

INSPECTION REPORT

WORDEN HIGH SCHOOL

Leyland

LEA area: Lancashire

Unique reference number: 119741

Headteacher: Mr D. R. Tilston

Reporting inspector: Mr D. Klemm
2049

Dates of inspection: 14th – 18th May, 2001

Inspection number: 196270

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive

School category: Community

Age range of students: 11 to 16

Gender of students: Mixed

School address: Westfield Drive
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Appropriate authority: The Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Mrs. G. Lewis

Date of previous inspection: 3rd – 7th February 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
2049	D. Klemm	Registered inspector		Information about the school The school's results and achievements How well are students taught? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
12775	J. Goodchild	Lay inspector		Students' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its students? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
30512	V. M. Bailey	Team inspector	Science Equality of opportunity	
30702	P. A. Bowyer	Team inspector	Mathematics	
10209	V. J. Gormally	Team inspector	Art and design	
12470	B. Greasley	Team inspector	Geography Provision for students with special educational needs	
11969	J. Hardy	Team inspector	Information and communication technology Design and technology	
20287	D. S. Harris	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages Provision for students in Key Stage 4	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to students?
11044	J. N. Hedge	Team inspector	English Provision for students with English as an additional language	
18589	M. King	Team inspector	Music	
10378	D. H. Turton	Team inspector	History Religious education	
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

The profile of the student intake has not changed significantly since the last inspection in February 1997. Worden High School is an 11-16 mixed comprehensive with 586 students on roll. There are 304 boys and 282 girls and the school is regularly oversubscribed. The school draws most of its students from 5 local primary schools and the majority of students live within easy walking distance of the school.

Students live in a mixture of privately owned and rented accommodation most of which is Housing Association property. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is just over 17 per cent and is around the national average although for the last few years it has been above. There are 4.8 per cent of students with statements which is above the national average and 8.9 per cent on the special educational needs register which is below. There are no students with English as an additional language and no students from ethnic minority backgrounds. The number of students from socially advantaged backgrounds is below the national average.

On entry to the school students' attainment levels are variable. In all years they are below the national average and in the present Year 9 well below with relatively few high attaining students. For the last two years there have been significant improvements in attainment on entry. In 2000 53 per cent of Year 11 students chose to continue their education in neighbouring schools or colleges.

Since the last inspection around one third of the staff are new to the school and a new deputy headteacher has been appointed recently and will start in September 2001. The school has recently had re-confirmed its 'Investors in People' accreditation.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

The school provides a sound education for its students. Teaching is good overall although there are weaknesses in some subjects. Attainment is at the national average in Years 7 to 9 but is below average in the upper school. It is generally above average for similar schools and most students achieve satisfactorily in relation to their prior attainment. The school is run well on a day-to-day basis and management is competent. Students are well cared for and relationships are very good although attendance is unsatisfactory. The school uses the resources available to it sensibly and taking into account the attainment of students on entry to the school provides satisfactory value for money.

What the school does well

- Good teaching in many lessons especially in Years 7 to 9
- The quality of relationships between school and home, teachers and students and amongst students themselves.
- Provision of extra-curricular activities
- Provision of personal, social and health education and careers and vocational education
- Relationships with feeder primary schools, local commerce and industry and post 16 institutions

What could be improved

- Students' attendance
- The quality of teaching in food technology and in some modern foreign languages lessons and the management of the modern foreign languages department.
- Monitoring the appropriateness and implementation of policies and day to day practices and evaluating their success
- Assessment, marking and reports to parents
- Provision of information and communication technology (ICT) at Key Stage 4, the use of three dimensional work in art and design at Years 7 to 9 and a daily act of collective worship for all students.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school received a very good report at the last inspection and satisfactory progress has been made since then. Standards have been maintained but have not improved in line with the national trend. Teaching was good at the last inspection and continues to be good especially in Years 7 to 9. There is a small amount of unsatisfactory teaching. There have been improvements in the teaching and provision of ICT at Years 7 to 9 but not at Key Stage 4 and the provision for and the teaching of students with special educational needs has improved. There is still no daily act of collective worship for all students. Attendance at school is not as good as at the last inspection.

STANDARDS

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

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

Standards in the national tests for 14 year olds for the last 3 years have been in line with the national average for science and in the last two years for English but they have been below average in mathematics. They were well above average for similar schools in science and above average for English and mathematics. Boys' attainment is weaker than girls.

At GCSE standards are below the national average but are above average in comparison with similar schools. In 2000 the achievement of students at GCSE in relationship to their attainment at 14 was below average although in 1999 it was above. There has been no significant difference in the attainment of students since the last inspection. Girls are now achieving better results than boys. In 2000 results were above the school average in science, English, English literature most design and technology subjects and physical education but were below average in geography, drama, history, French, German, art and design and food technology.

Attainment in lessons is in line with national standards in Years 7 to 9 and below in Year 10. The achievement of students is satisfactory throughout the school although boys' attainment in some subjects is below average. Students with special educational achieve well and make satisfactory progress. Gifted and talented students achieve satisfactorily in most subject

areas. Standards in literacy are average but numeracy skills are below. In Years 7 to 9 standards in ICT are average but provision is inadequate in Years 10 and 11 and standards are not maintained. The school has set very challenging targets for GCSE examinations in 2001 considering the prior attainment of this year group.

STUDENTS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Most students are positive about school, work hard and are keen to do their best. They respond well to challenging tasks and take an active part in extra – curricular activities
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour in lessons and around the school is satisfactory although a small number of students can be disruptive and the number of exclusions has risen this year. The majority of students are friendly and courteous.
Personal development and relationships	Relationships within the school are very good. Teachers show respect to students and value their attainments. Students demonstrate sensitivity to the feelings, ideas and beliefs of others and develop mature attitudes. Bullying is rare and is dealt with effectively
Attendance	Attendance is unsatisfactory. 75 per cent of students attend regularly but the attendance of 25 per cent of students is unsatisfactory. Punctuality is generally good.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of students:	aged 11-14 years	aged 14-16 years
Lessons seen overall	Good	Satisfactory

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

Teaching overall is good and is better in Years 7 to 9 than Year 10. There is no significant difference since the last inspection. During the inspection week 61 per cent of lessons were good or better and 24 per cent very good or excellent. In 5 per cent of lessons teaching was unsatisfactory. Teaching is good in many subject areas and is very good in history. Science teaching is good and in mathematics and English teaching is satisfactory. There is some unsatisfactory teaching in modern languages and the teaching of food technology is unsatisfactory. The major reason for unsatisfactory teaching is poor classroom management. Good use of practical methods enhances learning in music and in religious education lessons are carefully planned. Homework is set regularly across the curriculum and is of a satisfactory standard. There is a need in most subjects to set more precise targets to improve learning.

Literacy skills are taught satisfactorily in English and there are examples of good practice in drama, science and history. Numeracy is taught adequately in mathematics but apart from some work in science and geography is not taught systematically across the curriculum. Students with special needs are taught effectively in small groups. In many subject areas they are taught well in whole class lessons particularly in mathematics, religious education, art and design and history.

Learning was good or better in just over 60 per cent of lessons and strengths include the pace of work in science, the development of historical skills and the acquisition of knowledge in religious education. Learning is better in Years 7 to 9 than in Year 10. Across the curriculum students are often unaware of what they need to do to improve their learning further.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The quality of curriculum provision overall is satisfactory throughout the school. Statutory requirements are not met with regard to the provision of three-dimensional opportunities in art and design at Years 7 to 9 and ICT at Key Stage 4. Extra-curricular provision is very good and the school's links with the local community and partner schools are good.
Provision for students with special educational needs	The amount of provision for students with special educational needs is satisfactory and the quality of this support is always satisfactory and often good. Students with disabilities receive good support and make good progress.
Provision for students' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	The quality of personal, social and health education is good. Provision for students' moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory and, although religious education provision is good, spiritual provision is insufficiently developed across the curriculum.
How well the school cares for its students	Form tutors know their students and look after them well. Pastoral support is good. There is a need for teachers to develop the use of assessment information to improve learning and attainment.
How well the school works in partnership with parents	The school has developed very good links with parents although there is a need to improve annual reports. School and parents need to work together to improve students' attendance.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher has provided good leadership over the last twelve years and with the support of his deputy and other senior staff ensures that the school operates well on a day-to-day basis. Monitoring the implementation of practices and policies and evaluating their success are areas which must be addressed. The pastoral care system works well and most heads of department and faculties provide effective leadership although there are weaknesses especially in modern foreign languages. The strategic management skills of some middle managers need to be developed. Management overall is satisfactory
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governing body performs its duties well. It provides friendly but critical support to the headteacher. Some governors spend generous amounts of time in school giving practical help as well as monitoring policies. Through the committee structure they help to shape and evaluate policies. The governing body is not meeting legal requirements with regard to providing ICT at Key Stage 4, three-dimensional work in art and design at Years 7 to 9 and a daily act of collective worship for all students.
The school's evaluation of its performance	There is detailed analysis of test results which are used to set students targets and to analyse strengths and weaknesses in departments. Only a few teachers are using this information to plan lessons and provide students with specific feedback on what they need to do to improve. The senior team is evaluating teaching and self-evaluation within departments is encouraged. There is a need to target support on those areas where there are identified weaknesses.
The strategic use of resources	Financial resources are managed effectively although there is a need to evaluate more precisely the cost and impact of development plans. There are some large teaching groups particularly at Years 7 to 9. The amount and quality of learning resources are satisfactory although the number of computers is inadequate The school's accommodation is satisfactory and most classrooms are spacious and well maintained. There are sufficient toilets which are well maintained by cleaning staff. Staff are well qualified and their expertise is well matched to curriculum needs. The school works hard at trying to secure best value for the monies available to it.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• teaching is good• their children make good progress• there is an expectation that students will work hard• the school is approachable and friendly	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• standards of behaviour• the amount of homework• the quality of information about their children's attainment and progress

The inspection team agrees with parents that the school is a friendly learning environment where students are expected to work hard and make good progress. The school has an 'open door policy' and encourages parents to make contact to deal with issues as they arise. The inspection team found that homework was set on a regular basis although sometimes not in line with the homework timetable. The amount set is appropriate for the age and attainment levels of students. The majority of students behave well but there is a minority who need to be managed more effectively. Reports to parents do not provide sufficient information about attainment and progress and what parents need to do to help their children.

Sixty one per cent of parents returned the questionnaire and 17 parents attended the pre-inspection meeting.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and students' achievements

1. On entry to the school students' standards of attainment are below the national average as in the current Year 10 and sometimes well below as in Year 9 although there is considerable variation from year to year. There are fewer higher attaining students admitted to the school than in most schools nationally. In the last two years standards have improved but are still below the national average. By the end of Year 9 in the 2000 National Curriculum tests results were in line with the national average for English and science but below average in mathematics. In 2000 the results in comparison with similar schools were well above average in science and above average for mathematics and English. Boys' attainment is weaker than that of girls.

2. In English, results vary from year to year but have been around the national average for the last two years. Students do less well at the higher levels than is the case nationally and girls do significantly better than boys. Mathematics results are below the national average and there are variations from year to year in the attainment of boys and girls. In science results are better than for English and mathematics. Girls are performing significantly better than boys in English and science. In other curricular areas standards at the end of Year 9 have been below the national average although they have been stronger in art and design, music and physical education.

3. In 2000 32 per cent of students achieved at least five GCSE passes at 5 A* to C. This was below the national average but above standards in similar schools. The average points score was below the national average and above the average for similar schools. The number of students achieving 5 A* to G grades was well below the national average. Since the previous inspection there has been no significant improvement in attainment although results in 1999 were close to the national average and were well above average for similar schools. In 2000 GCSE results were below average in relationship to students' prior attainment at 14 but in 1999 they were above. In 2000 results at GCSE in comparison with other subjects in the school were good in science, English, English literature, most design and technology subjects and physical education but were weaker in geography, drama, history, French, German, art and design and food technology. Results in English are below the national average although they have been improving over the last few years and in 2000 were stronger than in science and mathematics. Students' attainment at GCSE was better in science than mathematics in 2000. Girls are achieving higher results than boys. The school has set a target for 40 per cent of students to achieve five GCSE grades A* to C and for an average points score of 34.5 in 2001. This is a challenging target considering the prior attainment of these students.

4. Standards seen during the inspection week were average in Years 7 to 9 and below average in Year 10. Most students make satisfactory progress with girls achieving significantly better than boys in the majority of subjects. In English lessons there are a small number of high attaining students who express themselves fluently in oral work but although the majority of students listen attentively they rarely develop ideas without teacher guidance. Middle and high attaining students read expressively and with understanding and by the end of Year 10 can comment on characters and plot. Low attaining students make good progress with their writing and high attaining students write correctly with well-developed ideas. In mathematics at the end of Year 9 high attaining students understand graphs and solve simultaneous equations and middle attaining students understand and use simple formulae. In Year 10 high attaining students understand circle theorems and middle attainers solve

linear equations. In science all students achieve well in Years 7 to 9 and develop good planning and experimental skills. High attainers record experiments and measure accurately although their skills of analysis and evaluation are weaker. In the upper school most students have developed their understanding of scientific concepts and low attaining students have developed good observational and recording skills. However, rates of achievement overall in Year 10 are not as good as in earlier years.

5. In art and design students achieve well in drawing and design in all year groups but three-dimensional work is very weak because of its lack of coverage. Standards in design and technology are improving although standards and progress in food technology are unsatisfactory. In geography standards are below the national average in all year groups and although students' knowledge of the subject is satisfactory their analytical skills are weaker. Standards in history are below the national average but are improving with all students developing a good understanding of historical events and high attainers starting to understand how past events influence the present. In French and German standards are better in Years 7 to 9 than in Year 10 with listening being the strongest and speaking the weakest skills. Standards in music are around the national average and students achieve at least in line with prior attainment. Students in religious education achieve in line with their prior attainment but below the national average at GCSE. By the end of Year 9 students often demonstrate a good understanding of complex and abstract ideas. In ICT standards at the end of Years 7 to 9 have improved since the last inspection and are now close to the national average although keyboard skills are under developed. Standards are not measured in Years 10 and 11 and this situation is unsatisfactory. Standards in physical education are above average in the lower school where levels of boys' and girls' fitness levels are above average and standards are around the national average in Year 10.

