lessons were unsatisfactory or worse. These lessons lacked adequate management of pupils.

The teaching of English is good at both key stages. There is good planning and excellent advice to pupils on how to improve their work. Not all higher attaining pupils are fully challenged in all lessons. Mathematics is well taught, especially at Key Stage 3. Teachers are very skilled in knowing at what point to give pupils enough support to help them to manage challenging work successfully. The teaching of science is good overall. Teachers' subject knowledge is strong. They question pupils very well. Teaching is of a particularly high standard in art, design and technology, history and music.

In general, teachers plan lessons well. They challenge and inspire pupils. Most lessons have good pace. Teachers manage pupils well in almost all lessons through good relationships and inspiring interest in the subject. They give their pupils scope to use their own initiative. However, teachers do not enable pupils to use computers enough to assist learning in some subjects.

The basic skills of literacy and numeracy are well taught. Some pupils requiring additional support are taught effectively when withdrawn from other lessons. In general, the school meets the needs of pupils of a wide range of ability very well.

**OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL**

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum provides a good range of worthwhile learning experiences at both key stages. There is an impressive range of extra-curricular opportunities available.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Pupils with special educational needs are identified prior to entry and from regular testing and assessment. The support they receive is of good quality, but poorly co-ordinated at departmental level. Talented pupils are identified and receive some additional challenge and support.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Pupils who require it and have English as an additional language receive additional support provided by the local authority.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Personal, social and health educational provision is good. Good rapport makes teachers good role models for pupils. Overall provision for pupils' personal development is very good, particularly in the social and cultural aspects.
Partnership with parents	Overall, the school works well with parents and is responsive to their concerns. Information on pupils' progress is insufficient in some

	subjects. Parents are not always fully consulted on curricular changes.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school cares well for its pupils through its effective house pastoral system. Pupils are very well supported. Child protection arrangements are effective. If pupils are identified as underachieving, they are encouraged and supported to achieve their best.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Leadership is strong and has suitably high expectations of what pupils should achieve. School development planning is very well managed.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors are strongly committed to the school and expect high standards. They are active and inform themselves thoroughly of standards. They work very closely with management and with subject departments.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The monitoring and evaluation of standards of teaching and learning are exceptionally thorough. Analysis of data on attainment is used in planning.
The strategic use of resources	Financial planning is well linked to school priorities. Resources are used well, but there are insufficient computers available. Despite weaknesses, accommodation is used well. The school's achievements are well above and its costs below those of similar schools. The services it uses are provided at a competitive price. It gives very good value for money.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pupils are expected to work hard and achieve their best.</li> <li>• Behaviour in school is very good.</li> <li>• Their children make good progress.</li> <li>• Their children like school.</li> <li>• They are comfortable about approaching the school with any problems.</li> <li>• Their children are helped to become mature and responsible.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Better and more consistent arrangements concerning homework should be applied.</li> <li>• More information about how their children are getting on.</li> <li>• Some parents would like to work more closely with the school and be consulted and advised on developments more extensively.</li> </ul>

The inspection team agrees with parents that this is a very good school in which pupils work hard, behave well and make good progress to achieve much higher standards than those achieved in similar schools. Pupils like attending the school. Morale is high. Pupils develop responsibility and become mature and confident. Although homework is adequate and used well in some subjects, individual teachers should be more consistent in its use at Key Stage 3. The school consults its parents, but not on all significant developments and should extend opportunities for parents to be consulted. Although reports are adequate, more information in them about how children are getting on is needed in subjects other than English, mathematics and science.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

*\*Please note: reference to similar schools throughout the report refers to schools which contain a similar proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals. This is considered to be a valid indicator by which to compare schools containing pupils of similar backgrounds.*

1. On entry to the school at age 11, pupils' achievements are broadly average, overall. Their attainment spans the full range of ability. This is shown, for example, in the 1999 national tests in English, mathematics and science for the current Year 7. Pupils are tested in cognitive ability, language and number by the school. Results indicate average attainment overall.

2. In the end of Key Stage 3 national tests, results in recent years for both boys and girls have been consistently above average in English, mathematics and science, including those for 1999. Mathematics has been a little ahead of the other two subjects in two of the last three years, and well above average. In comparison with *similar schools\** in 1999, pupils achieved a well above average points score in the national tests overall, and in recent years, they have consistently achieved at least above average standards. The trend in attainment has continued to rise at the rate of the national increase over the last four years, but at a much higher level than the national one.

3. At the end of Key Stage 4 in 1999, the proportion of pupils achieving five or more GCSE grades A\* to C and five or more grades A\* to G was well above average. Results are regularly well above average overall. In comparison with similar schools in 1999, pupils achieved very high standards, with an average GCSE points score in the top five per cent of schools nationally. On this measure of comparison, pupils regularly achieve well above the national average standard. Girls usually achieve standards higher than those of boys at GCSE, but the difference in attainment is usually below the difference that exists nationally. In most GCSE subjects including English, mathematics and science, pupils achieve above average standards. In 1999 GCSE examinations, pupils' standards in art, design and technology, history, mathematics, music and physical education were significantly above those which they achieved in their other subjects. In art, pupils regularly achieve very high standards, much higher than they get in their other subjects. During the last three years, pupils have attained standards a little lower in French, geography and German than in their other subjects. Results in the GCSE short course in information technology were below average in 1999, the first year in which pupils were entered for this examination. During the last six years overall, there has been a rising trend in the average GCSE points score achieved. This trend is below the national one, but achievement is very much higher than that achieved nationally. The value added by the school to pupils' attainment on entry is impressively high.

4. The school has made good progress towards the targets set for GCSE. These were largely achieved at both key stages in 1999, although the proportion achieving five GCSE grades A\* to C was marginally below the very challenging target which the school had set. Targets for 2000 are equally challenging, particularly for the achievement of boys at the higher GCSE grades.

5. Overall, during the inspection, the standards achieved by pupils in lessons were usually above average and sometimes high. Most pupils of all levels of ability, including

very able pupils, make good progress at both key stages. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress towards the targets set in their individual education plans. Pupils with English as an additional language make good progress in line with their very wide-ranging abilities. A few of these pupils receive additional support from the local education authority, and this contributes to their good rate of progress. In general, pupils' rate of progress is usually at least what it should be, and often higher.

6. In English at both key stages, standards of pupils' work observed in lessons are above average. Many pupils write imaginatively, but do not always present their work neatly. They develop an interest in personal reading and most read aloud fluently. When given the opportunity, they speak competently and confidently in class. Pupils produce good, structured essays at Key Stage 4 and have good note-taking skills. Many are fluent readers. Higher attaining pupils make personal responses to poetry but lower attainers struggle to understand it. Pupils can discuss literature well but find it difficult to do so without a lot of guidance from teachers. Pupils' standards of literacy across the curriculum are good. Standards in drama are well above average at both key stages. Both girls and boys attain well in role-play and the range of activities followed in lessons. In mathematics, pupils of all abilities achieve good standards in lessons at both key stages and make very good progress. However, in a few lessons observed, some lower attainers do not make the progress they should, because they were not challenged enough. Basic number-work is better than average both in lessons in mathematics and across the curriculum. In science lessons, standards are above average at both key stages and pupils make good progress. Their skills in practical investigations and in recording their findings are particularly high.

7. In art, pupils' standards of work seen are well above the nationally expected level at both key stages. Pupils are very creative and imaginative in their response to their work. They explore a wide range of media effectively and produce detailed sketchbooks at Key Stage 4. In lessons in design and technology, pupils achieve above national expectations at both key stages. They make very good progress in gaining knowledge and understanding and develop skills in use of tools well. Their work is well ordered and often shows creative flair and imagination. In geography, standards of work observed are at the nationally expected level overall. Pupils show good skills in mapping and in numerical work. They make good progress in knowledge and understanding of geographical ideas which they analyse successfully. However, the standards of general knowledge of some pupils at Key Stage 4 and the accuracy of their written work are unhelpful to progress. In history, pupils achieve above national expectations in lessons at both key stages. They progress very well, especially at Key Stage 4. Their written skills are strong and they use subject words well. They tease out supportive evidence to support their arguments very well at Key Stage 4.

8. Standards in lessons for information technology at both key stages are at the expected level nationally. Pupils develop good levels in basic skills, except in control technology which is underdeveloped. Pupils use computers and digital cameras well. However, the two-week timetable does not enable pupils to progress to the extent they should because skills are not reinforced soon enough. Although there is effective use of computers in some subjects, this is inadequate overall. The use of computers is insufficient in most subjects, including the core subjects of English, mathematics and science, for example, because there are not enough computers available.

9. In modern foreign languages, pupils are achieving standards at the expected level in lessons at Key Stage 3 and above average standards at Key Stage 4. They are achieving at an appropriate standard and making progress higher than prior GCSE results in French and German show. Skills are stronger in listening, speaking and reading than in

writing. Pupils are not rigorous enough in checking and correcting their written work and, for example, make unnecessary spelling mistakes. In music, pupils achieve above expectations in lessons at Key Stage 3 where they develop musical ability in performing and composing well and acquire perceptive skills in listening. They progress rapidly at Key Stage 4 to achieve high standards in composing and many pupils achieve outstanding levels in performing. In physical education, pupils achieve expected standards in lessons at Key Stage 3. However, the six-week modules of work do not always fully enable all pupils to reach their highest standard in each activity. Pupils progress to above average standards at Key Stage 4. They show good knowledge and understanding of how to prepare for specific activities, and of the principles of play, tactics and rules. Standards in gymnastics are very strong at Key Stage 4. Some pupils achieve representative standards at county levels, and progress for many pupils is well supported by the extensive extra-curricular programme. Pupils achieve above the levels expected by the local Agreed Syllabus for religious education in lessons at Key Stage 3. They have a good knowledge of Christianity and other major world faiths by Year 9 and express their views clearly in discussion and written work. Their knowledge deepens at Key Stage 4 where they achieve above average standards, shown in discussion of contemporary moral issues.

10. In the Key Stage 4 GCSE business studies, media studies and the City and Guilds diploma of vocational education, pupils achieve above average standards in lessons. They achieve their potential within the levels expected by these courses and progress is good, including that of pupils with special educational needs who follow the diploma course alongside other pupils. Pupils' rate of progress is very good in some GCSE business studies lessons where computers are used as part of learning. In GCSE media studies, pupils progress very well and use video and digital cameras and computers with much initiative and competence.

11. Since the previous inspection, pupils' standards of achievement at both key stages have continued to be strong. Both in examinations and in lessons observed standards are high. The school's results at GCSE in 1999 were in the top five per cent of similar schools nationally, an outstanding achievement.

