

INSPECTION REPORT

Hounslow School

Totton

LEA area: Hampshire

Unique Reference Number: 116434

Headteacher: Miss D Nightingale

Reporting inspector: Eveleen P Gillmon (2774)

Dates of inspection: 6th to 10th December 1999

Under OFSTED contract number: 708126

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Information about the school

Type of school	-	Comprehensive
Type of control	-	LEA
Age range of pupils	-	11 to 16 years
Gender of pupils	-	Mixed
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Appropriate authority:	-	Hampshire County Council
Name of chair of governors:	-	Mrs C Cook
Date of the previous inspection:	-	5-9 December 1994

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WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

- Provides teaching of a very high quality in all subject areas
- Promotes a culture of achievement in which pupils attain high levels of success, above the national average
- Facilitates enjoyment in learning and promotes high moral standards
- Provides opportunities for pupils to exercise responsibility and develop confidence
- Monitors and evaluates its own performance
- Achieves efficiency through high quality leadership and management

§ WHERE THE SCHOOL HAS WEAKNESSES

- I. The inspection team identified no significant weaknesses, but noted that the use of information and communications technology (ICT) in support of learning is underdeveloped in many curriculum areas.

Hounslow is a very good school with many strengths. The governors' action plan will set out how any weaknesses identified during the inspection are to be addressed. The plan will be sent to all parents or guardians of pupils at the school.

§ HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE THE LAST INSPECTION

The school responded promptly to the issues identified for improvement in 1994. Significant progress has been made in fulfilling the objectives of the school's action plan and this continues to be monitored by governors. The range of teaching strategies used has been extended, although the matching of work to the differing needs of pupils is not yet fully consistent throughout the school. Pupil grouping arrangements are now closely monitored, and homework provision is appropriate. Budget planning now indicates appropriate financial provision for future planned developments. The procedures for statutory collective worship, however, still require further attention, and the provision of adequate technician support for the school's ICT network remains an issue.

STANDARDS IN SUBJECTS

The following table shows standards achieved by 14 and 16 year olds in national tests and GCSE examinations in 1999:

Performance in:	Compared with all schools	Compared with similar schools	
Key Stage 3	A	B	<div style="text-align: right; margin-bottom: 5px;">Key</div> <div style="text-align: right;"><i>well above average</i> A</div>
GCSE examinations	A	A	
A/As level			

Results in the most recent key stage 3 tests show the combined performance in the three core subjects (English, mathematics and science) across the full attainment range to be well above the average for all maintained schools and above average when compared with schools in similar contexts. GCSE performance overall was well above the average for all maintained schools and also for similar

schools.

QUALITY OF TEACHING

	Overall quality	Most effective in:	Least effective in:
Years 7-9	Good	Art and Drama	None identified
Years 10-11	Good	Effective in all subjects	None identified
Sixth form			
English	Good		
Mathematics	Good		

Teaching was at least satisfactory in 98% of lessons observed; in 43% it was good and in a further 31% it was very good or excellent. As the proportion of good and very good teaching was higher than average, no subjects have been identified as being least effective in either key stage. Effective teaching was seen in all subjects at key stage 4.

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

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
Behaviour	Very good. Pupils are polite, courteous and well behaved; they have good relationships with each other and with adults.
Attendance	Very good. Attendance is well above the national average
Ethos*	An achievement-oriented school which successfully combines the promotion of traditional values with a high level of pastoral care and where relationships are mutually respectful and positive.
Leadership and management	Very good overall. Excellent leadership by the headteacher with effective governor support. The quality of management at all levels contributes significantly to the high standards achieved by pupils.
Curriculum	Good overall, although provision for information technology and religious education in key stage 4 is limited. Good range of extra-curricular activity.
Pupils with special educational needs	Provision is good for those with learning or physical difficulties and there is recognition of the needs of higher attainers.
Spiritual, moral, social & cultural development	Good. Moral and social development are strong features. Intercultural awareness is promoted and there are opportunities for spiritual reflection.
Staffing, resources and accommodation	Good overall. Staffing and learning resources are of a high quality and well managed. Some shortcomings in the accommodation in some areas.
Value for money	The school provides very good value for money

* *Ethos is the climate for learning: attitudes to work, relationships and the commitment to high standards.*

§ THE PARENTS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What most parents like about the school	What some parents are not happy about
II. The good examination results achieved III. The good discipline and moral standards IV. The care and concern of staff for pupil welfare V. The quality of support provided for pupils with special educational needs	VI. The amount of homework for pupils in years VII. Inconsistent application of homework VIII. Inadequate locker space for pupils

Inspectors' judgements support the views that parents hold about the positive features of the school. Difficulties relating to storage of pupils' books and equipment were recognized. However, inspectors found that the amount and distribution of homework seemed appropriate for the age and stage of development of the pupils. The school is welcoming and purposeful, and provides a caring and supportive environment for all pupils.