6. Students with special educational needs achieve well and make satisfactory progress in lessons. They achieve well in art and design in Years 7 to 9 and in English and history in the upper school. They make the most progress in these lessons because teachers know them well and make good use of their individual education plans to match work to their individual needs. When classroom support is available teachers ensure that it focuses on developing students' skills and knowledge. Gifted and talented students achieve satisfactorily across the curriculum although they are not sufficiently challenged in geography or in French and German. In science, high attaining students do not make as much progress in lessons in Year 10 as they do in Years 7 to 9. There is a need to develop appropriate work across the curriculum to enrich provision for these students.

7. Standards of literacy are average. Listening skills are stronger than speaking and students across the attainment range improve their reading and writing. Girls' literacy skills are better than boys and to a greater extent than is the case nationally. In science and geography students produce extended writing and reading skills are good in history. The school has started a weekly literacy hour for all students in Year 7 and this needs to be developed. Standards in numeracy are below the national average and although students achieve satisfactorily and make progress as they move through the school there is a need to improve standards further. In science, geography and ICT students have opportunities to practise skills in interpreting data, the use of spreadsheets and graph work but they often find it difficult to transfer these skills from one subject area to another. Standards of attainment are average and students achieve satisfactorily in ICT in the lower school but in Years 10 to 11 provision is inadequate and students do not sustain and consolidate their achievements in Years 10 and 11.

8. Since the previous inspection standards have remained more or less the same except that in 1999 GCSE results were closer to the national average than in other years. In Years 7 to 9 standards continue to be stronger in science and English than in mathematics and there have been significant improvements in attainment in ICT and achievement in art and design is good. GCSE results indicate continuing strengths in science although there continue to be weaknesses in geography. In most subjects standards have been maintained although there are weaknesses in food technology and modern foreign languages and there continues to be an issue with ICT in Years 10 and 11.

Students' attitudes, values and personal development

9. Students' attitudes towards school are generally good and the majority of them display a keenness and eagerness to work. The majority of students who attend regularly demonstrate an enthusiasm for school, work hard when required to do so, are cooperative and generally make good use of their learning. Most students are interested in their studies, motivated to learn and respond well when given challenging tasks. They settle quickly to written tasks when requested to do so and when given the opportunity they sustain good levels of concentration. Relationships between students and with teachers are very good. When given the opportunity students generally work well together in pairs and small groups where they encourage and support each other. In a music lesson students improvised group performances based on African music and often undertake paired work on keyboards. The majority of students are confident when talking about their work; they readily answer questions and participate fully in discussions; they are proud of their achievements and produce work that gives them personal satisfaction for their efforts. Students with special educational needs are interested in their work and fully integrated into the school community. They are fully involved in lessons and complete work accurately.

10. The standard of students' behaviour, both in lessons and around the school, is satisfactory. The school is an orderly community where the majority of students are courteous and welcoming towards visitors. This has a positive effect on students' overall attainment and learning. The school has clear expectations of good behaviour and the majority of students conform to this. The standard of behaviour in lessons is mainly good due to the effective classroom management techniques that teachers displayed. In seven per cent of lessons the standard of behaviour was unsatisfactory and was sometimes related to poor class management skills or tolerance of a lower standard of behaviour by the teacher. A significant minority of students exhibit challenging behaviour and fail to respond to the school's code of conduct within lessons. Their behaviour makes it impossible for the teacher to ensure that lesson objectives are met and the pace of learning of the rest of the class is disrupted. Students with special educational needs usually behave well although a small number do rely too much on teacher support to maintain concentration. Any incidents of oppressive behaviour that occur, when brought to the attention of staff, are taken seriously and dealt with effectively. There has been a significant increase in the number of students on fixed term exclusions from the school since the previous inspection. Twenty-one students have been given fixed term exclusions during the current academic year and one has been permanently excluded. Exclusion procedures involve appropriately the governing body at all stages.

11. The personal development of students is good. Relationships within the school are very good. A strength of the school is the respect that teachers show towards all students and the value they place on students' achievements. Students' respect for the feelings, values and beliefs of others is good and is fostered through many subjects. Religious education makes a significant contribution to this aspect of students' personal development and there were many instances of students sharing with their peer group intensely personal views, for example when students were discussing with great sensitivity 'What is God?' The

student council provides a forum in which students express their views and take responsibility for, the quality of life within the school community. The governing body has agreed to fund students' suggestion for a bike park and students are raising monies towards the cost and also taking a role in supervising its use. This contributes well towards the development of students' understanding of citizenship in the wider community. In view of the work the school does in raising students' awareness of the impact of their actions on others it is surprising that the presence of litter around the school is so prevalent, particular after break and lunchtimes. Students in the upper school act as reading partners for Year 7 students and support their tutor group. They act as 'hosts' at presentation evenings and other school events. Upper school students also help with the summer literacy school and the Leyland summer play scheme. The school runs a successful junior librarians scheme, which leads to competency awards, but, apart from this, there are minimal opportunities for lower school students to accept positions of responsibility and develop their initiative. Upper school students have represented the school successfully in the Rotary debating competition in recent years. Extra-curricular activities are well supported and there is a range of external visits both in this country and abroad. Students are active in raising funds for charities such as the RNIB and respond well to various appeals.

12. The level of attendance of students is unsatisfactory and below the national average for all schools. Attendance was judged satisfactory at the previous inspection and in line with national rates. The attendance level of students was 90.5 per cent for the academic year 1999/2000 which represents a small decrease on the level of attendance recorded at the previous inspection of 90.9 per cent. Authorised absence was 7.8 per cent and unauthorised absence was 1.7 per cent. Currently 25 per cent of students have attendance levels below 90 per cent with 43 per cent in Year 11. This seriously affects students' overall attainment and progress and ultimate success in GCSE examinations. There has been an upward trend in rates of attendance nationally since the previous inspection. Pastoral staff work hard to try to raise attendance rates. The appointment of a clerical assistant to undertake daily phone calls to parents and manage the computerised attendance recording system, represent an improvement in the provision since the previous inspection. However, there is no specific use of social inclusion funding, or strategic plans in place, to develop alternative systems to improve overall attendance through specific support packages for individual students or to analyse reasons for non-attendance. There is a need to review the support the school receives from the education welfare service in light of the problems the school faces. The majority of students are punctual arriving at school at the start of the day but there are a number of persistent latecomers. A list of these students is printed daily and they have to attend lunchtime 'lates detention'. The school complies with requirements for the registration of students.

HOW WELL ARE STUDENTS TAUGHT?

13. During the inspection teaching was good overall. In 95 per cent of lessons it was at least satisfactory, very good or excellent in 24 per cent and good in a further 37 per cent. At the previous inspection teaching was considered to be a major strength of the school with few unsatisfactory lessons. Now teaching is good in most subjects and is particularly strong in Years 7 to 9 and in history throughout the school. There is some unsatisfactory teaching in modern foreign languages and the teaching of food technology is unsatisfactory. Overall teaching is satisfactory in English and mathematics and is good in science. There have been improvements in design and technology and ICT in Years 7 to 9 and the setting of learning targets for students with special educational needs has improved.

14. Literacy skills are taught satisfactorily in English although students' writing would be improved in English if marking was more detailed and analytical. Across the curriculum students are taught well in drama how to express and develop their ideas and in history students are given good opportunities to practise and improve their skills in reading out loud. In history and science they are provided with structures to improve their subject based writing. Numeracy is taught satisfactorily in mathematics and there are some good opportunities in ICT, geography and science for students to develop skills in graph work and how to analyse and use data. There is a need to develop the teaching of numeracy across all year groups and subjects. In Years 7 to 9 ICT teaching is good and the school needs now to develop its use across the curriculum.

15. Teachers' good subject knowledge and the general effectiveness of their teaching methods are major strengths across the curriculum. In music practical work is used well to teach African music and in physical education teachers know their subject well and use teaching activities which extend all students' learning. In history lessons have precise objectives which extend learning and are appropriate for the range of attainment in groups. There is a weakness in some modern languages lessons at Years 7 to 9 where teaching lacks pace and challenge and learning is slow. In religious education lessons are planned carefully and a wide range of teaching strategies are used effectively and in science teachers have appropriately high expectations for all students and challenge students to extend their understanding of new ideas and concepts.

16. Classroom management is good in most subject areas although there are a small number of students across the school who can be disruptive and behaviour is sometimes unsatisfactory in food technology and in some modern foreign languages lessons. Homework is set regularly across the curriculum and is satisfactory in terms of appropriateness and length although it is not always set at the times indicated on students' timetables. Although there is good practice in design and technology the use of assessment information to set precise targets to help students to learn more effectively needs to be developed in all subjects.

17. The quality of teaching for students with special educational needs is sound. Teachers in most subject areas make good use of individual education plans to match work to students' needs. Teaching is good in science, history, modern foreign languages and religious education. In one French lesson the teacher planned a lesson with imaginative activities using materials carefully matched to students' needs. The lesson was taught in a lively way and students responded enthusiastically, working hard and learning well. Learning support assistants provide good classroom support and are particularly effective in mathematics, art and design, history and religious education where effective partnerships have been established with teachers. When students are withdrawn from classes to work in small groups or individually teaching is effective, well organised and good progress records are kept.

18. The majority of students with special educational needs learn effectively especially in the upper school. In science they make the same progress as other students and in English make good progress in writing in the upper school. The number of gifted and talented students in the school is relatively small but strategies for ensuring they learn effectively need to be implemented across the curriculum.

19. Learning was good or better in 55 per cent of lessons and was unsatisfactory in 6 per cent. In all subjects learning is at least satisfactory. It is stronger in Years 7 to 9 than in Year 10. At Years 7 to 9 learning is good in music, physical education, art and design, design and technology and ICT. Learning is good throughout the school in science, religious education and history. In Years 7 to 9 students usually work hard and at a good pace. They develop

appropriate skills in the different subject areas and start to develop a good understanding of the knowledge they are acquiring in lessons. In Year 10 most students work hard and students with special educational needs learn well.

20. Strengths in learning include the good pace of work in a Year 8 science lesson on the environment with low attaining students who worked hard and enjoyed the lesson. In history students develop good skills in evaluating historical evidence and in religious education they make effective progress in developing their knowledge and understanding of the subject. Across the curriculum the pace of learning is good but there is a need to develop students' understanding of the progress they are making and what they need to do to improve further. The quality of learning is similar to that described in the last inspection report.

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

21. The school provides a curriculum of satisfactory breadth and balance for the majority of its students. In Years 7 to 9 the National Curriculum is in place and religious education is taught throughout the school. Personal, social and health education, ICT and drama are all taught as separate subjects and make significant contributions to students' development. In art and design, however, there is no provision for three-dimensional work and the department's ceramic equipment is not used. The school has recently decided to concentrate its efforts on one foreign language, French, and as a result is in the process of phasing out German, as recommended in the previous inspection report.

22. In Years 10 and 11 all National Curriculum subjects are taught to GCSE with the exception of ICT where statutory requirements are not being met. Although an important element of the school's drive to raise standards is an insistence on GCSE entry for all students, there is a need to consider the introduction of other forms of certification at this level, particularly for the small number of students in particular boys who become disaffected. Statutory requirements for the provision of ICT are not being met. This provision relies on the teaching of ICT skills through other subjects and proper arrangements are not in place for monitoring and reporting on the ICT work which students do. There is some use made of ICT in science but opportunities in other curricular areas are limited.

23. The arrangement of students in groups of similar attainment is generally effective and allows the individual needs of most students to be met. Occasionally, however, these arrangements create inflexibility resulting in a few students being placed in sets that are not well suited to their level of attainment. In Year 7 for example, students are placed at the outset in groups according to National Curriculum tests and primary school reports. In cases where students are inappropriately placed it can take some time before this is identified and action taken to relocate the individual in another set.

24. The school meets the requirements of all students on its Code of Practice Special Educational Needs Register. Students follow the school curriculum working towards GCSE qualifications. The system of setting by attainment is generally effective for these students. Individual education plans fully reflect the requirements of the statements of special education need and they are well used by teachers to match work to students' needs. Targets are shared with students when they are being written but there are no regular reminders in the students' planners or through a regular review of their progress in lessons.

25. Students are supported well in lessons by learning support assistants, teachers from the special educational needs department and teachers working in the classroom alongside the class teacher. The amount of this support is sufficient. There is potentially an effective programme of support for students with specific needs who work individually or in small groups with specialist staff but this is not sufficiently sustained, intensive or systematic to facilitate rapid improvement. In Year 7 additional support is provided in tutor time for 15 minutes each week to improve students' reading skills in a paired reading scheme with Year 10 students. This is a successful programme but is not regular or intensive enough to be fully effective. Provision for students with physical disabilities is very good and they are happy in school and make good progress.

26. There is a school policy statement for literacy and all teachers and classroom assistants have been involved in whole school in-service training. There is some good provision across the curriculum in particular in science and history and the English department has introduced a weekly Literacy Hour. The temporary co-ordinator has made a good start in this area of work which is important in raising standards across the curriculum especially in terms of boys' attainment. Numeracy is only taught formally as part of mathematics and in some science lessons although mathematical skills are used in ICT and geography. There is need to improve numerical skills across the curriculum and to produce and implement a cross curricular numeracy policy.

27. A significant strength is the very wide range of extra-curricular activities, which extend personal interests and provide additional academic challenge. The science and English departments are particularly active in this respect, running weekly lunchtime clubs and many visits to places of interest such as a wind farm, sea life and environmental centres and visits to the theatre and cinema. The school's annual music and drama productions are well supported by students, staff and parents. The strength of music lies more in singing than in instrumental playing on account of the very low take-up of instrumental lessons, largely due to the relatively high cost of each lesson. The religious education department contributes actively to students' experience of other cultures and religions by taking groups to places of worship such as a Hindu temple and a Roman Catholic church. The Christian Union is flourishing and an annual trip to France and a weekly Spanish club offer good linguistic opportunities to enthusiastic students in Years 7 to 9.