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

12. Pupils have very positive attitudes to the school and to their studies. They are interested in what they do, and enjoy learning. An attractive feature of many lessons is pupils' enthusiasm and commitment. These were seen frequently in art lessons, and they were particularly evident in a Year 11 history lesson on the cold war when groups of pupils played out the roles of the United States and the Soviet Union. Pupils appreciate the wide range of activities that the school provides for them. Large numbers join in these enthusiastically. Sporting events are popular, both those which are purely for fun or health, and those which require some skill to compete. This interest is also reflected in the number of pupils who take part in the many events for music and drama.

13. Standards of behaviour are very high. In most lessons behaviour is exemplary. Disruption is rare. Pupils also behave very well as they move around the school. Corridors and stairs are narrow for a large school. Pupils are careful and considerate in these crowded areas. The level of exclusions is low for a school of this size. Pupils are trustworthy. They handle equipment with care as, for example, the Year 7 class which readily accepted the ground rules and responsibility for using musical instruments.

14. Relationships among pupils and relationships between pupils and members of staff are very good. Pupils in lessons respond very well to the opportunities they are given to

work constructively together in pairs and groups. There were many examples of such cooperation. In science lessons at Key Stage 4, pupils work successfully together and are sensitive to the needs of others. Productive cooperative work is a feature of many drama lessons. There is very little bullying. Pupils understand the effects of their behaviour on others. A readiness to take posts of responsibility as well as showing initiative and taking some responsibility for their own learning are strong features at all levels of the school. Pupils play a substantial role in the organisation of school life through the house system, the joint committee and pupil-management team. The level of their charitable work, also organised by the pupils themselves through their houses, is commendable. Pupils' initiative in organising their studies is evident from an early stage, for example by planning their own work in art and music lessons.

15. The level of attendance at the school is 92.2 per cent. This figure is broadly in line with the national average of 91 per cent. The figure for unauthorised absence is 0.6 per cent compared with a national average of 1.1 per cent. Attendance for some year groups is lower. Examination of records shows the main cause to be a few pupils with very low attendance rates. Attendance rates during the inspection were adversely affected by illness.

16. Standards were already good at the time of the last inspection. These have been improved. Attendance rates are similar.

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

*Inspectors make judgements about teaching in the range: excellent, very good, good, satisfactory, unsatisfactory, poor, very poor. "Satisfactory" means that strengths outweigh any weaknesses.*

17. The quality of teaching is very good overall. Some lessons have excellent features. This high overall quality ensures that pupils of very wide ranging abilities learn successfully at both key stages and make good progress. Teaching, other than in three per cent of lessons, was at least satisfactory. Thirty-two per cent of lessons were very good, and a further six per cent were excellent. The very few unsatisfactory lessons were at Key Stage 4 where teachers did not manage pupils well enough to enable learning to progress at a suitable rate. However, in almost all cases, pupils were well behaved.

18. A very good quality of teaching is maintained at both key stages and for all age groups. There is very good teaching in most subjects. Much teaching in art, design and technology, history and music is very good, and teaching in other subjects is generally good at both key stages. Girls and boys learn equally well from teachers in all subjects. However, in some English lessons, some higher attainers are not well enough challenged and do not achieve their maximum rate of progress. In most lessons, the most able pupils are well challenged and go on to achieve the highest grade in GCSE examinations.

19. Teachers use their own competent knowledge and understanding of their subjects to adapt work well for pupils of different levels of ability, in most cases. As a result, pupils gain worthwhile knowledge and a growing understanding of the subject for themselves and concentrate closely on their work. For example, in a science lesson for Year 7, the teacher used the example of how a bicycle works to introduce pupils to proportionality - through gears and ratios. In an excellent Year 10 lesson in art on famous artists, the teacher's extensive knowledge and great enthusiasm challenged, inspired and motivated pupils very well to pursue individual lines of enquiry and use considerable initiative to reach successful outcomes.

20. Teachers plan work thoroughly and identify clear objectives which they share with pupils. For example, a Year 11 lesson of high quality involving pupils speaking and listening in French contained very many different activities covered at a brisk pace. The pupils - whose understanding of the language was greatly stimulated by the intensity of the learning experience - managed the work successfully. Teachers usually manage pupils well through the good relationships and rapport which generally apply. For example, in a very good Year 8 lesson in personal and social education involving small group work, the teacher managed the class very well to ensure good behaviour and hard work. This enabled the pupils to work independently and extend their experience successfully. Very good rapport between pupils and teacher in music lessons makes challenging learning fun. However, in a few lessons for lower attainers at Key Stage 4, teachers' management of pupils does not enable learning to progress rapidly enough.

21. Lessons usually run at a good pace and pupils' rate of learning is good. In a Year 11 practical science lesson on plant dyes, the teacher's careful preparation enabled the lesson to run at a good pace so that pupils completed the activity successfully in the time allowed. Teachers generally use learning resources well to support pupils' learning. However, computers are not used enough in many subjects to extend pupils' learning, so as to enable them to take on more responsibility for some aspects of learning themselves. Where computers are available and in use, pupils extend their knowledge and understanding very well, as in music and media studies. Teachers assess pupils' work regularly and provide effective advice on how to improve. This is done both orally and in written advice in pupils' books. As a result, pupils are helped to improve their rate of progress. Teachers usually use homework effectively to extend pupils' learning beyond the classroom. However, there is some inconsistency in the quality and quantity of homework which is set at Key Stage 3. Some homework is extremely challenging, but some requires little from pupils who could achieve more.

22. Effective teaching enables lower attaining pupils, including those with special educational needs, to develop essential skills in literacy, especially in English, mathematics, science and history lessons. English teachers emphasise the importance of spelling and punctuation and provide pupils with separate exercise books to develop these skills at Key Stage 3. Science, mathematics and history teachers ensure that pupils know key subject specific words at the start of topics. A few pupils on the special educational needs register are withdrawn from some English lessons by the special needs department. The teaching of basic linguistic skills to these pupils is very good. A good range of teaching methods is used to enthuse children and maintain their concentration. Pupils make good progress, learn the spellings of key words in different subjects, and increase their confidence and fluency when reading simple texts. The teaching of numerical skills to pupils of lower attainment is good and assists their progress well, particularly in lessons in mathematics. In most lessons across the curriculum, teachers take the needs of pupils on the special educational needs register into account so that they learn well. For example in a Year 9 physical education lesson on volleyball, pupils with learning difficulties were helped to achieve skilful performance of the volley through the teacher's ability to meet their needs in a class of wide attainment.

23. Teaching assistants provide valuable support for pupils with special educational needs in some lessons. They keep very comprehensive records of pupils' work and are aware of the targets on their individual education plans. They work flexibly to fit in with teachers' lesson plans but their work is not as effective as it might be in some lessons because teachers do not involve them enough in planning. There is some lack of co-ordination between teachers and support assistants. Support by teaching assistants for

pupils on the City and Guilds diploma in vocational education course is very effective and helps pupils to participate fully in all aspects of the course.

24. Most teachers identify the needs of pupils for whom English is an additional language in their lesson plans and provide appropriate work or individual support when necessary. These pupils have wide-ranging abilities. They manage learning successfully and make good progress. The few who require specific support receive this from a specialist teacher supplied by the local education authority.

25. Since the previous inspection, the quality of teaching, which was then strong, is now even stronger. Many lessons are very well taught. Very few have significant weaknesses. As a result, pupils' learning is effective and they gain considerably in understanding their subject learning and, overall, make good progress at both key stages. Although homework is often used well to extend learning beyond the classroom, further consistency in practice by all teachers is needed, particularly at Key Stage 3. It is not current practice to set homework in information technology but this is needed to further pupils' learning.

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

26. The quality and range of learning opportunities are good at Key Stage 3 and very good at Key Stage 4. All pupils have access to the full range of National Curriculum subjects. The school meets statutory requirements in this respect and provides religious education in accordance with the local Agreed Syllabus. Pupils have a good range of extra opportunities at Key Stage 3, for example all take a successful drama course. Suitable alternative courses and accreditation are provided at Key Stage 4, additional to the required curriculum. These courses include GCSE media studies and business studies and the diploma of vocational education. Several pupils take up the opportunity to take three discrete science subjects, instead of GCSE double science. Pupils can obtain certificates of achievement in English, food technology and modern languages. Work-related education is well provided. This extensive provision ensures a broad and balanced curriculum for pupils of all levels of ability. The school provides pupils with special educational needs with the curricular support outlined in their statements. The school provides a curriculum that ensures equality of opportunity for all its pupils.

27. Although the provision of information technology meets statutory requirements, the quality of provision is adversely affected by unsatisfactory continuity of experience for pupils across the two-week timetable. There is insufficient teaching of information technology in many subjects across the curriculum.

28. The very wide range of extra-curricular opportunities, including many sports, is well supported by both pupils and staff. English, for example, runs master-classes for higher attaining pupils, and drama provides an opportunity to take an AS level examination through classes after school. Art, drama and music are rich in extra-curricular provision. Modern language visits and exchanges are very useful. Study support in a commendable range of subjects is widely available, effective and well attended. Homework clubs provide opportunities for help in many subjects.

29. There is good provision for personal, health and social education including sex education and drugs misuse. The quality of this provision at Key Stage 4 is particularly good. Links with the local community are good, and contribute well to pupils' learning. In personal, health and social education, for example, pupils learn well from their visit to a local prison with the community police officer. The sports centre provides many benefits for



both the pupils of the school and for others in the immediate community. Links with the local sports and arts community are particularly effective. Vocational experience and mini-enterprise for pupils in Year 10 and Year 11 contribute well to their personal development and learning. Additional placements for pupils following the diploma in vocational education, such as their mornings spent in old people's homes on the week of inspection, also contribute very effectively to these pupils' development.

30. Curricular links with partner schools and institutions vary in quality. In English, good continuity and progression are developed through literacy cluster meetings with primary schools. In mathematics and science, however, these links are inadequate and need much further development as the school is aware. With local sixth form and further education colleges, links are much stronger and very effective and, for example, supported by teachers who teach in both the school and one of the neighbouring colleges. The school provides good careers education and guidance for pupils' post-16 education. The school provides very good support for teachers in training and its links with institutions of higher education are also very good.

31. Since the previous inspection, the school has continued to provide a rich and varied curriculum. Statutory requirements are now fully met for learning a foreign language. Provision is unsatisfactory in use of information technology in many subjects and in the lack of continuity for pupils having one lesson a fortnight.