§ Key issues for action

To improve further the quality of education which the school provides and to continue to raise pupils' standards of attainment, the governors and senior management should:

- IX. improve the learning environment of the mathematics department by providing inter-classroom separators, similar to those in other departments, in order to reduce noise intrusion; (*Paragraphs 20, 59, 82, 107, 110*)
- X. devise a management strategy (which includes the provision of adequate technical support for network management) for the developing needs of information and communications technology (ICT) to ensure that all subject areas can and do offer pupils access to computer-based and on-line curriculum resources; (*Paragraphs 19, 36, 49, 77, 78, 98, 105, 116, 129, 143, 150, 157, 158, 163, 174, 191*)
- XI. improve the level of staff competence in the use of ICT to support learning across the curriculum and to secure for all pupils sufficient planned opportunities for skill development and capability assessment over time. (*Paragraphs 36, 49, 76, 89*)

In addition to the key issues above, the following suggestions should be considered for inclusion in the action plan:

- XII. encourage more joint curriculum activity to enhance learning across disciplines; (*Paragraph 39*)
- XIII. improve the consistency with which work is matched to the differing needs of pupils in all subject areas, and further develop the range of extension work and challenges available to higher attaining pupils; (*Paragraphs 20, 34, 60, 99, 142*)
- XIV. improve further strategies for the effective evaluation of expenditure at all levels of responsibility by considering the probable impact of funding decisions on the standards pupils attain at the end of each key stage. (*Paragraph 90*)

Introduction

Characteristics of the school

1. The school caters for pupils from widely varied backgrounds. It has an extensive catchment area embracing the urban area of Totton and 14 New Forest villages. One-third of the pupils live more than 3 miles from the school. Approximately 12% of the pupils come from outside the catchment area, including the border Forest areas of Wiltshire and the Southampton Waterside. Socio-economic data indicates a higher than average percentage of pupils live in high social class households. Some children who live in the more outlying areas of the New Forest come from families who have a distinctive way of life, linked to the traditional rural occupations.

2. Less than 1% of pupils come from ethnic minority groups. 162 pupils are currently on the school's register of special educational needs (15.8%) compared with a national average of 18.7%. The percentage of pupils with statements of special educational need at 1% is below the national average of 2.5%.

3. The school aims to provide a high quality education which challenges, encourages and supports pupils to achieve their best and so to become active, responsible and successful members of the community. Its ongoing priorities are to raise standards of pupil attainment and personal achievement.

4. The school has identified its key priorities for development as:

XV. improving further the quality of teaching

XVI. developing further the quality of leadership and management at all levels

XVII. enhancing the level and quality of pupil involvement in the school and wider community

- improving further the management of financial and physical resources

Key indicators

Attainment at Key Stage 3¹

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year:

Year	Boys	Girls	Total
1999	98	96	194

National Curriculum	Test Results	English	Mathematics	Science
Number of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	Boys	78	75	65
	Girls	85	68	60
	Total	163	143	125
Percentage at NC Level 5 or above	School	84 (69)	74 (70)	65 (66)
	National	64 (65)	62 (60)	54 (56)
Percentage at NC Level 6 or above	School	54 (40)	47 (34)	26 (28)
	National	28 (35)	38 (36)	23 (27)

Teacher	Assessments	English	Mathematics	Science
Number of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	Boys	76	75	74
	Girls	82	68	81
	Total	158	143	155
Percentage at NC Level 5 or above	School	82 (77)	73 (70)	79 (72)
	National	64 (61)	64 (64)	59 (61)
Percentage at NC Level 6 or above	School	46 (44)	46 (35)	35 (36)
	National	31 (30)	37 (37)	28 (30)

Attainment at Key Stage 4²

Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year:

Year	Boys	Girls	Total
1999	85	112	197

GCSE	Results	5 or more	5 or more	1 or more
Number of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	47	85	85
	Girls	77	110	112
	Total	124	195	197
Percentage standard specified	School	63 (46)	99 (99)	100 (100)
	National	46 (46)	91 (90)	96 (95)

¹ Percentages in parentheses refer to the year before the latest reporting year

² Percentages in parentheses refer to the year before the latest reporting year

Attendance

Percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year:			%
	Authorised Absence	School	5.8
		National comparative data	8.3
	Unauthorised Absence	School	0.3
National comparative data		1.1	

Exclusions

Number of exclusions of pupils (of statutory school age) during the previous year:			Number
	Fixed period		16
	Permanent		0

Quality of teaching

Percentage of teaching observed which is:			%
	Very good or better		31
	Satisfactory or better		98
	Less than satisfactory		2

PART A: ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Educational standards achieved by pupils at the school

Attainment and progress

5. The performance of pupils recorded prior to entry, and their levels of performance in a variety of standardised tests conducted by the school, show the full spectrum of ability is included in the intake. Within this wide range, the proportion of higher attaining pupils is greater than the proportion of those whose attainment is much lower than average.