28. The school is committed to the principles of equal opportunities and its policy is reflected in school practices and relationships. All students follow GCSE courses. Data on topics such as achievement awards, subject choices at 14 and destinations at 16 are carefully monitored by the deputy head teacher. The composition of groups is determined principally by students' attainment and they are not moved to low groups for behavioural reasons. The school is aware of differences in attainment between girls and boys. For example, at 14 girls performed better than boys relative to their respective national averages in English, mathematics and science. Strategies for raising boys' attainment are not included in the school development plan and need to be addressed. There is a pastoral support programme to help students with behavioural difficulties which aims to avoid exclusions. Links with outside agencies providing specialist support are improving although meetings with educational social worker are sometimes cancelled. Teachers have received training to raise their awareness on the issue of educational inclusion.

29. The school has recently drawn up a policy on the needs of gifted and talented students and has asked departments to compile checklists of the skills and qualities that constitute very high attainment in their subject. Some departments are beginning to identify gifted and talented students, but the provision of enrichment opportunities is at a very early stage and needs further development.

30. A well-documented personal and social education programme operates in Years 7 to 9 which is taught effectively by a team of experienced staff. This includes appropriate health and sex education, attention to the consequences of drug misuse and the development of personal and social awareness. The programme is regularly reviewed to ensure that it remains up-to-date and appropriate. In Years 10 and 11 the school has chosen to condense the time it allocates to personal, social and health education and careers education to a number of days or half days in the year which are dedicated to specific topics such as preparation for work experience, an industry day and drugs awareness. These sessions provide good in-depth coverage of the topics and there are some opportunities in religious education lessons to discuss other issues relating to personal development. The school has not yet audited this provision to determine whether students are receiving their full entitlement. There is also a need to ensure that departments such as drama and English communicate with those teaching personal, social and health education to avoid duplication in the coverage of social and personal issues.

31. Careers education is integrated into the programme for personal, social and health education and supplemented in Years 10 and 11 by at least one tutor period per week. The students and their parents speak highly of the careers education provision. Parents are kept well informed and some are actively involved through a well established work experience programme which has gained Quality Assurance accreditation. Students' interview techniques are improved by mock interviews. The area careers officer supports the teaching programme and is available for interviews and guidance. Students have good access to a well resourced careers library.

32. The school has developed good relationships with the local community and with its partner primary schools. Good transition arrangements with primary schools ensure appropriate curricular continuity and the programme of induction, starting in Year 5 is much appreciated by primary headteachers. As part of this induction regular enjoyable contacts take place between Worden High School and students in Years 5 and 6 of primary school, including a weekly session in the ICT suite. The school has number of on-going and productive links with local employers, including students' work experience, and these links have a positive impact on their social and personal development. The close link with a large local company continues to provide good opportunities for students and the contribution made by Engineers in Schools to Worden's science club is greatly valued. The school also enjoys good relationships with local colleges.

33. Provision for spiritual development has not improved since the last report and is unsatisfactory. Although the religious education department makes a strong contribution together with minor contributions from other areas, there has been no systematic review and development of this aspect of the school's work. Good practice was observed in a religious education lesson where Year 9 students were asked to reflect upon their feelings towards depictions of Christ in various paintings and responses were sensitive and mature. Although assemblies are of good quality, celebrating the success of students and raising moral awareness, opportunities for reflecting on spiritual matters are not taken and there is no programme of assembly themes. The school does invite members of the local clergy to take assemblies but there is not a daily act of collective worship for all students

34. The school's provision for the moral development of its students is sound. There is a clear code of conduct and students were involved in its creation and there are opportunities for students to discuss moral questions in science, religious education, history, art and design, physical education, geography and modern foreign languages but better planning across the curriculum would ensure more coherence and avoid repetition of similar issues

35. Provision for the development in students of good social skills is satisfactory. Most students in lessons are developing good social skills as shown in the ways they co-operate, show mutual respect and share ideas in many lessons. There are examples of students working successfully in pairs and small groups in physical education, modern foreign languages, geography, art and design, history, religious education, ICT and music. Opportunities for exercising social responsibility are available to students in Years 10 and 11. A large number of students help at the school Open Night and school productions provide a platform for students of all ages to work co-operatively. The newly re-formed School Council with representatives from each year group is a good example of students contributing to making decisions about matters of concern to them with representatives reporting back to their classes. However, there are relatively few opportunities for students in Years 7 to 9 to exercise responsibility and initiative and the school needs to extend its present good provision in Years 10 and 11 into the lower school.

36. Students have opportunities to experience other European cultures in organised trips to France and a weekly Spanish club. The English department organise frequent theatre visits and visits from professional writers and the music department produces an annual concert which is well received by parents. However, opportunities for students to learn about the beliefs and practices of other cultures are not planned systematically and provision is uneven. In music, students experience African and Indian methods of composition and performance and in geography, the people of the Amazon rainforest are studied. The religious education syllabus includes the study of world faiths and visits are arranged to a mosque, different Christian churches and a Hindu temple. Although there are strengths in the school's provision for students' cultural development more consideration should be given to extending the present provision in order to prepare students more effectively for life in a multi-cultural society. Provision overall is satisfactory.

37. Since the previous inspection the school has addressed successfully most of the concerns mentioned in the report. The problem caused by short GCSE courses in design and technology and French and the difficulties arising from timetabling German with French no longer exist. ICT provision in Years 7 to 9 is now satisfactory although in Years 10 and 11 it fails to meet requirements. Links with the community and local industry have improved. The problems caused by a small number of low attaining and disaffected students usually boys who find lessons too challenging for them still persists and the school is still not meeting legal requirements with regard to providing a daily act of collective worship for all students.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS STUDENTS?

38. The school provides a caring, supportive environment where relationships between students and adults and amongst students themselves are generally very good. Systems and procedures for pastoral care are satisfactory. Links with partner primary schools are good and students in their last year at primary school benefit from a six-week course on basic computer skills which prepares them well for the move into the secondary school. Older students support Year 7 tutor groups and act as reading partners to help raise student's reading abilities. This link with older students helps them to settle quickly and easily into the school and establishes a secure foundation for students as they move through the school. Form tutors stay with their tutor group in Years 7 to 9 and another tutor stays with

them in the upper school. This ensures that tutors know their students well. Heads of school effectively oversee their work and have the responsibility for monitoring and promoting students' personal development and academic progress. Students are prepared for post-16 choices through an effective careers programme supported by the careers service. There are clear and effective arrangements for supporting students with behavioural difficulties with the special educational needs co-ordinator and the specialist teacher working well with pastoral staff to monitor their needs.

39. Procedures for monitoring and promoting attendance are satisfactory. Attendance is monitored on a daily basis and there is contact with home if students fail to attend. Heads of school meet with the education social worker to discuss students causing concern. However, though timetabled weekly, these meetings do not always take place as scheduled due to other commitments on the part of the education social worker. The school rewards 100 per cent attendance but improved attendance rates are not recognised, or attendance targets set, for students whose attendance is a cause for concern. Currently there are no strategies in place to support and promote higher attendance. Procedures for taking registers at the beginning of each lesson are not in place and it is possible for students to truant from particular lessons. The daily 'lates detention' is effective in reducing the number of students for whom punctuality to school is a problem.

40. Much of the school's practice in assessing students' standards and achievement is satisfactory but there are significant shortcomings. All Year 11 students have individual help from a teacher acting as mentor who meets with them regularly and all staff are alert to identifying underachievement. There are extra classes for Year 11 volunteers in English. There is a common grading system that recognises effort and understanding but it pays little regard to the specific assessment criteria of the National Curriculum. Students are unclear about the standards they are reaching and what they must do to improve. Assessment practice is good in history and religious education. In history, for example, there are interim reviews of students' progress and further tasks are agreed. Overall, though, there is little target-setting to show students how they might improve and what they might aspire to. Much marking lacks comment of the kind that helps students to understand their shortcomings and how to overcome them. Students with special educational needs are identified and assessed on entry to the school following good liaison with primary schools and are re-assessed at the end of Year 7. Records are well maintained and up-to-date information is available to review students' progress. However, the review of individual educational plans is unsystematic and students are not kept regularly informed about their progress.

41. Minimum predicted GCSE grades have been worked out for Year 10 students for the first time this year but there is, as yet, no agreed way of using these grades to help students improve. Heads of year focus heavily on behavioural and pastoral issues in their work rather than attainment. Although the school logs students' national test scores and passes these to departments too little use is then made of them. Departments are not building on this record of students' progress by using National Curriculum subject levels and the outcomes of their own monitoring. In English, for example, teachers' assessments in Year 9 are very generous. In design and technology teachers' assessments are not co-ordinated across the department. This lack of reliable subject assessment data and the consequent difficulty in analysing such data to plot students' standards and achievements leads to shortcomings in promoting their individual improvement and in preparing comprehensive reports for parents which go beyond general commentary about attitudes and effort.

42. The school's procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour and eliminating oppressive behaviour are satisfactory. There are clear expectations of good behaviour based on respect for others that are clearly understood even by the youngest students. Positive behaviour is rewarded and, in the process, students' self esteem is raised.

Students are encouraged to develop self-discipline. There is a range of sanctions for students who display inappropriate behaviour. Form tutors are notified through a system of information slips of any difficulties with work or behaviour by subject staff. Heads of school place students either on report for poor behaviour or, if attitude to work is unsatisfactory, on an achievement card. Procedures for dealing with students whose behaviour in lessons disrupts the learning of others are less clear and lead to an inconsistent approach in the management of these students. On occasions students are left outside of classrooms unsupervised and missing the lesson rather than being cared for by another member of staff or taken to an alternative provision for supervision, to carry on with class work. Oppressive behaviour is addressed in personal, social and health education lessons where the effect of students' actions on each other is explored. Appropriate procedures for the exclusion of students are in place and follow local education authority guidelines.

43. Procedures for child protection are in place: systems for ensuring students' welfare are satisfactory. The school takes its child protection responsibilities seriously and three members of staff have benefited from undertaking full training. The nominated person is fully conversant with recent changes to procedures. Staff have clear guidelines for dealing with disclosures if they occur and have regular training sessions. There are appropriate links with the external support agencies. The procedures for ensuring the health, safety and welfare of students are satisfactory. The governing body has recently ratified a health and safety policy. The previous senior member of staff with overall responsibility for ensuring that the school meets health and safety requirements is no longer in school but interim arrangements are in place. There are no formal systems for recording and reporting health and safety concerns. Several minor infringements, and unsafe practice, were brought to the attention of the senior management during the inspection.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

44. Parents' views about the quality and effectiveness of what the school provides and achieves are very positive. 61 per cent of parents replied to the questionnaire circulated prior to the inspection. The majority felt that their children were making good progress and the school expected them to work hard; teaching within the school was good and they would be happy to approach the school if they had any concerns. The quality of reports the school provides on their children's progress concerned some parents, as did standards of behaviour and the amount of homework that students received. The inspection team agrees with parents about reports and shares parental concern about the behaviour of a small number of students but does not agree that homework is either too excessive or not enough is set.

45. The school works hard to involve parents in the education of their children and the school's links with parents are very good. Pastoral staff ensure that ongoing contact is established with parents of children who are causing concern, particularly those with poor attendance. The administrative staff are usually the first point of contact for parents; they play an important part in ensuring that messages are passed on to the relevant members of staff, and ensure regular communication between home and school. The school has an open door policy and staff are always available to talk to parents and address any concerns they may have.

46. The quality of information provided for parents is satisfactory overall although there are weaknesses in school reports on attainment and achievement. Parents receive regular newsletters about the life of the school. They are also told of the achievement their child has made through letters written by staff. Parents' consultation evenings give parents the opportunity to discuss the progress of their child with teaching staff and members of the senior management are present to deal with any concerns that parents may have. Annual reports to parents are unsatisfactory. They do not contain sufficiently clear information for

parents to be able to assess what their children can do, how well they are doing it, whether they are working at the appropriate level and what they need to do raise their levels of attainment. There are no interim progress reports. There are close links between parents and the special educational needs department and they are kept well informed about their children's progress. Parents give their children good support and regularly attend the annual review meetings.

47. The impact of parents' involvement on the work of the school is satisfactory. The majority of parents ensure that both homework and coursework are completed to meet deadlines. A significant number of parents, however, do not ensure that their children attend school regularly and 25 per cent of students have attendance levels below 90 per cent. This has an adverse effect on students' overall progress and attainment and ultimate success in GCSE examinations. The Parent Teacher Association raises funds for the school through a range of events as well as running discos for students and their efforts provide additional resources for the school and are appreciated by both staff and governors.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

48. The quality of management in the school is satisfactory and the leadership of the headteacher is good. The headteacher has been in post for 12 years and has ensured that the school has established a good reputation in the local area. He has established very good relationships with parents who have confidence in him and speak positively about his commitment to all students in the school and his willingness to address parental concerns. There is a clear vision for the school based on students' personal and academic development with all students being entered for GCSE examinations and a clear commitment to improving standards of attainment. The school's development plan identifies most of the key issues which the school needs to address but it is not fully costed in terms of staff time and financial resources. The senior team must ensure more effective monitoring of the implementation of key policies and evaluate their success. Important policies such as those on attendance and assessment and marking need to be prioritised and made clear to staff, parents and students. The senior team consists of the head and his deputy pending the arrival of a new deputy in September 2001. The existing deputy head has worked hard at developing classroom practice and working with subject departments in improving students' attainment. The workloads of both the head and his deputy are unrealistic and there is a need to reconsider in light of the appointment of the new deputy what the management roles of the senior team should be and the future direction of the school.

49. There is now detailed assessment information on students' attainment and progress which is available to all staff but there is a need for teachers to receive training on how to set clear and precise targets for individual students, especially boys. The head and his deputy are linked to subject departments and have monitored and evaluated systematically teaching in all subjects; they have a good understanding of where there are strengths and weaknesses and they need now to focus on key priorities for action to improve standards. There are some staff who are not fully conversant with school systems and this needs to be addressed. Regular and systematic evaluation of lessons needs to be developed further as part of the school culture at departmental level. The school runs well on a day-to-day basis and is an orderly institution where relationships are very good and the ethos is generally conducive to effective learning.