32. The school makes very good provision for pupils' personal development.

33. Spiritual provision is satisfactory. The Thought for the Day programme is carefully planned and builds up into a significant contribution to pupils' spiritual development. There are frequent links with house and year assemblies. The school does not have the space to bring all pupils together on a daily basis, so assemblies take place weekly on a year or house basis. Themes are broadly Christian, with spiritual and moral content. Those during the week of the inspection sought to explore science and truth. The topics are often used as the basis for a short discussion in tutor groups. Where this is done well, it is effective, thought-provoking and provides an act of collective worship. This was not the case in all assemblies and tutor periods observed. There is considerable variation in practice. The school still does not comply fully with the requirement to provide a daily act of worship for all pupils - an issue from the last inspection - although it has made significant progress towards compliance. Spiritual provision in curriculum subjects also varies in the range of references used and in quality. In religious education, it is very good. Pupils have many opportunities to discuss and reflect on matters of spiritual significance. In other subjects, provision is satisfactory overall. In the course of the curriculum, opportunities arise to develop self-knowledge and spiritual awareness; not all are taken.

34. There is good provision for pupils' moral development. It is considered an integral part of the curriculum. This is evident in the moral values which are made clear to pupils and the way members of staff act as good role models. There is insistence on high expectations and good standards. Moral matters are considered within the curriculum. Issues such as exploitation and conservation of resources are discussed in geography, and euthanasia in the social health and personal education programme at Key Stage 4.

35. The school's provision for pupils' social development is a strong feature and of very high quality. Many opportunities are provided for pupils to learn to work together and develop social skills in lessons and in extra-curricular activities. These opportunities include team-work in physical education, performing together in music and drama, and taking part in visits and exchanges. The personal and social education at Key Stage 3 and social,

health and personal education programmes at Key Stage 4, make an important contribution, as much in the way lessons are run with scope for pupils to participate, as in the topics presented. Pupils are encouraged to accept responsibility, both in the daily life of the school and in the wider community beyond. Very good relations exist at all levels of the school.

36. Cultural provision is also very good. Due emphasis is given to the culture of other nations. The art, drama and music departments routinely provide an extensive and varied cultural diet for pupils. This is available to all pupils through lessons in the classroom, displays around the school, music and drama events, and a busy programme of visits to concerts, theatres and trips abroad. Pupils can sample musical instruments from India and Africa, work with professional musicians, actors and technicians, study many types of art work and have some of their own published to support a local charity. They have links with other schools in Europe and one in Africa.

37. Standards of provision for pupils' spiritual and moral development have been maintained since the last inspection. Provision of a daily act of worship remains an issue, although progress has been made. The quality of the provision for pupils' social and cultural development has improved - including the multi-cultural element - which was an issue in the last inspection.

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

38. The school looks after the pupils in its care well. The continuity provided by the house system ensures that house staff know their pupils well and can provide effective support for them. They monitor attendance efficiently. The personal and social education and social, health and personal education programmes at both key stages, encourage pupils to think responsibly for themselves about their well-being. There are good procedures to promote good behaviour and enforce discipline across the school. Expectations of conduct are high. This firm approach is balanced by a celebration of achievement and effort, both in and outside the school. For example, there is an annual celebration evening. Routine procedures to ensure pupils' health and safety are effective, but the inherent problem of using the same room for textiles and food studies remains an issue. Child protection procedures are effective.

39. Information about pupils' attainment in primary schools and tests taken on arrival provide a firm base for academic information about pupils. This is available to teachers and tutors, together with copies of annual reports for reference. The responsibility for assessing and monitoring pupils' academic progress currently rests with subject departments, who fulfil it conscientiously and well. Individual departments keep good records of pupils' progress and use this information to help pupils to improve. Except in the case of pupils who are causing concern, however, there is, as yet, no system of co-ordinating these records across the school. The school does not combine the initial information and annual reports with the more frequent assessment monitored by departments to track all pupils and provide an overview of progress and personal development throughout the year. Pupils receive good personal advice and support through the house system. They have regular mentoring interviews with their tutors. These interviews set targets for pupils to encourage them to improve. Their effectiveness depends on the time given to pupils and whether the targets are appropriate. In general, these requirements are realised in practice.

40. Good links with local primary schools ensure that the needs of pupils on the special needs register are identified at an early stage. The school has effective arrangements for assessing the progress of pupils with statements of special educational needs. Annual

reviews and transition plans are carried out efficiently. Support services, parents, pupils and all teachers contribute to reviews of progress. The special needs department reviews the progress of other pupils with special educational needs who have individual education plans. When these reviews take place they are very effective. Pupils are aware of their difficulties and want to overcome them by meeting their targets. However, the long-term absence of the head of special needs results in targets no longer being set for several pupils who require them. Review of their progress is unsatisfactory.

41. The last inspection praised the standards of care provided for pupils. These standards have been maintained.

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

42. Parents are generally pleased with the school and like what it provides for their children. Inspectors agree with their views. There are, however, two areas where a proportion of those parents who returned the questionnaire expressed concern. These concerns were also mentioned at the parents' meeting. The first relates to homework. Inspectors note some good practice in use of homework by teachers, but consider that there are some inconsistencies here, both in the amount of work set and the expectations of teachers at Key Stage 3. The second concern which some parents expressed relates to the amount of information they receive about the progress made by their children. Inspectors consider that annual reports in the non-core subjects (that is other than English, mathematics and science) lack detailed information about progress, but that they meet statutory requirements.

43. The links which the school has established with parents are good and effective. The range of information the school provides about the curriculum, for example the handbooks for each year group, and about activities in the newsletter, is good. As mentioned previously, the information about progress in the annual report is not extensive and does not always tell parents what their children know and can do, or make specific suggestions for improvement. Attendance at parents' evenings is good. The school is careful to contact those parents who cannot, or will not, come to these meetings. Parents are not always consulted prior to curricular changes, for example about the introduction of the short GCSE information technology course.

44. Parents are informed when their child is placed on the special educational needs register and most contribute to the annual reviews of their children's progress if they have statements.

45. The last inspection report commented favourably on the school's links with parents. Standards have been maintained, although some parents have concerns about homework, would like more information about how their children are getting on and want to be consulted more by the school.

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

46. The school benefits from strong leadership of good quality by governors, headteacher and senior management. They effectively direct the work and developmental priorities of the school, ensuring that there is a clear focus on the quality of teaching and learning so that standards achieved by pupils are suitably high. All levels of management support each other well, and there is good teamwork throughout the school. The school has

a positive ethos in which all strive for the highest standards, and these are often achieved. School leadership has very good capacity to take the school forward to further achievements.

47. Governors take their responsibilities very seriously, and are active in helping to shape the work and direction of the school. They involve themselves very closely in the school's work. They link closely with subject departments and inform themselves of standards and the concerns of subject leaders. Governors have very good professional expertise, for example in finance, and useful connections with the local community. They give their time generously to the benefit of the school, and they are prepared to be critical of practice and standards if this is in the interest of pupils. Their committees enable them to develop particular expertise in important areas. Governors work very closely with the headteacher and senior management. They meet statutory requirements except for the omission of a daily act of collective worship for all pupils.

48. The headteacher has been in post for one term. He is already providing thoughtful and intelligent leadership to the school, benefiting from the strong position left by his predecessor. He has the confidence of the governors and his colleagues and aims for full consultation with all parties when significant changes are under consideration. Other staff with management responsibilities exercise these well. Delegated responsibilities are confidently and effectively exercised. A particularly strong feature is the monitoring and evaluation of standards of teaching and learning by senior staff. Not all heads of department have time for observation of teaching, but all monitor pupils' standards of work in their subjects. The process of monitoring has operated for two years and is applied with rigour, but particularly by senior management in order to raise standards. Governors also observe lessons to help inform their view of the standards achieved in the school. Results of national tests and GCSE examinations are analysed to evaluate how successful the school is in achieving the targets that it sets for itself. Monitoring and evaluation of standards enable management to inform itself of the standards which operate, and help ensure that pupils are supported to achieve highly. Weaknesses in teaching prompt response by management to assist individual teachers to develop their skills.

49. The aims, values and purposes of the school are clearly stated. There is clear commitment to the development of a school community in which relationships are helpful to learning and equal access and opportunity to the provision available are enjoyed by all. These commitments are met. Very good relationships exist across the school, and the former key issue concerning equal opportunities is now recognised within departmental schemes of work and monitored by senior management. School policy on this matter is currently being further updated.

50. The co-ordination of support for pupils with special educational needs is unsatisfactory. The frequent absence of the head of special needs requires teaching assistants to work with limited guidance and the special needs department lacks direction. Teaching assistants who support teachers and pupils require guidance to ensure that they work efficiently and provide help where it is most needed. The special educational needs policy meets statutory requirements but should include details of the complaints procedure for parents. Criteria for evaluating the success of special needs provision are insufficiently precise.

51. The school's priorities are shown in its planning. Whole-school priorities are appropriate to the school's further development. They include the important aim to develop further the capacity of the school as an effective provider of learning through information

technology for all pupils, supported by training for staff needing it. The plan is clearly set out with time-scales, staff responsible and success criteria.

52. The school's spending is closely linked to planned priorities. These are matters which directly aim to improve the school's capacity to provide a high quality of education for the benefit of its pupils. Specific funding, for example for staff training, is used very well. The principles of best value are well applied in decisions concerning use of resources. Comparison with similar schools indicates that the school attains very high standards of achievement and educational provision from income which is below average compared with levels of national and local funding of schools. The school challenges itself well in the range of curricular opportunities provided and in its very good extra-curricular programme. Competition is fairly managed for services provided. The school does consult main parties over major changes, but it should consult parents more on some issues, as for example, over the introduction of a new GCSE course, and action planning following inspection. Overall, the school gives very good value for money.

53. In general, the match of teachers to the needs of the curriculum is good. The teaching staff is suitably balanced in gender and experience to cover the curriculum. The school's recently renewed status as an Investor in People has enabled management to identify and respond to the training needs of all staff, ensuring very good administrative and technical support. However, there is insufficient technical support for art, science and food technology. Induction of new and newly qualified teachers is of very good quality. The school trains student-teachers very well.

54. The school's accommodation and the size of many classrooms restrict the range of learning experiences possible in some subjects, for example art. Part of a key issue of the previous inspection was to avoid work in textiles and food technology taking place in the same classroom, but restrictions on classroom accommodation have prevented this issue from the previous inspection from being met. However, accommodation for music is of high quality and provides an impressive context for the very good quality of teaching and learning in the subject. Despite the limitations of accommodation overall, good management ensures its full and effective use, enabling the curriculum to be taught well.

55. Learning resources are adequate overall. Provision of computers is adequate for the discrete courses in information technology, but inadequate for whole school needs across all subjects. Equipment installed in two classrooms for information technology is of very good quality. The school has plans to increase this provision. Although textbooks are adequate and used well, there are some shortages, particularly in modern foreign languages and history. Homework is sometimes adversely affected by lack of books. Lack of space prevents the school's library from increasing the numbers of books, but since the previous inspection it has been developed into a learning resources centre which is well organised and extensively used. The quality of books provided in the library and careers library is good. There is a good range of non-fiction relating to ethnic minority cultures. Some equipment in science requires replacement. Pupils use the locality for field trips, and visit the theatre and museums. There are regular trips to opera, musical shows and plays in London, and an extensive programme of foreign exchanges with Germany, France and Spain. In addition the school has links with Malawi, and has had visits from teachers from Botswana and Swaziland.

56. Since the previous inspection, the school has been well led and managed. Management has successfully addressed the key issues of the previous inspection concerning equal opportunities, implementation of policies, improved technical support for information technology, and most health and safety matters. However, food studies and

textiles continue to be taught in the same room and governors do not comply with the requirement to provide for a daily act of collective worship.

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

57. In order to develop further the standards achieved by pupils and the quality of educational provision, the school should:

- (1) Improve pupils' learning and progress in use of information technology across all subjects by ensuring timetabled time is more evenly distributed, teachers use computers more in lessons, and the numbers of computers available are increased. (This issue has been identified in the school's planning.) See paragraphs 8, 21, 27, 31, 63, 64, 70, 75.
- (2) Ensure greater consistency in use of homework across all teachers and subjects at Key Stage 3 by close monitoring of practice in setting homework within all departments. Ensure homework is set in information technology. See paragraphs 21, 25, 42, 45.
- (3) Provide more information to parents on how pupils are getting on by extending information in annual reports in most subjects. Consult parents more directly on curricular changes. See paragraphs 42, 43, 45.

58. In addition to the key issues listed above, the school should consider the following other weaknesses for inclusion in its action plan:

- (1) Further co-ordinate the use of assessment data across the school. See paragraph 39.
- (2) Ensure that the work of support assistants for pupils with special educational needs is more closely co-ordinated. See paragraph 23.
- (3) Develop further the Thought for the Day and assemblies to ensure that all pupils have opportunities to reflect on fundamental issues and to participate in a daily act of collective worship. See paragraphs 47, 56.
- (4) Continue efforts to improve accommodation for the pupils on roll. See paragraphs 54, 83.

### **COMMUNITY LINKS**

59. The school has established many links with the community it serves. These contribute significantly to pupils' learning. In particular, the links with the local sporting and arts communities are very good. The sports centre which is attached to the school provides many benefits for the school and the immediate community through such facilities as the new fitness suite. Community use of the centre is high, and increasing. Pupils from the school also take part in many local sporting activities. It provides ball-girls for the Eastbourne International Tennis Championships. The many music and drama performances give the school a high profile locally. Pupils from the school also play a role in the community through the vocational experience programme and the work done by pupils following the diploma course in vocational education. There are extensive links with

other community organisations which help pupils' learning, such as the links with the local police. The insights into prison life gained by visits to Lewes Gaol provide a salutary experience.

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed

159

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

65

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
6	31	39	21	2	1	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	1024	
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	149	

#### Special educational needs

	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	15	
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	128	

#### English as an additional language

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	17

#### Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	35
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	25

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

	%
School data	7.2
National comparative data	7.9

#### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.6
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	110	97	207

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	71	84	70
	Girls	76	70	62
	Total	147	154	132
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	71 (88)	74 (69)	64 (69)
	National	63(57)	62(60)	55 (60)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	34 (64)	49 (44)	35 (33)
	National	28(23)	38(37)	23(29)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	67	85	75
	Girls	82	71	75
	Total	149	156	150
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	72(72)	75(81)	72(67)
	National	61 (60)	64 (64)	61 (61)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	33 (36)	50(52)	35 (33)
	National	31 (28)	37 (37)	28 (29)

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	116	81	197

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	66	113	115
	Girls	53	78	80
	Total	119	191	195
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	60 (54)	96 (96)	99 (97)
	National	46 (45)	91 (90)	96 (94)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score Per pupil	School	48
	National	37.8

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	23
	National	70

### **Ethnic background of pupils**

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	4
Black – African heritage	5
Black – other	0
Indian	6
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	2
White	988
Any other minority ethnic group	19

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

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	6	1
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

### **Teachers and classes**

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

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	57.1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	17.8

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

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

Total number of education support staff	14
Total aggregate hours worked per week	315

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

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	74.9
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#### **Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11**

Key Stage 3	26
Key Stage 4	23

### **Financial information**

Financial year	1998-9
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	£
Total income	2199740
Total expenditure	2237060
Expenditure per pupil	2218
Balance brought forward from previous year	59316
Balance carried forward to next year	21996

## Results of the survey of parents and carers

### Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	1024
Number of questionnaires returned	271

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	39	52	6	3	1
My child is making good progress in school.	48	47	3	0	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	29	57	9	1	6
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	22	56	17	4	2
The teaching is good.	27	61	7	0	6
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	24	54	17	3	2
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	51	39	7	1	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	57	40	2	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	21	59	13	3	4
The school is well led and managed.	29	56	4	1	10
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	35	56	5	0	4
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	39	46	9	2	5

**Please note:** figures may not total 100% because of rounding.

### Other issues raised by parents

Parents' comments in written observations and in the meeting for parents were very largely on the issues raised by the questionnaire. Although some parents were critical of aspects of the school, overall they considered that behaviour was good and that the school achieved good standards.

The inspection team is grateful to parents who expressed views. These were very helpful to the inspection process.

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

### ENGLISH

60. In 1999, pupils' achievement in National Curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 3 was above the national average and above the average for similar schools. Results over the previous three years were at a similar level, although in 1998 pupils achieved exceptional results which were well above the national average. The 1999 results were not as high as those achieved by pupils in mathematics, but above those achieved in science. At Key Stage 4, the proportion of pupils attaining grades A\* to C in English in 1997 was well above the national average. In 1998 and 1999, it was above the national average and above the average for similar schools. English literature grades A\* to C were close to the national average in 1999 but above average in the two previous years. Overall, attainment in English and English literature was below that of the other core subjects in 1999. Girls attain higher levels than boys at both key stages, in line with the difference found nationally.

61. Pupils achieve above average standards in their work at the end of Key Stage 3. They enjoy quietly reading their own choices of books at the beginning of each lesson and read aloud fluently, with understanding and good expression. A Year 9 class showed a good understanding of the plot and characters of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, identifying key scenes and explaining their importance. Pupils can speak confidently in Standard English when given the opportunity, although during the week of the inspection they were seldom asked to speak at length. Many pupils use vocabulary imaginatively. Some high attaining pupils wrote vivid narrative descriptions entitled *The Storm*, building suspense and maintaining the reader's interest. Most pupils draft and re-draft their work effectively, improving the structure and presentation of their writing. Even so, handwriting is often untidy. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress and participate fully in most lessons.

62. At Key Stage 4, current achievement is also above the national average. Most pupils can write at length and many produce good, structured essays. For example, pupils made very good reference to the text to explain how Conan Doyle builds up suspense in *The Speckled Band*. They have good note-taking skills and write down key points from class discussions. Pupils read fluently in class. Their understanding and appreciation of poetry vary. In one Year 11 class, most pupils understood the theme of cultural identity in Sylvia Bhatt's poem *Search for my Tongue*. Several related it to their own experience. However, another class struggled to understand Simon Armitage's *Poem* and were unable to explain that it was a sonnet. In lessons seen, pupils are very reliant on teachers to lead any discussion and find it difficult to discuss topics in groups without support.

63. Since the previous inspection, the English department has maintained good standards of achievement for most pupils. Teaching remains good overall but higher attaining pupils are still not challenged sufficiently in all lessons. The planned introduction of master classes in English is, therefore, an important development. Pupils make much greater use of information technology than previously, even though the department does not have sufficient access to computers.

64. Teaching is good at both key stages. Nearly all teaching is at least satisfactory, although there are occasional unsatisfactory lessons, due mainly to poor management of pupils. Most of the time classes are well managed, ensuring that pupils are attentive and concentrate. This is helped by the good relationships between teachers and pupils and the

fact that most pupils want to learn. For example, half of a Year 9 class practised a presentation in drama effectively without direct supervision while the teacher supported others in a nearby classroom. Teachers share the aims of lessons with pupils so that they know what they are expected to learn. They also help pupils to learn from their mistakes by providing excellent, specific advice when they mark their written work. Teachers are aware of the needs of lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs. They organise lessons appropriately and prepare suitable materials to ensure that they can participate, but they do not enable pupils to use information technology enough. However, some lessons do not challenge higher attaining pupils sufficiently. For example, several Year 8 pupils found it easy to identify traditional elements of pantomime, but the teacher did not then challenge them to explain the effect of these on a pantomime audience. This limits the progress of higher attaining pupils and by the end of Key Stage 4, the number of pupils attaining the highest grades at GCSE is below the national average. Teachers manage class discussions well, but provide insufficient opportunities for pupils to discuss in groups.

65. The head of English monitors the marking of pupils' work and record keeping, but no time is available for classroom observation. Teachers in the department would benefit from greater sharing of successful teaching methods. The department is beginning to use assessment data to identify under-achievement and to set appropriate targets for each year group, but this is at an early stage.

#### Literacy across the curriculum

66. Standards of literacy are good at both key stages. Pupils develop good speaking and listening skills in history through an emphasis on class discussions, role-play and oral presentations. In science, most are able to describe their work to other pupils and adults articulately and with confidence. Good standards of reading allow most pupils to participate fully in all subjects. Staff from the local authority's learning support service are working with the science department to ensure that pupils are introduced to key words for each topic and can read and understand them. In history, pupils are taught how to construct historical essays and to use subject terminology correctly. As a result, standards of writing are high in history, especially by Key Stage 4. In geography, pupils are able to write in a variety of styles in Years 10 and 11. For example, Year 11 pupils write letters to builders of high-rise dwellings in earthquake zones and well written, illustrated topic notes on the 1995 floods. In music, most pupils can write extended commentaries to accompany their compositions for GCSE. Spelling is occasionally erratic but mostly good by Key Stage 4. The further improvement of literacy skills across the curriculum is part of the school development plan, with the emphasis on pupils in Year 7. The English department meets with teachers from local partner primary schools to share information about the primary school literacy hour. Subject departments are asked to focus on half-termly targets such as the presentation of work or the use of basic punctuation in Year 7.

### **MATHEMATICS**

67. Pupils' achievements in the 1999 Key Stage 3 national tests were well above the national average, both for pupils achieving level 5 or better and for those achieving level 6 or above. When compared with the results obtained by pupils from similar schools, results were very high. Boys and girls achieved similar standards. Pupils achieved more highly in mathematics than in English or science. Between 1996 and 1999, the Key Stage 3 test results have been well above the national average. Results in the 1999 GCSE examinations at grades A\* to C were high compared with the national average. As at Key Stage 3, pupils' results in mathematics compare very favourably with their achievement in

other subjects in the school. When compared with pupils from similar schools the number of pupils achieving A\* to C is very high.