50. The governing body and chairperson are very supportive of the head and perform well the role of critical friend. Through the committee structure they help to shape policies and evaluate their success. Some individual governors spend considerable time in school and give practical help as well as monitoring the work of the school. Individual governors are linked to departments and have a very good knowledge of the school's strengths and

weaknesses They fulfil statutory obligations with the exception of providing a daily act of collective worship for all students, provision for ICT at Key Stage 4 and three-dimensional work in art and design at Years 7 to 9.

51. The management of the pastoral system is effective and heads of school provide good support to students and form tutors. Although heads of faculty are fully involved in whole school strategic planning there are other staff including heads of department who do not feel sufficiently involved in decision making. The strategic management skills of some middle managers need to be developed. Leadership, management and development planning are good in science, music, history, religious education and physical education but there are some weaknesses in design and technology and major weaknesses in modern foreign languages. Overall middle management is satisfactory across all departments although departments need to focus on improving the quality of marking and assessment. The organisation of the special educational needs is good and leadership is sound. The work of the department is well supported by the senior team and the governing body and the department has responded well to the issues raised at the previous inspection.

52. The school's financial controls are sound and well documented. Budget holders are clearly identified and operate within an appropriate guidance framework. Regular cumulative budget summaries keep expenditure under review and quickly identify trends in spending for cross checking against estimates. There are effective systems to encourage value for money when purchasing resources and the bursar maintains regular scrutiny of all in-house orders. Longer term contracting is done through a local education authority agency that undertakes to negotiate best value contracts through competitive tendering. The school sometimes suggests local contractors to the agency in order to secure rapid service in emergencies. The last audit of financial procedures produced a satisfactory report with only minor issues to address. These have now been addressed.

53. The strategic management of resources is largely effective. Expenditure is prudently managed and the school has made a start in assessing the cost effectiveness of its development plans although more work needs to be done in this area. The governors exercise general oversight and the Chair of Finance receives regular cumulative budget summaries and commentary. The Finance Committee checks and approves the recommendations of the school for budget disbursement and although relying heavily on the judgement of the senior management team, requires justification of proposed expenditure and the identification of particular priorities. Specific grants are usually spent on their designated purpose although the student retention grant has not been as specifically focused in this respect as it should have been. The deployment of income is managed satisfactorily although the current budgetary surplus needs to be reviewed in light of current priorities. Accommodation is well used and there is a good match of staff expertise to the demands of the curriculum.

54. The school is committed to staff development and has just had reconfirmed its 'Investors in People' status. Provision for in-service training is very good. The procedures to ensure that staff can update their skills are well documented and are linked to the performance management policy and school development plans. There is a sound programme of induction for new staff and the arrangements for the support and induction of newly qualified staff are good. The school is involved with initial teacher training and students on teaching practice are well supported. The administrative staff are well valued by parents and teachers and are efficient and friendly.

55. There are sufficient teachers to meet the needs of the curriculum and the match between qualifications and subjects taught is good with only a few exceptions such as one group taught in mathematics and some lessons in physical education. Technical support staff provision is sufficient and of good quality except in design and technology where the provision is inadequate and in ICT where the lack of any technical support is an issue that needs urgent attention. Learning support assistants are deployed appropriately. Students with special educational needs receive support which is often very good, notably in art and design, although some teachers do not use this resource as effectively as they might.

56. The reception area on entry to the school building is well designed and welcoming and gives a good impression of the school. Classrooms are generally spacious and usually have sufficient desks for the large groups that sometimes use them as is the case in mathematics, modern foreign languages and geography. However, the rooms used for history and religious education are too small for some groups. Design and technology is taught in rooms across the school making team work and the sharing of resources difficult; this problem was identified at the previous inspection. Whereas most classrooms are well maintained the music practice rooms are in a poor state of repair and the boys' physical education changing rooms are inadequate for the numbers in teaching groups. However, the girls' changing rooms are very good having recently been refurbished and the art and design and drama studios are well designed for their purposes. Wall displays in classrooms are generally good, especially in modern languages, art and design and English. The school has problems with the amount of litter strewn around the school site. Although the inside of the building remains largely free of such litter and cleaning staff do well to keep the school as clean as they do there can be a problem on windy days when debris can be blown indoors. There are sufficient, well-maintained toilet facilities for students.

57. Learning resources in most subjects are satisfactory. The library is well equipped with fiction and non-fiction books and is well managed by the skilled librarian. Students use the library before school starts, at breaks and at lunchtime. It is well used by students who also make use of the Internet access which is available there. There are some resources which are not being used well: in English there is an electronic whiteboard available for staff which is currently not being used and modern foreign languages has some up-to-date software which is only rarely used. In art and design there is a lack of CD-ROMs and across the school there are insufficient computers available and inadequate access for students.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

58. The school should now seek to raise standards further and improve the quality of provision by:

- (1) Improving attendance;
(Paragraphs: 12, 39, 47 and 96)
- (2) Improving the quality of teaching in food technology; some modern foreign languages lessons and the management of the modern languages department;
(Paragraphs: 106, 108, 109, 140, 142 and 145)
- (3) Developing the monitoring of the implementation of policies and day to day practices and evaluating their success;
(Paragraphs: 42, 43, 48, and 49)
- (4) Focusing on improving the assessment and marking of students' work and the quality of reports to parents;
(Paragraphs: 40, 41, 46, 65, 67, 82, 96, 120 and 150)
- (5) Meeting legal requirements with regard to the provision of ICT at Key Stage 4, the use of three dimensional work in art and design at Years 7 to 9 and a daily act of collective worship for all students;
(Paragraphs: 5, 130, 134, 99, 104 and 50)

Other issues which the school needs to continue to address to improve standards include boys' attainment, and the development of numeracy and ICT across the curriculum;
(Paragraphs 61, 84, 86, 87, 100, 104, 106, 130 and 134)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	119
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and students	46

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
5	19	37	34	5	0	0

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

Information about the school's students

Students on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11
Number of students on the school's roll	586
Number of full-time students known to be eligible for free school meals	102

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11
Number of students with statements of special educational needs	28
Number of students on the school's special educational needs register	52

English as an additional language	No of students
Number of students with English as an additional language	0

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of students
Students who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	11
Students who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	14

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	7.8
National comparative data	7.7

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	1.7
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 students in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	64	54	118

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of students at NC level 5 and above	Boys	28	33	36
	Girls	43	32	34
	Total	71	65	70
Percentage of students at NC level 5 or above	School	60 (54)	55 (59)	59 (58)
	National	63 (63)	65 (62)	59 (55)
Percentage of students at NC level 6 or above	School	19 (27)	31 (31)	27 (23)
	National	28 (28)	42 (38)	30 (23)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of students at NC level 5 and above	Boys	34	36	40
	Girls	50	33	39
	Total	84	69	79
Percentage of students at NC level 5 or above	School	71 (62)	58 (61)	66 (70)
	National	64 (64)	66 (64)	62 (60)
Percentage of students at NC level 6 or above	School	46 (38)	29 (33)	38 (32)
	National	31 (31)	39 (37)	29 (28)

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4

Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	58	51	109

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of students achieving the standard specified	Boys	14	49	49
	Girls	21	47	49
	Total	35	96	98
Percentage of students achieving the standard specified	School	32 (43)	88 (96)	90 (96)
	National	47.4 (46.6)	90.6 (90.9)	95.6 (95.8)

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

GCSE results	GCSE point score
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Average point score per pupil	School	33
	National	38.4

Ethnic background of students

	No of students
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	586
Any other minority ethnic group	0

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	14	1
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y11

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	36
Number of students per qualified teacher	16.3

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y7 – Y11

Total number of education support staff	9
Total aggregate hours worked per week	241.5

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y11

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	76.2
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	22.0
Key Stage 4	20.8

Financial information

Financial year	1999/2000
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	£
Total income	1 552 642
Total expenditure	1 538 682
Expenditure per pupil	2 639
Balance brought forward from previous year	28 355
Balance carried forward to next year	34 617

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	586
Number of questionnaires returned	357

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	36	53	8	3	0
My child is making good progress in school.	46	47	4	1	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	37	45	9	3	6
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	31	49	14	5	1
The teaching is good.	46	46	4	0	4
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	39	43	14	2	2
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	62	30	6	1	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	67	30	2	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	35	47	12	2	3
The school is well led and managed.	48	42	4	0	5
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	43	47	7	1	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	36	43	7	3	10

Thirty five parents made comments on their questionnaires. Major strengths of the school mentioned included the care and concern of students, provision for students with special educational needs, quality of teaching and the good leadership of the headteacher. Areas of concern included the amount of homework, student behaviour, bullying and communication about their children's progress.

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

ENGLISH

59. In recent years standards in English have been improving steadily. Standards in Year 7 when students arrive at the school are closer now to the national average than in the past although there are fewer higher-attaining students than nationally. Significant numbers of students still do not read at the expected level when they come to the school.

60. The results of the national test taken at the end of Year 9 in 2000 were broadly in line with the national average when compared to all schools and were above average when compared to results in similar schools. Students did less well at the higher levels than nationally. Girls' performance in the test was better in 2000 than in previous years and they do better than boys than is the case nationally.

61. The department enters all students for GCSE English and English Literature. Although results are still below average they are improving steadily and represent a good achievement by students, especially low attaining students who did very well. In 2000 English results were slightly below average: boys did well at the higher grades. Literature results were not quite as strong as in the previous year and performance at the higher levels were below average. In 2000 girls' performance in both examinations was in line with girls nationally. Boys did not do as well as boys nationally although results were better than in 1999. Students do better at GCSE in English and English Literature than in all other subjects.

62. It was not possible to observe all groups of students during this inspection as Year 11 students were involved in external examinations and low-attaining students in Year 7 were taking tests. However, a full range of students' work was analysed. Standards by the end of Year 9 and Year 11 are broadly average. Most students are careful and attentive listeners. Students are willing to express ideas and make suggestions but they rarely develop them without prompting. Year 8 students had a good knowledge of the novel they were reading but gave short answers. Boys are generally more confident and make more frequent responses to teachers' questions than girls who are often passive and content to listen rather than participate. Some higher-attaining students are keen to express their ideas and opinions and in a higher-attaining Year 9 class students expressed some lively and articulate views in discussion about tabloid and broadsheet press. Few students have sophisticated oral skills. The department places emphasis on the place of literature in the curriculum so students have many opportunities for reading aloud in class. Middle and higher-attaining students read quite expressively and with evident understanding. They comment on development of character and plot. In a lesson on persuasive writing higher-attaining students in Year 7 identified words and phrases which made the reader feel generous, greedy, or guilty. Some lower-attaining students have difficulty with reading. Many students enjoy writing and do so at length. Students at all levels of attainment generally take great care with the drafting and presentation of their work. In Years 7, 8 and 9 higher-attaining students have a reasonable grasp of spelling, punctuation, and grammar and identify with characters in the books they read, and write from their point of view. They make notes on what they have read. The work of lower attainers is generally more simply expressed and vocabulary less extensively developed. By the end of Year 11 students have covered a range of different styles of writing. Higher attaining students' writing is well expressed, technically accurate and ideas are well developed.

Lower

attaining

students

have made good progress although the range and expression of ideas and grasp of spelling and punctuation are more limited.

63. Students are generally attentive and listen well in English lessons. Most respond well to questions when given the opportunity although they need encouragement to participate in discussion. Girls in particular are content to be passive in lessons. Most students, especially in Years 10 and 11, concentrate well, take their work seriously and try hard. Some students have a short concentration span and find difficulty in sustaining interest through a whole lesson and need considerable support.

64. The overall quality of teaching and learning in English is satisfactory. In all lessons the quality of learning mirrors teaching. There is some good teaching and none that is unsatisfactory. In all lessons relationships are positive. Teachers know their students well and there is much mutual respect and warmth so those students feel confident and comfortable. Teachers set very positive role models for students and students have a very clear sense of how they should behave. Lessons have clear objectives so that students know what to do. In the best lessons the teacher has a good grasp of the material, presents it in a lively and energetic way so that students are interested and involved. In a Year 8 lesson based on 'The Voice of Silence' the teacher posed lively questions so that students were keen to respond. The task that followed the class reading was well structured and students knew exactly what to do and could make connections between the activities. Tasks are set at the right level for students as in a higher attaining Year 9 lesson where students were studying quite challenging extracts from a range of newspapers. Students learn well when discussion is structured so that all students have opportunities to share their ideas and the lesson progresses at a good pace. A small group of students in Year 11 revising 'To Kill a Mockingbird' found the focus on examination techniques useful. Students with special needs in Year 9 benefited from very strong team teaching. Learning support assistants are mostly deployed effectively. Teachers need to concentrate on encouraging girls to be more actively involved in lessons

65. There are some recurrent aspects of teaching which are in need of development. Some tasks are dull and the range of classroom strategies employed is too narrow. In some lessons the teacher has lost sight of the curriculum objectives. Tasks are not always sufficiently challenging and students are sometimes given too much time for activities so that the pace of learning is slow and interest evaporates. Higher attaining students would benefit from greater challenge. The teacher dominates some lessons, students are expected to listen for too long and there is little opportunity for them to develop their own ideas. Students' work is regularly marked but although comments are supportive they are very general and do not help students to know how to improve the quality of their work.

66. The department has introduced a weekly literacy hour for all Year 7 students. This is a positive development and teachers have benefited from contact with local primary schools. The present programme requires further refinement and a sharper focus on the development of basic literacy skills. A well organised and supported summer school ran last year for students coming to the school and the progress of weaker students in Year 7 is being monitored. The department works hard to support students nearing examinations and additional classes run before and after school. Extra-curricular provision is very strong. The department organises frequent visits to theatres in the region and invites authors and poets into school to work with students. The school bookshop is open on three lunchtimes every week and several students help regularly with its running.

67. Teachers have a clear focus on raising standards and developmental planning already outlines some of the key areas to be addressed. The current level of curricular planning at both stages does not adequately provide teachers with a clear foundation for their work and the means for monitoring proper coverage and progression. At present the curriculum for Years 7, 8 and 9 has a strong base in literature but a limited range of learning objectives and classroom strategies. There are few structured opportunities for independent learning and oral work and too little focus on the development of students' language skills especially writing. Boys underachieve and the girls' participation in spoken activities is limited. ICT is poorly represented in the English curriculum. The school now provides considerable assessment data on students' attainment. The department identifies underachieving students and has begun to track progress in Year 7 but insufficient use is made of this information to set targets to raise standards. Teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 over-estimate students' attainment. Departmental practice in assessment, marking and grading of students' work should be developed alongside the curriculum so that students have a better understanding of the standard of their work and how to improve it. The current system for organising teaching groups results in some very large classes.