68. In lessons observed, by age 14 higher achieving pupils are confident in number and in the use of fractions, percentages and decimals. They can, for instance, recognise that 9 per cent = 0.09. Most can state instantly that 9 per cent is approximately one tenth. Average attainers are very competent at number work, secure for instance in their knowledge and understanding of place value and rounding of numbers. Lower attaining pupils can find the area of a triangle given the length of its height and base. Most can find the area of a circle when given its diameter. Higher attaining pupils in Year 11 can read and understand practical problems, put them into a mathematical form and solve them graphically. They can solve quadratic equations graphically by converting them to linear form. Average attainers can reflect points and shapes in the x and y axes. Some can reflect in other lines such as  $x=y$  too. Knowledge of the trigonometry of right-angled triangles is well known and understood by these pupils. Most lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs make good progress.

69. Since the last inspection the mathematics department has been successful in maintaining very high standards. All suggestions in the previous report have been followed through and satisfactory action has been taken. The key issue of raising the level of challenge for more able pupils has been addressed by enhancing the worksheet provision for pupils at Key Stage 3 and by the introduction of the option of additional GCSE statistics for the more able Key Stage 4 pupils. In response to the point that work in lessons should be better suited to the needs of the pupils as individuals, supplementary work and worksheets have been produced for Year 7 and Year 8 pupils. The Year 9 scheme of work has been rewritten and an enhanced booklet scheme introduced for lower attainers. The scheme of work for Key Stage 4 has been revised, and better up-to-date textbooks are in use.

70. Teaching is good at Key Stage 3 and satisfactory at Key Stage 4. Wide-ranging quality in teaching was observed. Two unsatisfactory lessons were seen, both taught by teachers of limited experience. The pace of these lessons was too slow and there was insufficient challenge to maintain pupils' interest. In contrast, teaching in one third of lessons seen was very good and enabled pupils to learn effectively and, in some cases, independently. In these lessons, pupils, including those with special educational needs, made good progress. These lessons were taught by experienced teachers of the subject, kept pupils working throughout and engaged their interest. Teachers of these lessons have good subject knowledge and are assured in their delivery. They skilfully anticipate what pupils might find difficult. An example of this was a Year 7 investigation where pupils were organising data in different fields, prior to drawing up tables and diagrams of what their friends liked best. The teacher's excellent planning and organisation ensured that the lesson ran smoothly. The teaching showed high skill in knowing precisely the right point at which to give advice or whether to leave the pupils to find their mistakes out for themselves. A major factor in the department's success stems from the attitude and behaviour of the pupils. There were instances where poor behaviour by a few influenced the learning of other pupils, but these occasions were very infrequent. In most lessons, and in all of those taught well, the pupils worked hard, showed interest and often the ability to think for themselves. However, teachers do not enable pupils to use information technology enough.

71. Staff development and training will be critically important if the department is to maintain its very high standards. The head of department who has ensured standards are high is well aware of this situation. There are good monitoring and support procedures in place. Teachers are regularly observed in their classroom and marking and assessment of

pupils' work are monitored to ensure departmental policies and procedures are effective and properly followed. Regular half-termly testing of pupils ensures that decisions to change pupils' places in ability-groups are properly informed. Testing and review serve as a motivator for pupils to improve. Procedures would be enhanced if inexperienced teachers had the opportunity to see good practice in others' classrooms. The department is well led, but there are challenges to be met, not least the need to develop use of information technology into lessons and schemes of work.

#### Numeracy across the curriculum

72. There is, as yet, no whole school policy for numeracy. However, pupils demonstrate good levels of competence in numerical and graphical skills across the curriculum. Most Year 7 pupils successfully use co-ordinates in map work, draw up tally charts, tabulate results and represent them in graphical form. These skills are well applied, having been learned in mathematics lessons. Pupils are also able to measure angles when working with a compass and map. In science, use and application of number are strong. Graphs are used widely, including the drawing of lines of best fit. However, graphical work is often done by hand rather than on computer – a reflection of lack of use of information technology in the teaching of number overall. In lessons specifically for information technology, pupils demonstrate good numerical skills when constructing and using spreadsheets. In Year 10 physical education lessons, pupils of all abilities show they can use percentages effectively. They are skilful in managing calculations to review various measures of physical fitness. The school recognises that there is much to do if it is to be successful in building on the work in numeracy now taking place in primary schools so that high standards continue to be maintained.

#### SCIENCE

73. Pupils' achievement at the end of each key stage is above the national average. In national tests at the end of Key Stage 3 in 1999, the percentage of pupils reaching level 5 and above was higher than the national average and the percentage reaching level 6 and above was close to the national average. This has been the pattern for the past three years. In science tests, the proportion of pupils at level 5 and above is higher than that for similar schools, but below this at level 6 and above. Relative to attainment in the other core subjects, science is below English and mathematics. At the end of Key Stage 4, the percentage of pupils attaining GCSE grades A\* to C in biology is better than the national average, and in physics and chemistry the percentage is at the national average for this group. The proportion of pupils attaining GCSE grades A\* to C in double science at the end of Key Stage 4 is above the national average, and the proportion gaining grades A\* to G is at the national average. Other than minor variation between years, there is no overall significant difference in the attainment of boys and girls, although the proportion of girls doing three separate GCSE science subjects rather than double science is steadily increasing. In comparison with pupils' attainment in other core subjects at Key Stage 4, science sits between mathematics and English, and this level of attainment has been stable for some years.

74. Pupils' attainment in science lessons varies in quality, but generally it is good and occasionally very good. For example, pupils in Year 11 are very successful at developing a range of skills in making and using plant-dye indicators. Pupils in Year 8 investigate the refraction of light successfully. Attainment is less secure where pupils do not have first hand experience, as with pupils in Year 10 and the generation of a reactivity series for metals.



75. Since the last inspection, above average standards of attainment have been maintained and teaching continues to be good. Schemes of work at both key stages have been revised and triple science has successfully been added to the option system. Accelerated learning techniques have been developed. The department has improved the monitoring of progress and the quality of information to pupils and parents, and is able to assess pupils' examination borderlines accurately and provide support. Documentation is good and major policies and procedures are in place. Working with the county learning support service the department has produced a range of differentiated resources to support pupils' learning well, particularly for pupils with special educational needs.

76. The quality of teaching is generally good. There are examples of very good practice across both key stages. Teachers have very good knowledge and understanding, particularly within their own science specialism. They organise and prepare individual lessons conscientiously. Teachers' expectations are high for many pupils, and objectives usually shared with pupils. This clearly contributes to pupils' understanding and the overall success of the lesson. Whole class questioning is used effectively and the pace of lessons is generally good. A range of teaching and learning strategies is used and homework is usually well thought out, relevant and extends learning. Progress in lessons is good at both key stages, and for pupils of all levels of ability, including those with special educational needs. Pupils are challenged by good teaching. They respond with confidence, and show clear gains in knowledge, understanding and skills. This is demonstrated well in Year 9 where a group of pupils of low attainment progressed well in their work on chromosomes and genes. Pupils in Year 10 study chemical reactions which take in or give out energy; they present their work confidently and speak and listen well. Pupils are well behaved and relationships are good. Many take pride in their work and books are well looked after. They are keen, willing and attentive, and approach work with enthusiasm and a sense of enjoyment. Their engagement with new knowledge, skills and processes is high. This was illustrated well in Year 7 in work on determining the pH of a range of substances, and during a Year 9 lesson on chemical compounds and the investigation of the composition of magnesium oxide. Pupils enjoy practical work in science; they concentrate on their work and work well together. However, at Key Stage 3, teachers provide insufficient opportunity on a daily basis for genuine open-ended problem-solving, for making and testing hypotheses and for developing the skills of planning and investigation, prediction and evaluation. Pupils' books and other work are regularly marked, often with praise and helpful comment, to support learning. Assessment is properly organised and effective, especially in lessons where the teacher gives immediate feedback, such as that following a quick test on distance, velocity and time graphs with lower attaining pupils in Year 11. Teachers regularly assess pupils' work in unit tests and in the outcome of practical investigations. Scores and levels are displayed in the back of pupils' books, and hence can be seen regularly by parents. This information is occasionally used to modify the next stage of learning. The number of extra-curricular activities to extend learning beyond the classroom is low, but includes visits to Southern Water and the science centre at Hurstmonceux. Visiting speakers contribute to extending pupils' experience in the subject. The quality and amount of pupils' work on display throughout the department are good and help to create a stimulating context for learning.

77. A team of two well-qualified and experienced technicians provide high quality support. However, technician time is barely sufficient. Four laboratories were refurbished seven years ago; however, the remaining rooms and preparation areas are in poor condition and with minimal services. Although clean, their general appearance is unattractive and they present a poor learning environment for pupils. Use of laboratories is high. Funding for resources is below average and in some areas there is barely sufficient apparatus and equipment to support an appropriate level of practical problem-solving.

Quality varies, with some apparatus nearing the end of its useful life. Although teachers are rapidly developing their skills in using computers in science and administration, there remains a serious shortfall of experience of using computers in pupils' day-to-day experience in science. Standards are monitored by the head of department. Teachers work well together. Commitment to the subject and to the pupils is strong.

## **ART**

78. GCSE results have risen dramatically since 1995, when they were below average. In 1999, almost all pupils achieved GCSE grades A\* to C. These results were very high compared with the national average. Results were the highest in the school, and pupils achieved higher standards in art than they did in their other subjects. Boys in particular attain well compared with boys nationally. Of the girls entering the examination, about 40 per cent gained A\* grades, compared with 8 per cent nationally.

79. From average levels of competence on entry to Year 7, pupils of all abilities rapidly gain skills and understanding which take them to well above average attainment by the end of Year 9. All pupils achieve high standards in the rich variety of crafts-techniques that they learn. In relief work using card, for example, textures are well understood by Year 7. Their work shows very good use of simple materials, card, string and stains, to develop texture on the shell shapes they are making into visual notebooks. In Year 8, colour theory is well understood and excellently applied to paintings. By the end of Year 9, painting is very strong overall. Although attainment of all is high by Year 9, boys in particular attain very much higher standards than average in all skills, especially in painting. Pupils' drawing is average and often better, but relative to their very high attainment in other media is often pupils' weakest skill.