68. Attainment has improved steadily since the previous inspection and most students are making good progress in lessons although overall teaching is not as strong. The last report identified curricular planning and assessment as important priorities for development. These have not yet been adequately addressed.

69. The school has made satisfactory efforts to support the teaching of literacy in all departments. Practice is good in history where there is some opportunity for reading aloud and students are given differentiated material and are helped to collect, organise and communicate information. There are prompt sheets in science and students produce some extended writing. Higher attaining students have produced some impressive extended writing in geography. Students contributed to an assembly through reading aloud. These are positive developments but more needs to be done to improve students' literacy skills.

Drama

70. All students in Years 7, 8 and 9 have one period of drama each week. Students are taught in groups organised by attainment in other subjects and standards reflect the setting arrangements. By the end of Year 9 standards in drama are below average. Last year a higher than average proportion of students was entered for drama at GCSE and all students attained a grade in the A* to G range. Few students attained the highest levels in the examination and the A* to C result was below the national average.

71. In drama lessons students learn well. Higher attainers in Year 7 although about average, express and develop ideas and are learning to listen carefully and work together. They use and understand the effect of dramatic conventions such as a 'thought tunnel'. In a lower attaining Year 9 group, pairs of students were working on a role-play. Although students had a limited range of vocabulary and experience to draw on and found the task very challenging, most made good progress in empathising with characters and developing self confidence. Some Year 10 students working towards GCSE produced role-plays that were lively and above average in standard but some others were still reticent and produced little.

72. The subject is taught mainly by a newly qualified teacher. Teaching and learning are good. Objectives are made clear at the start of the lesson and students are firmly managed. Students enjoy drama, work well together and have a clear understanding of what is expected in lessons. Relationships are very strong and all students, even the least confident, are drawn into the tasks. Lessons have good pace and students' interest is sustained. Lively and challenging tasks are used but there is not always sufficient opportunity for students to develop their own ideas or to evaluate their progress.

73. New and thorough planning underpins the subject in all years and at all levels. Themes are often based on important social and moral issues, such as bullying or on literary works such as 'A Kestrel for a Knave'. However, as yet there is no mapping of the whole school's curriculum to make these themes explicit and prevent duplication by other subjects. Year 7 students have shown their work to the year group. There is a lunchtime drama club for younger students. There are puppetry and dance workshops in school and some theatre trips.

MATHEMATICS

74. Mathematics is taught by three full-time members of staff, supplemented by three non-specialist teachers who teach one group each. Although two of the full-time teachers are also non-specialists they both have considerable experience in teaching mathematics. The last inspection in 1996 reported that students were over-reliant on calculators, not enough attention was paid to targets and expectations for students were not always high enough. Since then teaching has focussed on numeracy to reduce calculator reliance, target setting is beginning to become a formalised process and teacher expectations, whilst still variable, are improving.

75. Results in national examinations at Year 9 in 2000 were below the national average although when compared with similar schools they are above average. GCSE results in 2000 were below the national average. The long-term trend is broadly upwards with last year's results showing a dip in that trend although results are below national averages at Years 9 and 11.

76. Students' standards on entry to the school are below the national average but the trend over the past few years shows an improvement with the 2000 intake being closer to the national average. The standards of work seen during the inspection cover the full attainment range and are below national averages throughout the school. The achievement of students through the school is satisfactory. The results of boys and girls have differed sharply in the last few years but follows no obvious trend. In the 2000 GCSE examinations girls achieved much better results than boys but in 1999 boys did better than girls. The department needs to monitor these differences in attainment closely.

77. In lessons work is generally neat and tidy and of good quality. High attaining Year 11 students understand the difference between rational and irrational numbers and circle theorems, find missing angles and sides of triangles by means of the sine and cosine rules and calculate the standard deviation of a set of data. Middle attaining Year 11 students calculate areas of plane shapes including circles, solve linear equations and construct pie charts to display data. In the lower school high attaining students understand straight-line graphs, calculate gradients and identify intercepts, solve simultaneous equations and construct cumulative frequency diagrams. Middle attaining students understand and use mensuration formulae for circles; they understand and use simple formulae and calculate the three types of average for a set of data.

78. Teaching is satisfactory in all lessons. There is some good teaching and a few lessons where teaching is very good. With the absence of Year 11 it was only possible to see a few lessons in the upper school and most lessons observed were in Years 7 to 9. Teachers' knowledge and understanding of the subject are generally good even though some regular teachers of the subject are non-specialists. There are some lessons, however, which suffer from a lack of focus and inappropriate expectations; although students work reasonably hard they are not always sufficiently extended. In those lessons where expectations are high students make good progress but many lessons are of moderate pace

leading to satisfactory progress. Good pace can lead to good or very good progress, especially with high attainers. The management of students is good and sometimes very good in most lessons and this is a major strength of the department. Most students are responsive to the positive relationships which staff establish with them and are enthusiastic about demonstrating their learning. The teaching of numeracy in Year 7 using Numeracy strategies is generally good; with the use of warm-up sessions to reinforce mental arithmetic skills helping all students to participate in lessons and generating positive student interest. Reinforcement sessions keep students on task and enable lower attaining students to consolidate their weak numeracy. When the use of warm-up sessions has been extended outside of Year 7 it proves an effective use of time, especially with low attaining students who find it difficult to concentrate for the hour-long lessons.

79. Students' interest, concentration and independence does vary but is usually good. They work well whether on their own, or in pairs but rarely get the opportunities to work in groups. They respect property so that textbooks and equipment are treated with appropriate care. As most lessons are teacher-led opportunities for independent work are rare. When students have the opportunity to work independently in Year 10 on coursework they work and gain marks appropriate for their level of attainment. Some higher level coursework is very good and shows a confident use of algebra. Students' awareness of their own learning is limited because although marking is thorough it is insufficiently diagnostic and does not indicate attainment levels. Previously all students in Years 7, 8 and 10 have taken tests produced by the school half way through every year but the department is about to move to commercially produced tests. This should aid the processes of grade prediction and target setting, procedures that have only just begun.

80. Students with special educational needs make satisfactory progress in lessons, especially if extra staff supports them. Most achieve a GCSE grade. Where learning support assistants are present in classrooms they are effectively used. Students with physical disabilities are well catered for and supported by classroom assistants. The progress made by gifted and talented students is an issue that needs attention. These students are identified on entry to the school by internal assessment and Key Stage 2 results. This year the top set in Year 8 are covering the syllabus in less time with the intention of sitting the GCSE examination early in Year 10. This is an interesting experiment that needs careful monitoring.

81. In addition to the statutory curriculum there are other opportunities for students to develop mathematical skills. A local college organises Saturday morning sessions for Year 9 high attainers which are attended by a few of the school's students. Some Year 7 students participate with some success in the Lancashire mathematics challenge and the mathematics department provides extra lessons for high attainers in Year 11 to complete the syllabus for the higher-tier GCSE paper. Extra lessons are also provided for other groups for revision sessions before examinations.

82. The leadership of the mathematics department is sound but cautious. Developments are taking place. Departmental documentation is thorough and teachers work well and form an experienced team. Marking, recording and using assessment data is something that needs more development. A new system of computerised record-keeping which has recently been introduced should enable students to know what they are achieving in terms of National Curriculum levels or GCSE grades and what they must do to improve. This should improve teachers' skills in target-setting for students. Reports to parents, although following whole school policy, lack clarity. They show effort grades but National Curriculum levels are not made explicit. As a result it is difficult for both parents and teachers to know the progress made by students and what students need to do to improve.

83. The system for monitoring, evaluation and development of teaching in the subject has

recently changed. Under the previous system the head of department monitored each member of staff regularly using reciprocal visits into classrooms by staff so that teaching methods and styles could be discussed. This system has been superseded by a performance management scheme which has yet to be fully implemented. It is important that intra-departmental discussions continue with the aim of disseminating good teaching practice.

84. The effectiveness of the subject's use of new technology is unsatisfactory. Limited ICT work is being done since the computer rooms are not readily available and the equipment is outdated. In lessons students readily and confidently make use of calculators. The accommodation in the department is good. There are pleasing displays of students' work on walls of classrooms with the key words of the subject displayed on some classroom walls although insufficient use is made of them in class. There are sufficient textbooks for students in school although not enough for students to have their own copies.

85. The departmental development plan correctly identifies issues that need attention including the development of resources to take account of the effect of the National Numeracy Strategy in Year 7. There are further issues, however, which also need to be tackled including the development of a whole school numeracy policy, the development of target-setting and continuation of classroom observations within the department.

86. Students have opportunities across the curriculum to use their numeracy skills. In geography they collect, analyse and display data in various types of graphs, in ICT Years 7 to 9 students confidently handle spreadsheet work and in science students plot and draw graphs. However, students do not always use their skills accurately in science and some graph work with low attaining students is weak. There is need to develop an effective numeracy policy across the curriculum.

SCIENCE

87. The results of the national tests taken by Year 9 students in 2000 were in line with the national average for all schools and well above the national average for similar schools. These results represent a good achievement for students, who were below average attainment on entry to the school three years earlier. Girls performed better than the boys relative to their respective national averages and results in the school were higher than those in English and mathematics. The trend of results over the last few years follows the national picture.

88. All students are entered for the dual award science GCSE examination. In 1999, the percentage of A* to C grades was in line with the national average, and the percentage of A* to G pass grades was 100 per cent, which was above the national average. In 2000 both these percentages dipped below national averages. The percentage of the higher A* to C grades has fluctuated in the last few years and is just below the national average. In 2000, the girls performed better than the boys, whereas in the previous two years, the boys' results were better than the girls relative to their respective national averages. Students in the school performed better in science than in mathematics, but not as well as in English.

89. Students achieve well throughout Years 7, 8 and 9. By the age of 14, the standards seen are consistent with the standards in the national tests and are average. Students have good practice in developing their experimental skills and these skills are sound. They have a good understanding of the processes involved in a scientific investigation. Students have sound planning skills and can apply the principle of a 'fair test'. The high-attaining students record experimental observations and measurements accurately. Their analysis and evaluation skills are weaker and need further development. High-attaining students in Year 9

describe accurately scientific processes such as photosynthesis and respiration and write word equations for each. Low-attaining students in Year 8 put themselves in the place of a sugar particle and vividly describe their journey to a leg muscle. Most students use the Kinetic Theory to explain changes of state and transfer of heat. Year 7 to 9 students can recall their knowledge but their ability to apply it in new situations is less well developed.

90. Year 11 students were not in school at the time of the inspection. The standard of work seen in Year 10 indicates that this year group should reach a higher standard in GCSE than that seen in the 2000 results which were below average. During Years 10 and 11, the rate of progress is slower than in the earlier Years. In general, the achievement of most students is sound but the high-attaining students underachieve relative to their attainment at age 14. Overall, students' investigative skills are sound. Average-attaining students have good planning and observation skills, but their abilities to analyse and evaluate their results are underdeveloped. The observation and collection of results is the strongest skill shown by low-attaining students. Carefully structured teaching enables all students to develop their understanding of scientific concepts and of the contribution science makes to society. Year 10 students discuss the conservation of energy and the advantages and disadvantages of different alternative energy sources. They use a burette to investigate what happens when an acid is added to an alkaline substance and understand the chemical reaction taking place. However many students have poor study skills and so find the recall of facts in tests and examinations difficult.

91. Literacy skills are sound for most students but weak for some low attainers. There is some planned development of literacy in science with an emphasis on the correct use and spelling of scientific terminology. Key words and structured worksheets are used to support students and a range of writing styles is used. Strategies for using and enhancing numeracy in science are underdeveloped. However, attention is given to developing students' graphical skills in a structured way. By age 16, high-attainers have a good understanding of the line of best fit and draw successfully more than one set of data on the same graph. Average-attaining students cannot always draw a best fitting line. Low attaining students have problems choosing appropriate scales when drawing line graphs and have a tendency to draw bar charts instead.

92. Students are competent in using ICT to research and analyse information but do not have sufficient practice in using computers for modelling and to collect measurements. Students with special educational needs achieve at the same rate as the other students, due to good support from teachers and support assistants. The developing use of writing frames helps students to structure their work and the department has produced some imaginative resources to enhance the learning of low-attaining students. The time of support assistants is not always deployed to maximum effect within lessons and more extension activities including problem-solving and the application of knowledge to new situations would provide more challenge for the higher-attaining students.

93. Teaching is good throughout the age-range and this results in good learning. No unsatisfactory lessons were seen. In Years 7, 8 and 9, three-quarters of the lessons seen were good or better. Some outstanding teaching was observed. In Year 10, over half the lessons seen were good or better. A key strength of the teaching is the way in which teachers manage their classes; they insist on high standards of work and behaviour so that students are not distracted from their learning in lessons. The very good relationships between teachers and students engender positive attitudes to science. Teachers are encouraging and supportive making good use of praise to boost students' confidence and they ensure that most students are comfortable in volunteering answers to teachers' questions, which enhances their learning.

94. Teachers have appropriately high expectations for all students and are very good at challenging students' thinking, skilfully using questioning to extend student understanding. This was seen in a Year 9 lesson in which students were devising their own investigations to compare the strength and absorbency of different paper towels. Questions such as, 'Is it more important to know the strength of wet or dry towels?', 'Is it the amount of water the towel takes up or the amount it retains that is important?' tested students' understanding and made them clarify their thinking. This resulted in very good learning. Students work hard in lessons and sustain their concentration. Teachers use time-targets to focus students' attention on their task and structure lessons carefully in small steps with a variety of activities. This means that lessons proceed at a purposeful pace and students keep 'on-task' throughout, making good progress. An example of this was seen in a Year 8 lesson on the environment with a group of low attaining students. After a lively introduction students enthusiastically demonstrated their knowledge of food chains by arranging large pictures of animals on the board. Groups of students then used sets of picture cards to construct a food web. The teacher captured their interest and well-motivated students took responsibility for their own learning and worked hard with great interest; they enjoyed the lesson and made excellent progress.

95. Science teachers make good use of imaginatively produced resources to engage students' interest and to motivate them well. In a Year 10 lesson on the conservation of energy, groups of students were given sets of cards containing facts about alternative energy sources. The teacher posed questions and the students had to find the appropriate cards and hang them on their 'washing line' within a set time. The 'washing line' idea meant that the teacher could see at a glance whether groups had selected the right cards. The practical nature of the group activity involved students in active learning and by the end of the lesson students were able to complete their own summary table of the advantages and disadvantages of different forms of alternative energy.

96. Teachers have good subject knowledge. Lessons are planned well and the aims are usually made clear to the students, which helps to focus their learning. Sometimes these aims are not revisited at the end of the lesson so that both teachers and students can assess their learning. Written work is regularly marked, but comments are not specific enough to show students how to improve their work, and their attainment level is not always indicated. The teaching methods seen during the inspection tended to be dominated by the teacher. More individual and group work would allow the teacher to spend more time talking to individuals and give greater opportunities for different activities within a class to better meet the needs of different attainment groups. Students enjoy science and enthusiastic, energetic teaching motivates and captures their interest. When this happens, students demonstrate good listening skills and behave and learn well. Students collaborate well with each other in practical work. Some students lack confidence in their own abilities in science

and in spite of good teacher encouragement find independent study difficult. The high level of absence of some students hinders their learning considerably.

97. The department is well led and managed. There is a good development plan with appropriate targets for improving standards. The quality and range of learning opportunities is enhanced by CASE thinking skills work and CREST Award activities. The use of assessment to monitor student progress and the monitoring of the work of the department needs to be more rigorous in order to share good practice and provide all students with a more consistent learning experience. The department has worked on many areas of improvement in the last few years. It now needs to adopt a narrower focus on fewer developments in order to have maximum effect on learning in the classroom. Resources are efficiently organised by the laboratory technician and are adequate, apart from the urgent need for computers and sensors to enable students to collect and analyse scientific data. The purchase of textbooks, once these have been revised to account for changes in the curriculum, will allow students to become more independent learners. The standard of display in the department is very good and provides a stimulating learning environment.

98. The department has made satisfactory improvement since the previous inspection. Results in the Year 9 national tests have been maintained and the overall standard of teaching has improved. The introduction of CASE thinking skills lessons and the wealth of extra - curricular activities in science have enriched the learning opportunities. The experimental and investigative skills area of the curriculum have been integrated into the scheme of work and developed throughout the age range. In order to improve standards further teachers should develop the use of ICT in data capture and modelling, the quality of marking to show students how to improve their work, extension work for the higher-attaining students and the integration of study skills into the scheme of work, particularly in Years 10 and 11, to increase student confidence in examinations. The department has the capacity to improve further because of thoughtful leadership and very hardworking and enthusiastic teachers who have created a team spirit committed to raising achievement.

ART AND DESIGN

99. At the age of 14, students' standards are average. Students draw from observation with accuracy and develop design ideas from their drawings. Work in perspective shows an intelligent appreciation of the way in which distance may be portrayed and work by higher attaining students is particularly strong. Art historical material is effectively incorporated in creative work, the perspective distortions by Escher being used as a source and, in portrait, the study of Archimboldo's work influences students' ideas. The knowledge, skill and understanding evident in these areas constitute an improvement since the previous report when drawing from observation was underdeveloped and the use of historical material limited. There is no evidence of work in three dimensions and little evidence of attainment in the application of ICT. Literacy is developed through the discussion and analysis of subject terms for example 'opacity' and 'transparency'. Students' skills in numeracy are enhanced by the judgement of proportion in drawing and by experience of pattern structures and measured perspective. All students, including those with special educational needs, achieve well in relationship to levels of attainment on entry to the school which are below average.

100. At 16, standards are around the national average and are similar to GCSE results at the previous inspection. Girls gain better results than boys in examinations. Students' work in drawing is strong and large scale reflecting their confidence and creative independence. Work in colour shows a good understanding of its function in art and design, together with skill in mixing and application. Students at this stage show an ability to pursue their ideas in a personal way and conduct research to develop their ideas. Basic skills in literacy and numeracy continue to be developed through the continuing analysis of terms arising in the

course of projects and by perspective and pattern work. Achievement at 16 is satisfactory. Students in lessons make purposeful progress and extend their capacity for research. Students with special educational needs make good progress and gifted students fulfil their promise.

101. Teaching is good in Years 7 to 9 and satisfactory in Year 10. Strengths in the teaching include clarity in the introduction of lessons, careful planning and provision of learning resources and good pace. Lesson aims are made very clear to students and learning is enhanced by students' understanding of teachers' expectations. The good pace of the teaching is reflected by a similar pace in learning, particularly up to 14. From 14 to 16, students are establishing a creative identity and achievement, although sound, is more tentative with periods of trial and error. A further strength of the teaching is the quality of the relationships between teacher and student. Students are given encouragement and their efforts are given appropriate recognition. Individual help and tuition enables students of a wide range of attainment to make appropriate progress.

102. There is thorough assessment and a formal, recorded assessment of attainment and effort using a four-point scale in each case augmented by plus and minus additions. Grades are entered in students' records and reports made to parents in accordance with statutory requirements. A feature of assessment in art and design is the practice of collective discussion of examples of work as they are developing. This is used as a very positive and effective form of encouragement. The comparatively large size of many classes creates difficulties for teachers to give as much individual attention as they would like.

103. Students' response to lessons is good and often very good throughout the school. Concentration is good and is well maintained throughout most lessons. There is a pleasant and productive working atmosphere in studios. Students are capable and confident in the organisation of their working space and take responsibility for the care of the working environment. At 16, students organise their work independently. They co-operate well in the sharing of materials and equipment and when required to collaborate do so willingly. Behaviour in lessons is good and students do not disturb each other when working.

104. The curriculum to 14 covers many aspects of drawing and pictorial work with activities linking drawing from observation through to design. The approach to complementary studies provides for the effective incorporation of art history into creative work. A distinct deficit in the curriculum is the absence of work in three dimensions which is an area listed in the National Curriculum. A further shortcoming is the lack of work in the application of ICT. Up to 16 the curriculum is modelled on the GCSE NEAB syllabus. This provides for continuous progress with the further development of drawing and work in colour. There is still, however, an absence of work in three dimensions which detracts from the overall quality of work, and the limited use of ICT remains a weakness.

105. The teaching and organisation of the department is well managed by the head of department. Accommodation is well organised and appropriate materials and equipment are provided. The work of the department, however, has been affected significantly by whole school decisions to omit ceramics from the curriculum. Expensive equipment, including a kiln and pottery wheels, are currently unused. Schemes of work are carefully planned to provide opportunities for all students and are reviewed regularly in the light of students' progress and attainment. The department development plan lists priorities which reflect those of the school and the specific needs and aspirations of the department. Stimulating exhibitions of work are mounted around the school and are an important enrichment of the environment. Whilst there has been a significant improvement since the previous inspection in attainment up to fourteen, the loss of ceramics represents an impoverishment of the curriculum over recent years.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

106. At the end of Year 9 standards of attainment have been below the national average and remain so although standards of work of the current group of students are stronger. There are differences in standards amongst the different aspects of the subject and girls consistently outperform boys. Good quality work was observed in graphics with Year 8 students working to specific design briefs to produce good quality 'pop-up' greetings cards. Students prepare with care their initial designs and in Year 7 develop good drawing skills when working on single-point perspective. Other Year 7 students making an electronic game were able to assemble components competently using soldering irons. Year 7 students in resistant materials followed the design process, creating outcomes that reflected their original ideas. Most students work safely demonstrating good awareness of safe practice with hand and machine tools. In food technology the majority of students work at a level below that expected for their age. There is an awareness of safe and hygienic practice which is not always translated into appropriate behaviour in the practical sessions.

107. At GCSE attainment in design and technology has been below the national average although the department does match the school's percentage for A* to C grades. Standards in Year 10 are also below average with variations in achievement across the different subjects. The department offers four discrete options at GCSE and there are variations in performance between the subjects. Graphic products is particularly impressive with A* to C figures of over 70 per cent. This is well above the national average as was the equivalent course at the time of the last inspection. However, performance in the other areas was below national averages. In food technology no student gained a grade higher than D and results in resistant materials and systems and control were also below national averages. In most of the subject areas except food technology students make satisfactory progress over both key stages.

108. Teaching overall is satisfactory and is better in Years 7 to 9 than Year 10. It is satisfactory in seven out of ten lessons with over half of those being good or very good. The good lessons take account of the broad range of attainment within sets with teachers planning appropriate tasks. Students are provided with stimulating environments where their work is displayed and literacy development is encouraged through key word lists and discussion. High expectations and opportunities to develop as independent learners are characteristics of graphics, resistant materials and systems lessons. Where unsatisfactory teaching occurred, in food technology, learning objectives were not clearly developed, lesson plans did not provide a clear structure, presentations were confusing and students became inattentive. Insufficient use is made of prior knowledge to challenge students' thinking and too little attention is paid to enforcing the safety and hygiene procedures outlined in the department's policy statements.

109. Learning was satisfactory and was good when sufficient responsibility was given to students together with clear and appropriate expectations. All groups of students including those identified with special educational needs make satisfactory progress in most areas within design and technology. It is equally clear that where there is insufficient challenge learning is affected, as in a Year 10 food technology class with students making desserts,

some of which were very basic and requiring minimum preparation time. Students had little to occupy them upon completing the practical work.

110. In Year 7 although there is an eagerness to get onto practical work in resistant materials, students recognise the need to complete the written aspects of the course. They display a pride in their work being ready to explain the process and outcome and the majority of students recognise the need for safe practice. For example, when working with soldering equipment in Year 7 students exercised care with equipment and made use of eye protection. The soldering task required a good degree of co-operation to enable the pairs working together to complete their work on the capacitor. The nature of the working environment requires students to adopt a positive attitude to the teacher and the task and this was the case in most lessons. There are some students in food technology who do not always follow the codes of practice, failing to remove jewellery, tie hair back or wear aprons appropriately, when working with food. In Year 10 students' behaviour was generally good, although on occasions some did not observe the rules of the department. Relationships amongst students, and between students and teachers are mostly good although in one resistant materials lesson despite the best efforts of the teacher a minority of poorly behaved students affected the overall quality of learning.

111. The department offers a balanced curriculum across all years including graphical products, food technology, systems and control and resistant materials. The allocation of curricular time is adequate although the setting arrangements affect the opportunities for movement between groups in Years 7, 8 and 9. In Years 10 and 11 students pursue the area of their choice at GCSE level. The blocking system in the upper school does create a minor problem for the small number of top set students who wish to pursue French and systems and control. Equal curriculum provision is available for all students.

112. The department has an evolving system to monitor the academic progress of students. Project assessments are available to students so that they can see the level of their performance and the teacher's judgements. Assessments do inform planning but do not result in individual target-setting to improve standards. There is an inconsistency in marking with limited written comments in some areas. All staff follow school systems for assessing Years 7, 8 and 9 and in Years 10 and 11 GCSE assessments follow the examination boards' guidance. Monitoring of progress in Years 10 to 11 is the responsibility of individual specialists who work independently as a result of the specialist nature of the subject and the location of specialist rooms. The quality of reports to parents is variable. Whilst some provide an indication of overall achievement there is insufficient emphasis placed on the student's performance against national standards or their achievements with regard to programmes of study.

113. The department functions effectively with the head of department ensuring that time is allocated appropriately and staff deployed, as far as possible, according to their strengths. However the strategic development of the faculty is less effective. Results and assessments are analysed and used to inform subsequent planning but the links amongst the various sections of the department are insufficiently strong to promote a cohesive and integrated departmental approach. This results in a diverse approach to the design and make process, especially in Years 7 to 9, where inconsistency of practice in food technology, affects the quality of outcomes. Improvements in the monitoring and evaluation of teaching have not reduced the amount of unsatisfactory teaching in the department. Resources in the department are adequate with the exception of CAM and the availability of computers. Workshops are spread across the school and this does have an impact on attempts to

create a cohesive and mutually supportive department. Technical support for design and technology is inadequate in meeting the diverse needs of the subject.

114. Since the previous inspection improvements have taken place in the overall performance of students in Years 7 to 9. At GCSE performance has shown an upward trend although still below national averages. Monitoring of teaching is formally carried out and short courses are no longer offered in the department. Overall the department has made satisfactory progress since the previous report although there is much still to be achieved.

GEOGRAPHY

115. Students' standards at 14 are below the national average. When teachers assessed students' work at the end of Year 9 in 2000, results indicated that attainment was close to the national average for those attaining level 5 and above. The standards overall of students taking the GCSE course are below the national standard. GCSE results in 2000 were well below the national average, with students' performance below what they achieved in most other subjects. Results are similar to those at the time of the previous inspection. The department analyses its results carefully and clear strategies are being implemented this year to improve results in the future. These include regular assessment and monitoring of students' progress, and increased support for coursework and revision.

116. Many students make satisfactory progress, as work is generally well sequenced and carefully planned, although overall achievement throughout the school is below average. High attainers do not reach their full potential because they are not challenged sufficiently to develop their understanding in enough depth. Students with special educational needs make satisfactory progress in lessons, as they generally complete work accurately, work is matched to their needs, and learning support staff provide good support in class.

117. Students generally have a satisfactory knowledge of the subject but have difficulty in explaining why places change and how landscapes are formed. Students in Year 8, for example, know the features of landscapes in limestone areas but have difficulty in explaining how they are formed or how people have changed the area over time. By the end of Year 9 higher attaining students have a sound knowledge of the links between people and the environment. They describe the effects of the activities of people on the North Sea, and suggest why the fragile environment of Antarctica should have the protection of World Park status. Students have a weak knowledge of terminology and although higher attaining students define terms they rarely use them in written work. Their knowledge of where places are and what they are like are weak.

118. Students extract information from textbooks, atlases, videos, and computers. They complete written work accurately, but with the exception of the higher attaining students, extended written work is weak and contains too many spelling errors. Graphs are drawn accurately and generally analysed correctly. Higher attaining students use a wide range of different graphs particularly in studies of development issues. In completing coursework for the GCSE examination students use the correct fieldwork enquiry methodology, analyse data accurately, and reach appropriate conclusions, but photographs are not annotated effectively.