80. At the end of Year 9, pupils undertake a bridging project in the summer holiday prior to their GCSE course. Last summer's project produced standards of multi-media work which are as high as often seen in good Year 11 work. Most pupils begin Key Stage 4 with exceptional levels of skill. By Year 9, they have learned to develop excellent, highly investigative, exploratory visual notebooks. Pupils use these habits to extremely good advantage at Key Stage 4 to produce a very high level of preparatory work for their projects. They have a flying start in the development of personal, individually responsive outcomes in their final pieces for projects. Pupils often produce excellent work for these in a good variety of two-dimensional and relief work. Work from pupils of all abilities at Key Stage 4, including lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs, reflects the high standards of examination results described above. From very early in the school, pupils show unusually creative, enthusiastic attitudes to their work in the art department, and the subject contributes very significantly to their personal development and self-esteem.

81. The department has made excellent improvement since the last inspection. Standards have risen in all aspects of the work pupils undertake. The head of department, recently in post in 1995, has been highly successful in raising pupils' attainment to these exceptional levels. The criticisms relating to lack of range of media, to lack of sufficient experimentation in pupils' work are now fully resolved, to the extent that these are now great strengths.

82. The quality of teaching in the department is mostly good or better, with some excellent teaching seen, especially at Key Stage 4. Although a key member of staff was absent during the inspection, most teaching is characterised by very high expectations and an extremely lively enthusiasm for the subject. Teachers want their pupils to do well and

enjoy the subject. They put a great deal of energy and effort into lessons. Very good curriculum planning also provides unusually broad opportunities for pupils to undertake extra work at weekends, lunchtimes, after school and in holidays. Homework is used exceptionally well. Pupils often spend a long time on this, generally enjoying its challenge and usefulness. Homework contributes well to pupils' progress and attainment in art. Teachers stretch and encourage pupils as a matter of routine, and enable them to respond to stimuli in an individually creative manner. A very effective questioning style in many lessons forces pupils to think hard. The use of other pupils' prior work as examples gives them the conviction that they can work to high standards, and this positive culture of confidence pervades most of the department. This characteristic is mostly missing in classes taken by non-specialists, however. Here, teaching seen was satisfactory, but lacks the dynamism seen elsewhere in the department, with pupils' attitudes to art, and their skills, developing much less positively.

83. One issue for the school relates to the use of non-specialist staff whose work does not produce the highest standards from pupils. Another is the restricting size of the accommodation, especially of storage. At present the kiln room is used for paper-based work storage, so kilns cannot be fired for health and safety reasons. These assets are thus wasted, with no ceramics in the curriculum. The lack of a technician in art imposes essential maintenance and preparatory tasks on teachers.

## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

84. GCSE results in the grade range A\* to C have been well above the national average over the past three years. They have risen continuously year-on-year since the last inspection in all the design and technology specialist areas. The proportion of pupils achieving GCSE grades A\* to G has also been above average. The proportion of pupils achieving at the highest grades of A\* and A is significantly above the national average. Girls attain well above the national average for girls. Boys similarly attain above the national average for boys. Pupils attain higher standards in design and technology than they do in most of their other subjects in the school.

85. At the end of Key Stage 3, in all the material areas of design and technology, the great majority of pupils attain above national expectations. By the end of Key Stage 4, most attain well above the national average, with a significant minority attaining very high standards. Most pupils show a good understanding of the design process and principles. Middle and higher attaining pupils outline and explain their design ideas well, fluently using the appropriate technical language of the subject. Lower attaining pupils, including some with special educational needs, do not always use technical vocabulary so well. The great majority of pupils, including those with special educational needs, achieve to their potential. Higher attainers produce original design ideas to a very good standard. These designs eventually culminate in the production of well-crafted and finished outcomes. At Key Stage 3, graphic skills are good, although a very small proportion of work is spoiled by the use of garish and ineffective techniques. At Key Stage 4, and most evident in graphic products and textiles, there is a very high level of creative flair and imagination in pupils' design ideas and work. Pupils balance aesthetic and functional values well, as seen in practice by most pupils in the Year 9 bottle-opener project in resistant materials. At both key stages in all material areas, most pupils show good skills in using tools, equipment and machinery and they are very conscious of the need for safe working practices. Pupils readily use information technology in the completion of their coursework, with some examples of excellent outcomes seen in coursework folders. Pupils' progress, knowledge and understanding in computer-aided design and manufacture are underdeveloped, because they are limited by a lack of specialist equipment.

86. The school and the department approached the findings of the previous inspection in a very positive manner. Pupils' achievement has greatly improved at both key stages. Teaching has also greatly improved. Issues in relation to airborne dust have been suitably remedied. Dual use of a room for food and textiles remains unresolved, as does insufficient technical support in food technology.

87. Teaching is very good overall. Teachers are energetic and dedicated specialists with high levels of enthusiasm for their subjects. Their expectations are high and suitably modified to take account of the ability levels of pupils. Most pupils are made clearly aware of what they need to do and are well informed and motivated by teaching. Occasionally, teachers do not rigorously follow up pupils' incomplete class or homework. The great majority of pupils are fully engaged and learn much from the completion of their design projects. In most lessons, good humour prevails and an atmosphere conducive to positive learning is established. In almost every lesson, teaching generates good pupil response, a good attitude to learning and very positive behaviour. Lessons are very well planned and are clearly linked to National Curriculum requirements for design and technology. The pace of work in almost all lessons is brisk and purposeful with activities that are well matched to pupils' abilities and interests. Teachers provide good verbal feedback to pupils on their progress. Design projects are consistently marked and include sensitive and constructive comments to extend and improve pupils' work. Homework is set regularly and extends the curriculum effectively, although what is required is not always made clear to pupils in Year 7. Teachers make very effective use of examples of prior work to motivate pupils of all levels of ability, including those with special educational needs, and to encourage attainment at the highest levels.

88. Technical support is good in resistant materials, but insufficient in food technology. Technical and support staff provide an invaluable contribution to pupils' learning. The head of department is extremely effective in ensuring high standards.

## **DRAMA**

89. Drama is part of the expressive arts department. It is taught to all pupils at Key Stage 3 and is a popular option taken by up to half of each year group at Key Stage 4. In 1999, a much higher percentage of pupils than nationally entered the GCSE examination and the proportion of pupils attaining grades A\* to C was close to the national average. The attainment of boys was above the national average.

90. Many pupils in Year 9 were able to read extracts from the script of *Blood Brothers* effectively and to portray differences in status through their actions. By the end of Key Stage 4, pupils have good skills in performance. Nearly all were able to stay in role and concentrate well while they investigated different ways of expressing the emotions of the central characters in Jim Cartwright's *Two*. They were able to reflect on their own performances and help each other to evaluate their work through sensitive criticism.

91. Teaching is very good at both key stages. Teachers have a very secure knowledge of their subject and often use this to inspire and enthuse their pupils. Relationships with pupils are excellent. Teachers manage classes skilfully and are able to prevent enthusiasm from turning into over excitement. Pupils are always clear about what they are trying to achieve because of teachers' clear instructions and explanations. Most lessons include a variety of activities, including pair or group-work, performance and evaluation, to challenge all pupils appropriately.

92. Drama makes a significant contribution to the curriculum. It provides ample opportunities for pupils of all ages to participate in termly productions and to make frequent visits to theatres. An AS level course provides further challenge for higher attaining pupils and eases the transition to studying the subject at sixth form or further education colleges.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

93. In the last three years, attainment of GCSE A\* to C grades has risen steadily and at a faster rate than the national average. In 1999, there was a reversal of previous trends, with boys gaining better GCSE A\* to C grades than girls, and slightly above the national average. Overall achievement of A\* to C grades is average. Despite the improving results in 1999, boys are gaining nearly half a grade less in geography than in other subjects that they take. For the last two years, girls have gained two-thirds of a grade less than in other subjects. However, the number of A\* grades is slowly improving. Achievement of A\* to G grades is in line with the national average.

94. In lessons seen in Years 7 and 8, achievement is at the expected level. By the end of the key stage, it is above expectations. Basic mapping and number skills are quickly put in place and pupils use coordinates well in 4 and 6 figure references. They measure line and angle in scale and compass work and are proficient in using graphical methods, such as line and column graphs to illustrate work on climate. Written skills improve throughout the key stage and, in Year 9, imaginative writing is seen in creating newscasts reporting an earthquake. Presentation of some work does not reach the standards set by the department. There is some emphasis on the use of correct vocabulary, but additional word displays and glossaries of key words are lacking. In lessons at Key Stage 4, achievement is average overall. Pupils' coursework, based on well learned enquiry skills at Key Stage 3, successfully blends written and numerical work. Pupils can hypothesise, gather data, analyse and draw conclusions, as seen in a variety of good studies of the Eastbourne area. Pupils have a good understanding of more complex ideas in geography, found in themes such as urban development, modelling, weather systems and tectonic activity. Despite this understanding, there are still some gaps in basic knowledge, such as formation of fossil fuels.

95. Although examination results since the last inspection have been erratic, standards now are similar to those reported in 1995. There have been improvements in assessment at Key Stage 3 and in other areas, such as field-work, teaching and curriculum, good standards have been maintained.

96. Teaching at Key Stage 3 is at least satisfactory in all lessons and good or very good in half the lessons seen. At Key Stage 4, teaching is good or very good in three-quarters of lessons. Friendly, non-confrontational teaching gives pupils confidence and encourages them to participate in lessons. Teachers employ good local knowledge and thorough planning to prepare entertaining and informative lessons. Good use of materials well adapted to pupils' different levels of attainment ensures that all pupils, including those with special educational needs, can participate and benefit from classwork and homework. High expectations and constant reinforcement help pupils at all levels of attainment, including those on the special needs register, to make satisfactory and often good progress. Able pupils are suitably challenged by extension work and encouraged to work at their own speed. As a result, they make good progress, as seen in clearly thought-out and very well presented studies on the water-cycle and water-supply. These contain excellent illustrations and graphs combined with a high standard of writing. Other work is improved by the use of a variety of sources, other than texts, such as personal photographs, newspapers and computer-generated material exemplified by extended writing on the topic,

for example of industrial change in South Wales. Teachers' departmental clinics enable lower attainers to work without undue pressure and help higher attainers to reach their potential.

97. Use of computers in class is a weakness and although the software collection is being built up and schemes of work offer suggestions of when the use of computers is appropriate, more staff training is needed with guidance of how best to employ information technology in the classroom.

98. The head of department has been in post for two years and examination results have steadily improved. Plans are in place to introduce tests at age 16, which are better suited to some levels of attainment. This, coupled with improved monitoring of individual progress, target-setting and continuous review of the curriculum, should result in improved performance in relation to other subjects in the school. Consistency and unity of effort within the department are threatened by the relatively large number of part-time geography teachers deployed and the non-specialist rooms in which the subject is taught. The establishment of high standards in teaching and field-work is enabling the department to improve satisfactorily.