119. The quality of teaching overall is satisfactory. Lessons are always very well prepared and organised so they start promptly and proceed smoothly. Teachers have a sound knowledge of the subject and explanations are clear, but they do not use their knowledge to challenge students with brisk, sharp, and rigorous questioning, or detailed examination of the well chosen and good quality resources used. In one lesson with students in Year 10 for instance, an excellent video clip showing soil erosion was not exploited to motivate and inspire students, or to reinforce and deepen their understanding of the topic. Teachers know

the students well, provide good support, and work is well matched to students' needs, so that they complete work accurately and generally behave well.

120. Lessons are planned carefully with a number of activities to meet clear objectives. These objectives are not made clear to students or used to review and reinforce their understanding of what has been learnt at the end of the lesson. This affects the pace of learning and students' progress. In the best lessons students are challenged to use the knowledge they have learnt previously in a new context. In one lesson, for example, students in Year 10 were studying tourism, and were asked to work in pairs to use their knowledge to place cards containing features of a holiday resort on a graph, to show the effects of tourism on an area during the past 40 years. They then discussed their ideas and completed a short exercise to reinforce them. Students were interested and worked hard, and increased their knowledge of the relationship between people and the coastal environment. Marking is of satisfactory quality and books are marked up-to-date with encouraging comments, but these do not inform students sufficiently of what they need to do to improve. Appropriate homework was set regularly during the week of the inspection.

121. Students are generally attentive, listen well, and can assimilate information rapidly. They usually work hard, but a minority of students, mainly in lower attaining sets, have a short concentration span, and are dependent on the teacher to retain focus. Students in Year 10 will respond to a challenge, and are willing to tackle a difficult exercise and think hard to find the correct answer. Work is well presented and books are maintained in good order. Students with special educational needs work hard and complete work effectively when supported by specialist assistants working in the classroom. Students have a satisfactory attitude to the subject, behaviour is generally good, and students are willing to be involved in their lessons. They work well in pairs and in groups, co-operate effectively with each other, share work, and listen to the views of others. A minority of students lack enthusiasm for the subject, and require teacher intervention to complete their work effectively.

122. Although the scheme of work is sound and fully complies with National Curriculum requirements it does not provide a clear indication of the progression of knowledge and skills through the course and between each stage of learning, and is not written to a common format. A good programme has been developed and implemented for fieldwork, and the use of ICT is being introduced. Appropriate procedures for assessment are being developed, with regular assessment of students' progress using a suitable range of assessment tasks. Resources are good and of sufficient quantity. Good accommodation is enhanced with attractive displays celebrating students' best work.

123. Leadership of the department is satisfactory, and good management support is provided within the Humanities Faculty. The organisation is sound, and there is a clear direction for the subject with well thought out plans for the future, but the standards achieved are not good enough and there has been little improvement since the last inspection. There is a shared commitment in the department and the faculty to succeed, and with sustained and rigorous implementation of the policies and strategies being developed standards should improve.

HISTORY

124. By the end of Year 9 teacher assessment show that standards are below the national average. Lesson observations and examination of student work confirm this judgement. Students make effective progress in Years 7 to 9 and achieve satisfactorily. They develop knowledge and skills in the subject as a direct result of very good teaching. By the end of Year 9, many students have learned to extract relevant information from given contemporary sources. Most have a developing sense of time and sequence and fit past events into a chronological framework. The best work shows that students appreciate the link between short-term cause and effect. Many have a growing understanding of the way of life and beliefs of individuals in past times and some start to compare this with their own situation. Project work arising from a local history study at Quarry Bank Mill, illustrates this well. Some higher attainers understand how past events influence current circumstances. Many students across the range of attainment choose to continue their historical studies in Years 10 and 11, indicating the continued popularity of the subject. Current standards in lessons are below the national average although there are some students who are working at a much higher level than this. The history department teaches both GCSE Modern World and GCSE British Social and Economic History syllabuses. The higher attainers take the Modern World course. Some students, who have made religious education their main humanities GCSE subject, take the short course GCSE. All make steady progress and achievement is satisfactory. GCSE results have fluctuated in recent years but the upward trend has been maintained. In 2000, 36 per cent of the entry gained the higher A* to C grades but all entrants received certification at Grades A* to G. Girls performed significantly better than boys, with the difference in attainment at the higher grades being greater than the national pattern. Boys improved considerably compared with attainment in 1999. These results, although still below the national average, indicate that progress has been maintained. The department has set itself ambitious but realistic targets for 2001.

125. The quality of teaching is very good. The two, experienced, specialist historians have a thoughtful and well-planned approach. Lessons are carefully prepared and focus on precise learning objectives that are challenging but appropriate for the range of attainment in classes. They have a confident command of the subject and inject considerable interest with well-designed tasks that reinforce knowledge and develop historical skills in a structured way. The tasks are varied and the orderly pace of lessons combined with a good balance of activities, sustain motivation and interest. Classes are organised by attainment but the range of attainment within any one class is broad. Although there are reference materials and task sheets designed to help students of different abilities participate in lessons, further refinement is required to ensure that higher attainers within these broad classes are always suitably challenged. When learning support assistants are allocated to support students with special educational needs, teachers usually use this extra time well. This helps these students to participate more fully and they generally make sound progress. A Year 10 lesson, designed to help lower attainers improve their extended writing was particularly effective. The carefully structured lesson guided students through the process of collecting, organising and communicating information to answer a GCSE examination-style question, boosting their confidence and overcoming their own doubt that they could do this. In another lesson, Year 7 students were skilfully helped to explore a picture source in a very detailed way. This captured the enthusiasm of this lower attaining group, and helped them secure some understanding of how to observe closely, collect valid evidence and draw conclusions. Nearly all of the observed lessons had a positive learning atmosphere with good relationships evident between teachers and students. Most of the time, experienced classroom management linked to the courtesy and concern shown by teachers, generates good learning attitudes and very effective classroom routines. There are instances of unacceptable behaviour by a minority of students but this rarely occurs with the specialist staff.

126. The quality of learning is good across the school and all levels of attainment. In Years 7 to 9, students are taught how to investigate and interpret pictures, artefacts, eye-witness accounts and other historical sources. By the end of Year 9 they develop a growing confidence in using this sort of material and the higher attainers begin to realise that although all sources from the past are of some value to the historian, some accounts are more reliable than others. The facility to recognise bias is developed further in the GCSE programme. In Year 10 students are taught to gather information and they do this well although many rely too much on one source even when more than one is available. The higher attainers should be encouraged to research more widely and to select and combine information from a range of sources, partially as a preparation for expectations in post 16 education.

127. The leadership and management of the subject within the broader context of the humanities faculty is very good. The development targets are appropriate but remain relatively short term. They are not fully costed in time or money and the evaluation criteria need more detail. The department has generally supported the achievement of the development plan objectives and have attended in-service training so that they can develop their skills. Assessment strategies are evolving but could be strengthened to provide students with individual subject specific targets to guide improvement. Currently the department is concentrating on raising attainment of the average and below average student. This is appropriate but the focus on higher attainers must also be sharpened. Schemes of work could be developed further. This will provide non-specialists with more structure when teaching the subject. Lesson plans could also give more explicit emphasis to the contribution the subject makes to the spiritual, social, moral and cultural dimensions of the work of the school. The department has good accommodation within a humanities suite and rooms are enhanced by excellent displays of reference material and student work. However, these rooms are often overcrowded when dealing with large classes of up to 34 students and this limits teaching strategies.

128. The department has built on the positive features of the last report and has made progress in tackling the issues raised. The use of ICT is still underdeveloped although some students are drawing information from CD-ROM sources and make effective use of word-processing in their projects. The subject is popular with students who recognise the value and interest generated by the quality of teaching.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

129. Students are confident in their use of ICT which was not so at the time of the previous inspection. The introduction of ICT lessons for students in Years 7 to 9 has enabled them to increase their knowledge and understanding. Attainment on entry is below the national average but by the end of Year 9 students' performance is average. Students have a good knowledge of spreadsheets, create fields, insert formulae and carry out various tasks. They construct databases appreciating the commercial application of such software. Students are familiar with and make use of desktop publishing, CD-ROM and Internet. They have access to ICT in some subjects across the curriculum but not in a co-ordinated way. Skills are developed throughout Years 7 to 9 and there is evidence to suggest that students are developing into discerning users of the technology. Higher attainers articulate when use of computers is appropriate and beneficial but keyboard skills are not well developed. All

groups of students make sound progress, and the department provides for those with physical disabilities effectively, ensuring their pace of learning is appropriate

130. The school does not measure attainment in Years 10 and 11. Programmes in place at the time of the previous inspection are no longer offered. ICT provision for Years 10 and 11 should be provided in all subjects but it is neither monitored nor assessed, consequently there is an absence of information on attainment. Students have very limited opportunities to build on the skills and knowledge gained in earlier years.

131. Teaching at Years 7 to 9 is good. Teachers are generally assertive adopting a firm but sensitive approach to students. They enjoy good relationships, providing support and guidance in a manner accepted and appreciated by students. Lessons are well planned and presented using high quality resources prepared by the staff themselves. Teachers make good use of prior knowledge, developing students' confidence in the use of standard software programs. This results in students being keen to succeed and demonstrating high levels of motivation and concentration. In the least effective lessons insufficient attention is given to specific learning objectives and the needs of all groups of students are not met fully. This leads to students becoming frustrated.

132. In ICT lessons the behaviour of students is good. They respect the equipment and one another. The vast majority of students are attentive and responsive to the teacher's instructions. Those students who have a greater knowledge respond to requests for help from other students. Unfortunately the lack of hardware means that sharing of computers is necessary. This presents a problem as it affects students' progress. Most work is done in pairs making assessment of an individual's skills difficult for the teacher.

133. Curricular arrangements have changed since the last inspection with one-hour lessons timetabled for Years 7, 8 and 9. Additional experiences are restricted by lack of access and by the poor co-ordination of cross-curricular provision. The school meets statutory requirements for Years 7 to 9. The use of email is in very early stages of development as a result of difficulties with service providers and is beyond the control of the school. Although co-ordination and monitoring is weak, students do make use of the Internet and CD-ROM for research purposes, as observed in history, geography and science. Students do have the opportunity, although not regularly, to work on spreadsheets as part of their programmes in mathematics. Levels of equipment in departments are low and access to the two existing computer suites is limited.

134. In Years 10 to 11 students should receive their ICT entitlement through subject areas but although there is some use of ICT in science its use is very limited across other subjects. The cross-curricular provision in the school is inadequately developed and insufficiently co-ordinated to ensure full entitlement. The school is not meeting the statutory requirements for ICT in Years 10 and 11. Academic progress in Years 7 to 9 is monitored through an effective system, adopted by both teachers. The reports to parents provide some indication of the way in which students have developed their ICT skills over any given year. There is however no reference to the National Curriculum to enable parents to make comparisons should they wish to do so. There is no reporting of students' performance in Years 10 and 11.

135. Co-ordination of ICT is an extensive and demanding task especially when linked to other faculty responsibilities. There have been improvements since the previous inspection but there is much still to be achieved. There is no technical support for ICT and the head of faculty does well to maintain a reliable network and keep some relatively old equipment running. Resources and accommodation are inadequate to meet the requirements of ICT both as a subject and across the curriculum. At 12:1 the ratio of students to computers is well above the national average of 7:1. There is considerable commitment to the

development of the subject in line with the overall aims of the school but the co-ordination of cross-curricular ICT is currently ineffective, with no reliable mapping and recording of provision. Students throughout the school receive inadequate provision because subject planning and co-ordination of ICT is underdeveloped.

136. Since the previous inspection ICT in Years 7 to 9 has improved but in Years 10 and 11 has deteriorated. Cross-curricular developments have not improved at an appropriate pace.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

137. In the past three years examination results in the French GCSE course have fluctuated and on aggregate have been well below the national average at grades A* to C. The very small number of students gaining top grades indicates that some of the highest attainers have not been achieving to their potential. Since 1998, however, all students have been entered for a modern foreign language at GCSE and almost all of them have achieved at least a grade G in French. This represents a good achievement for many students. Numbers taking German in 2000 were too few to make a useful comparison with national figures, but their results were very low and it is partly for this reason that German is currently being phased out of the school. In both French and German, girls did better than boys consistent with the national picture.

138. The French coursework assignments of students currently in Year 11, particularly of higher attainers, are of good quality and show promise of better results for 2001. Some of these pieces of work are accurate, idiomatic and very well written. Standards among current Year 10 students, however, are below the national average. Those in the highest sets are not sufficiently challenged and as a result are not achieving the standards of work of which they are capable. Although their understanding of spoken French and German is sound, there is little evidence of a use of more sophisticated language in speaking or writing. Students of lower attainment, however, and those with special educational needs, are achieving above what is expected of them through very appropriate and challenging teaching.

139. In contrast to Key Stage 4, the standards achieved by many students at the end of Year 9 are average. Some higher attaining students are reaching standards that are well above those expected. For example, students in Year 8 are very confident in expressing themselves in well accented French, and understand what their teacher is saying. Writing in French is beginning to be well developed in some promising linguists. Poor behaviour among a few lower attaining students in Year 7, however, and a lack of challenge for some higher attainers in Year 9, are holding back standards. Of the four language skills of reading, writing, listening and speaking, listening comprehension is the best developed overall because students are consistently exposed to French in the classroom. Speaking is the least well developed in some students because they are not given enough opportunities in some lessons to practise and extend their oral skills.

140. The teaching of modern foreign languages is satisfactory. Overall it is sound but in a small number of lessons it is unsatisfactory. In a third of lessons the quality of teaching is excellent or very good. Teachers are proficient in the languages they teach and use French or German consistently in the classroom. This results in the sound levels of comprehension of most students, and the speed with which they learn to understand new words. Lessons generally start well with a brief explanation of what students should learn by the end. Teachers are skilled in the use of resources for presenting new language.

141. In the very best lessons there is real challenge and rigour. Students are expected to form full sentences in French and to pronounce words correctly. Homeworks are demanding

and clearly explained. A rich variety of engaging ideas and methods keeps students interested and productively busy. In these lessons students learn quickly and effortlessly, and enjoy themselves in the process. There is therefore no temptation to lose concentration or misbehave and the teacher has little need for sanctions. In a group of Year 10 students with special educational needs, for example, strongly paced and imaginatively planned teaching gave them ample opportunities to practise new items of language. By the end of this lesson students had the confidence to volunteer to conduct a brief dialogue in a French cafe and did so with authentic accent and pronunciation. Students' behaviour was exemplary throughout.

142. In some lessons teaching lacks pace and challenge. There is too little insistence on students using the foreign language in the classroom for everyday requests and apologies. Not enough opportunities are offered to students to reinforce and drill newly learnt language in pairs and groups. Higher attainers are not always expected to give fuller answers or to widen their experience of French with extra reading and research. Sometimes the sequencing of activities does not allow students adequately to consolidate new points of language so that some of the lesson's momentum is lost. Inattentive chatter and low level disruption is not always checked or suitably acted upon. Students do not learn as well in such lessons, either because they have less chance to practise or because the prevailing ethos favours those who are reluctant to learn. In such cases students do not fully achieve to their potential.

143. The attitudes of students to learning a language are satisfactory and depend to a large extent on the quality of teaching they receive. Many students in Years 7 to 9 are well disposed to French. They behave sensibly, respond eagerly and listen attentively to the teacher. A number of students in Year 9 and lower attainers in Year 7 are unenthusiastic and reluctant to settle to the work in hand, losing concentration when they are not fully engaged and becoming noisy and disruptive when they are not firmly managed. Year 10 students behave acceptably and some are showing signs of independent work through the early demands of a modular course.

144. Students' work is regularly marked and assessed and the faculty is beginning to match actual performance with predicted grades to find out whether individuals are achieving to their potential. Much more has yet to be done in this area, particularly in setting students appropriate targets for improvement and in the electronic recording of assessment data. Routine marking, also, needs to insist more on the correction of poor work. A few students in Years 7 and 10 are currently in French sets which are not well suited to their level of attainment and cannot easily be moved into a more appropriate group before the end of term. Students' cultural and linguistic development is broadened by an annual visit to northern France. The spacious and well appointed language classrooms are enhanced by some very good displays of student work and departmental documentation is clear and thorough

145. Although the management of the faculty encourages openness and informal sharing of ideas and resources there are a number of important issues, some of them mentioned in the previous inspection report and in a more recent report by the local education authority languages adviser, which have not received proper attention. These should be at the heart of the faculty's drive to raise standards: the need to challenge higher attainers; to give students more practice in speaking and writing at length; to increase opportunities for wider reading and the use of ICT; to link teaching more closely to National Curriculum levels; to improve the motivation of students in certain groups - all referred to in previous reports and now requiring immediate attention. The management of these changes to improve standards has been unsatisfactory but as recent difficulties with staff absence are resolved the department should be better placed to give these issues the priority they deserve.

MUSIC

146. The general standards of students' attainment when they start at school are below the national average but assessments in music at the end of Year 9 in 2000 were at the national average. This indicates that achievement is satisfactory and good progress has been made due to the quality of teaching and the high expectations of the department.

147. GCSE music results in 2000 were well below the comparable national averages with 7 out of 19 students gaining a grade C or above. However, all students gained at least a G grade. In 1999 the A* to C grade results were much better but still below the national average. Fluctuations in the results of small examination groups are not necessarily significant because all students who are interested in following a music course are encouraged to do so.

148. Standards of performing and composing in Years 10 and 11 are variable but overall are below average. The work of one Year 11 student in both performing and composing was outstanding and the good quality of teaching ensures that students at all levels of attainment are encouraged to achieve their potential. Whilst most students compose in a traditional style, the use of computer-aided composition has resulted in music of a more contemporary style being used. Students' listening skills are developed by good teaching methods.

149. Music is taught with enthusiasm and is good in Years 7 to 9 and satisfactory in Year 10. There is an emphasis on practical music-making using the voice, keyboards and percussion instruments which students enjoy. This style of teaching encourages all students to do their best, supports those who find performing skills difficult and enables students at all levels of attainment to make good progress. Students are taught to play pieces from different times and places. In one Year 8 lesson, students worked as a class to perform a piece on percussion instruments in an African style. They listened to some African music and were taught the rhythms by listening, copying and memorising. A complex piece was gradually built up and the final performance was recorded so that its merits could be discussed in a later lesson. Students learned about African instruments and the way in which this style of music is created. The progress made by all students was good; they co-operated well showing a positive attitude to the subject.

150. Since the previous inspection the schemes of work for students in Years 7, 8 and 9 have been re-written. These should now be revised in the light of experience and analysed to ensure that the National Curriculum programmes of study are covered. The emphasis on the use of correct musical words is a feature of what the department expects from students. In Year 9 classes worked in pairs at keyboards composing music for a video. They were familiar with words like 'timbre', 'syncopation', 'note clusters' and 'ostinato'. A top set Year 9 class produced very good compositions that were performed as they watched the film and the class made helpful comments. Appraisals like this are sometimes written down but the quality of written work is inconsistent. Although the work is thoroughly marked and helpful comments are written to encourage improvement, the systematic addition of a grade would help students to know how they are achieving over a period of time.

151. Practical work is assessed and the recording of attainment is good. An example of the use of assessment being shared with students was in a Year 10 GCSE lesson. A listening test was given and marked and after a period of teaching the skills required, another test of a similar type was given. The majority of the class increased their score demonstrating that effective learning had taken place and progress had been made. Assessments given to students should be more widely shared in this way. The quality of learning in this lesson was good but there are lessons where the teacher's aims are not shared with students and they are not given time to reflect upon what they have learned.

152. Students are generally polite and respectful and are challenged when they lose

concentration. This sometimes happens towards the end of a lesson when a few students find it difficult to concentrate on one activity. A greater variety of practical activities within lessons might be considered including singing which would also assist in raising singing standards which are below average. At the last inspection singing was described as “enthusiastic” but not “refined” and singing by a Year 8 class heard during this inspection reflected this judgement. The matching of tasks to suit the attainment of individuals in practical work is good and should be extended to written tasks. This would ensure that students of below and above average attainment are set suitable tasks to enable them to make progress in areas of work such as musical notation.

153. The music department has adequate accommodation and good use is made of a number of practice rooms. The display boards in the main teaching room are good, containing a mixture of students’ work, photographs of school performances, key musical words and materials to provide a stimulus for current topics. Pictures of African instruments enhanced the Year 8 topic that contributed to students’ appreciation of another culture. The department has good resources with good keyboards and instruments although the number of tuned percussion instruments is being increased because it is inadequate at the moment. There are three computers but their use in assisting composition is limited to GCSE groups. A larger number would enable students of all ages to develop both ICT and music skills. The management of the resources and all other aspects of the department is very good. Planning and documentation are helpful and informative.

154. Instrumental teaching is good but the number of students receiving lessons is small. The cost of lessons appears to deter students and the current practice is under review. The extent of extra-curricular instrumental work is restricted by this situation but despite this the music department makes a major contribution to school productions which are very popular. The Worden Singers have become ambassadors for the school in the community as well as developing the skills and confidence of students.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

155. Standards are average. At the end of Years 7 to 9 standards are above average although this judgement is based on a narrower than usual range of observations as all lessons were indoors because of wet conditions. The latest GCSE results were just above the national average based on A* to C grades and a little better than the schools’ average across other departments. Over the last few years results in examinations have been variable though there is a clear upward trend over this period. Standards of work seen in Year 10 were average.

156. In Years 7 to 9 levels of personal fitness are above average and there is no difference between boys and girls. In Year 7 many girls have achieved well over a short space of time and their throwing, catching and fielding skills in rounders are good. The level of skill, the speed at which they perform and the accuracy of most is above national standards for the age group but in Years 8 and 9 they do not sustain the same degree of accuracy in bowling as well as boys. In Years 7 to 9 good progress is made to raise standards on entry from below average to around average or above by the age of 14. Students with special educational needs make good progress gaining confidence as a result of their achievements in practical activities. In Years 10 and 11, in classroom work, the standards reached are average. Some students are making good progress and have a clear knowledge and understanding of the skeleton. They use specialist names for bones, know the bone-types and understand their function. A few students, mainly boys, rely heavily on other students to answer questions in group-work revealing limitations in knowledge and in their appetite for learning.

157. Students in all years, although mainly in Years 7 to 9 are developing a greater degree of knowledge and understanding relating to the principles and purpose of healthy exercise. This is seen in their mature approach and energy in warming-up in preparation for physical activity. In competitions outside and inside school individuals and teams enjoy considerable success and this extends into area and regional matches and events.

158. Overall students' attitudes towards the work of this department are positive and this is due to the strength of teaching. The quality of teaching is always good, sometimes very good. In all classes students know exactly what to do in order to improve as a direct result of the teachers having set and displayed the learning objectives at the beginning of each lesson. The teachers know their subject well and devise activities or practices expertly and thus enable all students to make progress. Lessons are well planned and students are well managed. Most respond positively to the energetic, engaging and encouraging style adopted by all teachers. Standards of behaviour are good as are relationships between students and teachers. There is a clear understanding of and a most professional response to the different learning needs of all students.

159. The requirements of the National Curriculum are met throughout the school although the allocation of time for physical education in Years 10 and 11 is less than in many schools. The programme of extra-curricular activities is good and enables many students to continue and or extend their enjoyment of a wide range of sports and games. The work of all students is properly assessed and these arrangements are in line with whole school policies. The department recognises the need for subject reports to give more specific and more detailed information to both students and their parents relating to both progress and attainment. Some work on this development has already begun. The department is well managed and the new head of department has already demonstrated an efficient and effective organisational capability. He is developing a clear vision of how this department should move forward and with the support and encouragement of faculty and senior managers has the capacity to succeed in further improving standards.

160. Since the previous inspection there have been changes in staffing. Overall standards are now higher, the trend in GCSE results is clearly upward and girls are beginning to achieve higher grades in this examination. The overall standard of teaching has improved and with current levels of specialist teachers and management skills the department is well placed to make further improvements.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

161. When students arrive at the school they have had a very varied experience of religious education. By the end of Year 9, attainment is below the national average, but most students have achieved appropriately and made good progress in lessons. The stimulus provided by the well-planned and interesting lessons encourages a good oral response. Students often show considerable perception and reflective insight in oral work when introduced to quite complex and abstract ideas but many find it difficult to convey this perception in their written work, although some of the high attainers do this very well. By the end of Year 9, they have increasing knowledge of world faiths. They are beginning to appreciate that despite the different signs and symbols of the main faiths, there are common elements. They start to understand that religious belief influences the way in which many people across the world live their lives, guiding individual response to many social and moral issues.

162. In Years 10 and 11 all students study the subject to GCSE level. The majority take the core programme which leads to the short course GCSE examination and a few opt to take the full course. In 2000, the percentage of entrants gaining the higher grades A* to C in the full

course was very close to the national average and A* to G grades were above the national average. For the majority taking the short course, the results at A* to C were below the national average but the numbers achieving a grade were good. These results are creditable in relation to the range of attainment within the year group. Students have a good experience of the subject throughout the whole statutory programme, with the emphasis being as much about learning from religion as it is on learning about religion. Standards observed in lessons are average overall.

163. Most of the teaching is in the hands of one person who has weekly contact with nearly all of the students in the school. The quality of teaching is good and sometimes very good. There are many strengths. The well planned lessons are linked to schemes of work that effectively interpret the spirit of the locally agreed syllabus. Teachers use a range of classroom techniques to make difficult ideas accessible to the students. The learning objectives for each lesson are carefully identified beforehand and translated into practice with varied and well-paced activities that challenge and motivate the students. All of the fundamentals of good classroom practice were observed including good use of paired and group work, challenging questioning drawing responses from the majority of the students, very effective use of visual material provoking considered personal reflection and the creation of a good working atmosphere across the range of groups. Teachers listen carefully to what the students have to say and all contributions are welcomed. Religious artefacts are used sensitively and with due respect. Above all, good relationships exist with most students responding to the courtesy and respect shown by the teachers. Lessons are challenging. In Year 7, a class containing many students with special educational needs explored in an introductory lesson who or what God is by using references to their everyday experience. This was effective, stimulating and energetic for both teacher and students. A group of higher attainers explored perceptions of Jesus by looking at artistic interpretations from South America, Africa and Asia. Some of the images were very powerful and helped students to realise that these portrayals are often linked to social, political and environmental experiences of the artists.

164. Students have a generally good learning attitude that owes much to the varied techniques and carefully considered content of the lessons. Behaviour is usually good although restlessness does occur and with some students frequent reminders about classroom expectations are necessary. Most are very friendly and co-operate well with the teachers and with each other. This is essential given the discussion method that is at the heart of many of the lessons. Most listen carefully and sensitively to each other during discussion and on occasions respond with considerable enthusiasm. They appear to enjoy what they are doing and this is reflected in the comparatively strong recruitment to the GCSE full course.

165. Good teaching generates a good quality of learning across the school. Although it was not possible to observe Year 11, students' books and projects confirm that they continue to make effective progress in developing knowledge, skills and understanding of the subject. Students do not make dramatic progress but they accumulate steadily knowledge and ideas about religious belief that gives them a basis for comparison and personal reflection. The best student work indicates that some are thinking about their own beliefs. They also learn a little of the culture associated with each of the world faiths they study and the subject makes a considerable contribution to the multi-cultural dimension of the school's curriculum.

166. The subject is managed within the context of a humanities faculty. The subject leader has made a considerable impact during his short time in the school and has received effective support from his faculty head. He has also been successful in attracting external sources of funding to improve the range of religious education resources. The subject has an appropriate time allocation, which although just below that indicated in the locally agreed

syllabus, is sufficient to tackle most objectives of the syllabus. Teachers mark the books regularly although the attainment of the students is not always clearly or accurately indicated and this could cause confusion when informing parents and students about their standards in the subject. The subject makes a considerable contribution to spiritual, social and moral development in the school but this could be extended through linking topics studied in lessons to assembly themes at suitable points in the school year.

167. Religious education has a good profile in the school and there is largely positive response from the students to the subject. The subject is well managed and the department has built successfully on the positive elements noted in the last inspection report.