## **HISTORY**

99. In recent GCSE examinations, results in both grades A\* to C and A\* to G ranges have been above national averages and in 1999, they were well above the national average and compared very favourably with results achieved by pupils in their other subjects at the school.

100. The seeds of this notable achievement are being sown at Key Stage 3 where, by the end of Year 9, standards of attainment in lessons are above national expectations. From the outset, pupils are encouraged to develop subject skills, such as the critical use of source materials and differing forms of historical expression. They move freely between descriptive, analytical and empathetic writing, and are also becoming skilled in how to write historical essays. They are able to tease out historical information from a variety of sources of evidence and can use this information effectively. This was shown in a Year 8 lesson, where pupils developed their group-work skills to produce a newspaper highlighting the issues surrounding the union with Scotland in the eighteenth century. At Key Stage 4, there is a very large uptake for the subject, and the skills, knowledge and understanding nurtured during the previous key stage are further developed. Attainment levels in lessons are above national standards at Key Stage 4, except in lower attaining groups, and some outstanding examples of coursework investigations were seen in pupils' work in Year 11.

101. Overall, there has been very good improvement since the previous inspection in this high attaining subject. The high standard noted in the previous inspection has strengthened further with respect to pupils' achievements and the quality of teaching. The small, but very able and highly committed teaching team has the potential to build upon its existing notable success.

102. A key feature of the department is the quality of teaching, which is mostly good, and often very good or excellent. A very positive classroom atmosphere is maintained at all times and pupils are encouraged to develop their critical reasoning powers, particularly in the evaluation of sources of evidence. A very good example of this was provided during a Year 9 lesson in which pupils listened closely to an audio-tape containing interviews with World War 1 veterans, and discussed the importance and reliability of their testimony with commendable maturity. Teachers have a very good grasp of subject knowledge and teach

with pace, enthusiasm and rigour. Lessons are planned very effectively and a variety of techniques are employed to aid pupils' learning, including group work, role-play, class discussion and the use of video and audio material. There are excellent relationships between teachers and pupils, and an air of purpose and enjoyment pervades history lessons. As a result, the progress of pupils, including that of pupils with special educational needs, is very good throughout the age range. All pupils are encouraged to use historical vocabulary from the outset, and develop their skills well both in the classroom and in their exercise books, although sometimes poor presentation detracts from the overall quality of their written work at Key Stage 3. All pupils are given confidence to express their views in discussion and group work, as was demonstrated in an effective Year 10 lesson, in which pupils used work cards in groups to discuss the relative successes and failures of the League of Nations in the 1920s. Teachers have very high expectations of all pupils. Higher attaining pupils are provided with very good opportunities to develop their knowledge through extended essay writing and an emphasis on personal historical investigation. Lower attainers, including some with special educational needs, are given good support through the use of materials designed to meet their individual needs and, as a result, they make good progress at both key stages. The attitudes and behaviour of pupils are very positive. They show keen interest in the subject and commendable commitment to their studies. They have respect for their teachers and respond well to challenges. This was shown to good effect in an excellent Year 11 lesson, during which pupils used role-play to exemplify conflicting attitudes to the cold war. However, little opportunity is provided for pupils to reflect on the progress they have made during each session.

103. The department has many strengths which make a strong contribution to its success in raising standards. There is a strong sense of teamwork with excellent leadership which ensures that standards are high. Documentation is thorough and a variety of techniques are used to monitor pupils' progress, including rigorous assessment of pupils by teachers and pupils' own self-assessment. The department uses imaginative home-produced resources to reinforce pupils' learning. The use of information technology has improved since the previous inspection and the department has a detailed handbook on this aspect of its work, although further development is needed.

## **INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY**

104. Pupils' achievement of GCSE grades A\* to C was above the national average in 1997, but well below in 1998 and 1999. The proportion of pupils achieving a GCSE A\* to G grade has been below the national average during the past three years. There is little difference in the attainment of boys and girls. Pupils do not generally attain as well in information technology as they do in their other subjects in the school.

105. In all the required National Curriculum strands for information technology at Key Stage 3, most pupils attain standards in lessons that are broadly in line with national expectations. There are significant strengths in communicating and handling information through word processing and desk-top publishing. Pupils' attainment in modelling using spreadsheets is at the nationally expected level. Work in control technology is at a very basic level. Too little opportunity is provided beyond lessons specifically for information technology for pupils to extend their skills in modelling, to construct procedures or to use appropriate measurement and control functions. This is, however, mainly because of a lack of sufficient resources, particularly suitable equipment, to enable teachers to develop these aspects. Pupils show good skills in using a digital camera to capture an image and to incorporate this in their word-processed files.

106. At Key Stage 4, all pupils study for the GCSE examination in information technology and just over half the pupils achieve standards in line with the national average. Work in Year 11 GCSE lessons shows standards to be much nearer the national average for most pupils than they were for the previous year group. Almost all pupils attain the national average in Year 10. At both key stages in most lessons specifically for information technology, most pupils show fluency in basic operations such as logging on to the network, loading programs and files using the keyboard and mouse. They show good skills and techniques in formatting and editing text, backing-up material, entering spreadsheet formulae and printing their work. The skills, knowledge and understanding which pupils develop in timetabled information technology lessons are not at present widely practised or developed in sufficient depth across all areas of the curriculum. This limits pupils' progress in using information technology as a tool to investigate, research and solve problems, or to understand the implications of this technology for working life and society. For example, the use of CD-ROM or the Internet for research work is underdeveloped, although pupils have sufficient skill to carry out research using this medium. Individual pupils often make good use of the multimedia and Internet facilities during lunch and other breaks.

107. Improvements have been made since the previous inspection, and leadership of the subject has competently managed these. Control continues to be underdeveloped. Ventilation has been slightly improved in the main suites. The previous key issue requiring a full-time technician has been met. This technical support provides an invaluable contribution to pupils' learning and in maintaining the resources provided. The new textbook used generally enables teachers to adapt work effectively for all levels of ability through pictorial representation of the key learning objectives. However, computers are not used enough across the curriculum. The gaps between lessons specifically for information technology for Years 7 to 10 on the two-week timetable reduce pupils' rate of progress.

108. Teaching is never less than satisfactory and is good in most lessons. All teachers are enthusiastic and effectively stimulate interest and motivation. Most teachers explain subject concepts clearly. They provide straightforward, effective demonstrations of applications and enable pupils to understand and apply these confidently themselves. Teaching is characterised by high levels of individual support and guidance for pupils at their computers. The teaching styles and methods adopted support pupils' learning well. As a result, most pupils show good interest levels, sustain their concentration for long spans of time and make good gains in subject skills and understanding. All teachers are dedicated, caring and sensitive in their approach to pupils. Lessons are very well planned with work that is appropriately pitched for pupils' capabilities and interests. Teachers are good at testing pupils' understanding of the required task. The teaching effectively enables pupils to understand how well they are doing and to understand how they can improve their work. Most pupils respond well to the teaching approaches adopted and show a good attitude to learning and good behaviour in lessons. Pupils with special educational needs mostly make good progress. Teachers do not set homework in information technology and opportunities are missed to extend the curriculum to promote pupils' further understanding in the subject. Pupils' rate of progress is reduced by a two-week timetable and learning is not well enough reinforced because of the excessive time-lag between lessons.

## **MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES**

### **French and German**



109. In 1997, French GCSE results at grades A\* to C were above national standards and, in 1998 and 1999, they were average. In 1997, German GCSE results at grades A\* to C were well below national standards, and in 1998 and 1999 they were below average. These results are below those for other subjects in the school. The department's targets are to be above national averages in both languages at GCSE in 2000. This is a significant challenge, but observation in lessons and of pupils' work indicates that this should be achieved.

110. In lessons observed, many pupils in Year 9 have now reached the end-of-year nationally expected level in French in listening, speaking, reading and writing. At Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 pupils are stronger in listening, speaking, and reading than in writing. Year 9 pupils working in pairs in German can successfully ask each other questions about their holidays. A pupil in Year 7 can recite a French poem accurately. Year 8 pupils listening to a German tape can identify positive and negative opinions expressed by different speakers. When reading in French, Year 10 pupils can understand different types of television programmes and Year 11 pupils write interesting material in French in present, past and future tenses. However, pupils make unnecessary errors in grammar and spelling. This is the greatest overall weakness in pupils' attainment throughout the school. Pupils do not check their written work carefully enough. Girls usually attain better results than boys, but within the national difference. Pupils' skills are at lower levels than they would be in English. They use numbers only occasionally.

111. GCSE results are not comparable to standards at the previous inspection, when all pupils did not study a foreign language at Key Stage 4, as they now do. The department has managed this change, and standards in lessons seen are higher than GCSE results of recent years indicate. Otherwise the department has successfully addressed most issues raised in the last inspection report. Pupils are using French and German more to communicate with their teachers and each other. However, they have little access to computers to improve their skills through information technology. No funds are currently available to employ foreign language assistants to help improve pupils' oral skills further.

112. Overall, the quality of teaching is good at both key stages. Some lessons are very well taught and some are excellent. The quality of teaching is improving standards and ensures that pupils make good progress. Teachers plan a sequence of activities, are proficient in the foreign language, project their voices clearly, and have good accents. Some use the foreign language for large parts of the lesson, but others use too much English. They use overhead projectors and other resources effectively to help pupils' learning. Standards of discipline are good and pupils are well managed. Though work is usually matched to the ability of the pupils, a closer match is needed in some classes, particularly for written work. Time is used well, and some teachers are good at encouraging oral work in pairs or groups, but others do not use pair-work sufficiently. The vast majority of pupils behave well. They show interest in their work, sustain their concentration, and develop satisfactory study skills. Many pupils show an obvious sense of enjoyment in lessons. They work well together, and sometimes have opportunities to use their initiative in creating role-plays and in working independently. A few pupils find it difficult to concentrate so as to achieve their potential. Teachers display pupils' work, maps, posters, and other authentic material, which help to increase pupils' knowledge of the languages and countries concerned. However, more display is needed in some classrooms. Teachers assess pupils' work and progress regularly, and results inform subsequent teaching. Useful homework is set regularly. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs meets their needs, enabling them to progress well. Teachers use a good range of methods and keep lessons moving at very good pace. For example, in a Year 8 German class, the teacher introduced the months by saying them and holding up cards showing the spelling. Pupils chorused the

months to ensure good pronunciation. They then were given cards with a birthday, and had to move round the room asking other pupils in German until they found someone with the same birthday, and then moved on to the next activity. In both French and German, pupils are actively involved throughout and work very well on the range of different tasks, making very good progress.

113. The head of department monitors the progress of pupils in both languages well and this is helping to raise standards. The department is well organised, and has prioritised development plans. Visits to France and exchanges with France and Germany encourage social interaction and personal responsibility. Books and visits abroad help to develop awareness of other cultures. Insufficient textbooks and computers are unhelpful to pupils' progress.

## **MUSIC**

114. Results in GCSE grades A\* to C in music are well above the national average for the subject. This year's figures included around 30 per cent A\* entries and in comparison with the department's pattern over the last four years of 100 per cent A\* to C grades show only a slight dip below this level. Pupils usually achieve higher standards in music than they do in their other GCSE subjects.

115. Standards at the end of Key Stage 3 exceed nationally expected levels. Pupils develop their musical abilities well, developing aural perception and good rhythmic responses. They learn composing techniques and, by experiment, selection and exchange of suggestions, develop and extend their ideas. They perform individually and in ensembles, maintaining individual lines, often with good sensitivity, but above all with a good sense of communication and presentation. Pupils in Year 7 readily acquired the appropriate music-hall style for singing *Oom Pah Pah*, as well as improving several aspects of their singing technique and developing confidence in two-part work. Pupils' responses as an audience listening to each other's presentations reflect their increasingly perceptive listening abilities. Many read staff notation adequately, but this is not a particular strength, and many could improve fluency in keyboard playing by adopting logical fingering.

116. Standards at the end of Key Stage 4 are well above average, particularly in performing. Many higher attaining pupils achieve well above the standards required. The performances of pupils of average ability are good and one or two lower attaining pupils learn to play simple repertoire fluently. For these pupils, their achievements in music are frequently among the best of all their subjects. Compositions are imaginative, well structured and effectively employ an interesting range of resources and subtle textures. Most pupils readily use computer technology as a composition resource.

117. The high standards observed during the previous inspection have been well maintained. Strategies to provide suitable levels of challenge for pupils of different abilities have been further refined. More pupils of a wider range of ability now choose the GCSE music option. Learning resources, previously good, are in some cases deteriorating, and there are at present no plans for their replacement. Some tuned percussion instruments are in very poor condition and the department's three computers, used extensively both as composing tools and for storing pupils' work, are elderly and unreliable. Curriculum continuity with Key Stage 2 is still largely undeveloped. However the department attempts to compensate by inviting parents to complete forms which provide information about their children's musical interests.

118. Teaching is very good at both key stages. Teachers' clear understanding of how pupils' musical abilities can be developed is reflected in clear objectives for all lessons. Lessons are taught in a committed and charismatic manner. By their enthusiasm and excellent expertise, teachers provide excellent role models, both for standards of performing in class and in a wider forum, and for acquiring new knowledge and skills. Expectations of standards of work are consistently high and pupils are constantly encouraged to build on their previous knowledge. Pupils with special educational needs make very good progress in relation to their abilities. Pupils in Year 7 learning about triple time quickly related the nature of the music to their knowledge of life in London at the time of Charles Dickens and were led on to discover the nature and development of the Viennese waltz. Pupils in a Year 10 lesson learned about structure by analysing a piece of folk music and went on to demonstrate their understanding well in subsequent composition work. Although teachers develop good inter-action with pupils by carefully targeted questions, some lessons are dominated by too much talking. In some lessons with larger classes the noise generated by pupils' instruments jeopardises the development of sensitivity and discrimination.

119. Facilities for music are good. Systematic management and good use of resources, along with the wide variety of experience offered and the rich programme of extra-curricular activities, ensure high standards are maintained. Concerts and major musical productions are a regular feature and the school's musical ensembles regularly perform in the National Festival of Music for Youth. Very good links exist both with the local musical community and the professional world. Access to local authority instruments and the head of department's competence and familiarity with Indian and Gamelan music raise pupils' awareness of non-Western cultures. Visits to opera and musical shows and annual foreign tours offer opportunities for pupils to increase their understanding of a vast range of musical experiences.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

120. GCSE results at grades A\* to C for the past three years have been well above the national average. Pupils usually achieve higher results in the subject than in their other subjects in the school. In 1999, 70 per cent of pupils achieved grades A\* to C and all pupils gained a grade. Twice as many boys as girls study for the GCSE examination. While the numbers of girls have remained constant, the numbers of boys taking the subject have increased each year.

121. In lessons, most pupils at both key stages are achieving standards of performance at least in line with national expectations for their age in a variety of games and gymnastics. Some pupils are achieving high standards in games, particularly volleyball at Key Stage 4. This reflects the in-depth work the pupils experience over this key stage. Knowledge and understanding of how to prepare for the specific activities are well established and many pupils are able to lead others in a worthwhile warm up. In some games sessions, a good understanding of principles of play and rules accompanies skilful performance.

122. Apart from the constraints imposed by accommodation, some of which is of poor quality, all issues from the last inspection have been resolved. Achievement and endeavour of all pupils in GCSE practical sessions are now good. Standards at GCSE are high.

123. Most teaching is good and much is very good. As a result, most pupils make good progress through structured units of work. Teachers have good subject knowledge allied to accurate knowledge of their pupils enabling both high attainers and pupils with special educational needs to succeed. GCSE teaching is a strength and is well researched. In

volleyball and gymnastics the setting of tasks to match pupils' abilities is particularly noteworthy. Pupils with special educational needs are fully integrated and often not discernible in lessons. Very good management of pupils is a strong feature in all lessons. Many pupils take advantage of the opportunity to advance and refine their skills through the strong extra-curricular programme and community sporting links. Some individuals and teams progress to achievements at representative and national levels. Most boys and girls show very good attitudes to the subject.

124. The department has strong leadership. A clear view exists of where the teaching is leading through a curriculum map supported by coherent units of work. The length of those units at Key Stage 3 needs reconsideration, informed by pupils' attainment in the different activities. Grouping arrangements at Key Stage 3 maximise learning opportunities enabling pupils to work at a level appropriate to their different abilities. The opportunity for pupils to be taught gymnastics at Key Stage 4 and the inclusion of a GCSE dance course are noteworthy features and enhance the curriculum well. Several problems with accommodation serve to undermine the high standards set by the department. The leaking sports hall roof, standards of cleanliness, insufficient storage space and lack of good changing and showering space are unhelpful, and place additional strain upon the teaching and management of the department. However, the school, with the local authority and borough council, has now scheduled improvements for the sports hall to take place shortly.

## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

125. GCSE results in 1999 at grades A\* to C and A\* to G in the full course examination in religious studies were well above the national average. Results matched the national average in 1998, but were above average in 1997. The number of candidates was relatively low. There were ten in 1999, eight in 1998, and fifteen in 1997. However, numbers increased substantially in 1999 when 106 candidates took the examination for the recently introduced short GCSE course. The results for grades A\* to C were well above the national average. Five pupils gained grade A\* and sixteen pupils achieved grade A. The 1999 results compare well with results in other subjects in the school and represent high attainment.

126. Pupils' achievements in lessons by age 14, exceed the expected outcomes for pupils of that age as set out in the local Agreed Syllabus for religious education. By the end of Year 9, most pupils have a good knowledge and understanding of the main beliefs and religious practices of Christianity and of other major world religions such as Buddhism, Hinduism and Sikhism. They also have a good appreciation of how religious belief affects daily living, for example in what people wear, as in Sikhism. Most pupils express their ideas clearly in discussion, as in a Year 9 lesson on contemporary issues, when pupils effectively evaluated the social problems encountered by school age parents in terms of finance, accommodation, family relationships and child-care. The majority of pupils produce a wide range of good quality written work that includes descriptions of events in the New Testament, research findings on different religious and cultural customs such as Hindu birth ceremonies, as well as personal viewpoints. Pupils make good use of illustrations, cartoons and information technology, and their work in many exercise books is very attractively presented.

127. By the end of Year 11, the standards of attainment of most pupils are above the national average. Their written assignments and discussions in class show that they have a good knowledge and understanding of Christian attitudes towards the fundamental questions of existence, and towards moral issues such as the sanctity of life. Pupils explore spiritual themes thoughtfully, as in a discussion with the curate of the local parish church on

the priestly calling in a Year 11 lesson. Most pupils use technical language confidently, and they make good use of evidence from a wide range of sources in their written work.

128. The school has responded positively to the concern raised in the previous report about the difficulties encountered by lower attaining pupils in understanding concepts and certain technical terms. The department has made good progress in developing teaching methods and learning materials that meet the needs of all pupils. Pupils use information technology as an integral part of some lessons, for example, in creating posters to advertise missionary posts in Africa and Asia. The revised Programmes of Study for Years 7, 8 and 9 reflect the changes made in the local Agreed Syllabus. The introduction of the short course in Years 10 and 11 has contributed to raising attainment.

129. The quality of teaching is good and this has a positive impact on pupils' attitudes to learning. In about a third of the lessons seen the teaching was very good. The teachers in the department work very well as a team. They have a very good knowledge and understanding of the subject and an enthusiasm for it. One of the strengths of the teaching is the careful planning of opportunities for pupils to explore the spiritual dimension to life, which they do successfully. In the most effective lessons, teachers make very good use of resources to encourage all pupils, including those with special educational needs, to reflect on beliefs and significant events. In these lessons, pupils learn successfully and attain standards which are above average, and they gain satisfaction from their work. This was evident in a Year 10 lesson on the role of art and symbolism in developing spiritual understanding, when pupils visited the neighbouring Baptist church to study the banners created by members of the congregation. Pupils made very good progress in working out how the themes and texts for meditation were presented and developed in the skilful use of design, pattern and colour. Another strength is the way in which homework is used not only to consolidate what has been learned, but also to provide opportunities for research and encourage a personal response. Books are regularly marked with helpful comments showing pupils how work could be improved. Pupils themselves are well motivated and the good relationships in the classroom encourage them to feel confident in taking part in discussions with the knowledge that their contributions are valued. Most pupils are attentive listeners, they show respect for other people's views and give a courteous welcome to visiting speakers. Behaviour is almost always very good. Pupils respond positively to the very good opportunities offered for personal development.

130. There are a few shortcomings. Sometimes there is a lack of precision in the lesson objectives, and therefore the activities are not sufficiently well structured and pupils are not fully drawn into discussions. As a consequence, a minority of pupils do not sustain their concentration, and begin to talk among themselves. The pace of the lesson slackens, and the quality of learning is not as good as it should be. This was the case in a Year 11 lesson on religion and the media. Very occasionally, as happened in a Year 10 lesson, the negative attitudes of a significant number of boys make it difficult for the teacher to move the lesson forward, so pupils do not make satisfactory progress. However, the strengths of the teaching far outweigh the weaknesses.

131. The subject is well managed and there is a very good ethos for learning contributing to good standards. Pupils' progress is well monitored to ensure that above average standards are achieved.