6. When judged against the standards expected nationally, overall attainment in the school is above the expected standard in most subjects. When the standards achieved (at all levels) by the school in national tests and examinations are compared with those achieved by other schools in similar contexts, the average points score (34.8) for key stage 3 core subjects (English, mathematics and science) is above average. It is well above average when compared with all maintained schools nationally. At key stage 4 in GCSE the overall average score (46.1) is well above the average for similar schools and also for all maintained schools nationally.

· *Key Stage 3*

7. The results of standard national tests for 14 year olds (end of key stage 3) in 1999 were well above the national average for those reaching the required standard in English and above the national average in mathematics and science. The proportion gaining higher levels in English and mathematics also exceeded the national average. The performance of girls was better than that of boys in English but boys outperformed girls in mathematics and science.

8. In English and mathematics the results for 1999 were significantly better than in 1998 and continued the rising trend in performance since the previous inspection. Results in science show a reduction in performance since that time. In other subjects, teacher assessments for 1999 showed pupils' performance to have improved in most subjects since 1998 and to be above the national average (for the percentage of pupils achieving the nationally expected level) in art and history and well above in design and technology, information technology, modern foreign languages and physical education. Results in geography had improved since 1998 but remained slightly below the national average in 1999. Internal staffing difficulties prevented accurate assessment of pupils' attainment in music.

· *Key Stage 4*

9. The school has experienced a pattern of rising performance in GCSE examinations at the end of key stage 4. Since the time of the previous inspection the percentage of pupils achieving grades A*-C in five or more subjects has risen from 45% (1994) to 63% in 1999. Performance in 1999 was a significant improvement on the result of 1998 (46%) and well above the average for all maintained schools nationally and Hampshire schools. The 99% of pupils in this school, who in 1999 achieved 5 passes within the grade range A*-G, was better than both local and national averages. In common with the national trend, more girls secure consistently five or more passes in the range A*-C than boys and the difference in this school was greater than that found nationally. In contrast, in 1999 the percentage of boys securing five or more grades A*-G was greater than girls in this school.

· *English, Mathematics and Science*

10. In the core subjects of English, mathematics and science, overall attainment is above the standard expected nationally at the end of key stage 3. This pattern continues into key stage 4 for English and mathematics where, in 1999, at the end of the key stage, the percentage of pupils attaining grade A*-C in the GCSE examinations (English 73.5%, mathematics 60.2%) was above the national average for all maintained schools in mathematics and significantly above in English. Results in science (49.2%) were slightly above average.

· *Other subjects of the curriculum*

11. In other subjects, observations of lessons, discussion and scrutiny of pupils' work show standards of attainment by the end of key stage 3 to be in line with the standard expected nationally in drama, geography, physical education and religious education. They are at least in line, and often above, in information technology and modern foreign languages. Standards are generally above in art, design technology and history and slightly below expectation in music.

12. A similar situation exists at the end of key stage 4 for art, drama and history. By the end of this key stage, attainment is in line with the nationally expected standard in French, above this level in geography and well above in German. It is variable in music and in design technology as standards in food technology and textiles are higher than in other aspects and are above average. In information technology, physical education and religious education standards are above national expectation for those on specialist courses. For the remainder of pupils standards are generally in line with the expected level in physical education and religious education and variable in information technology.

13. In these non-core subjects, examination performance in 1999 in the GCSE grade range A*-C was significantly above the national average for all maintained schools in art and German. It was well above in English literature, business studies, religious studies, geography, history, food technology and textiles and above in French and dance. It was close to the national average in drama but below that standard in other aspects of design technology and music. Subject performance comparisons within the school show the best outcomes that year were in art, German, religious studies, English, English literature and history.

14. In the grade range A*-G, performance was significantly higher than the national average as, with the exception of only two entries in one subject, all subjects secured a pass rate of 100%. The average points score (46.1) obtained in 1999 across all subjects and grades was well above the average for all maintained schools. In common with the national trend, girls outperformed boys in most subjects but in contrast to the national trend, in this school, boys performed better than girls in mathematics, science, art, business studies, history and music.

15. All subjects improved on their performance of 1998 except for German and music where results that year were exceptionally high. When compared to the situation at the time of the last inspection, the good standards reported have been maintained and in many subjects have improved. Significant improvement is recorded in art but a fall in standards was noted in music.

· *Pupils with special educational needs*

16. The majority of pupils identified with learning difficulties and the few for whom English is an additional language, attain standards that are appropriate for their identified abilities. In key stage 4 standards are sometimes higher than might have been anticipated as, despite their difficulties, all are entered for GCSE examinations and recently all have achieved at least a grade G pass and many achieved higher grades. This performance represents good progress in relation to prior attainment and in relation to the consequences arising from some of their difficulties. In key stage 3 also, most make good progress in lessons and over time. Lower standards and less progress arise when support staff are not available, when the pace of learning is inappropriate and when work is not matched to their individual needs. Those with statements of special educational need make particularly good progress in relation to set targets in classes where they have access to learning support assistants. All pupils identified with learning difficulties are well integrated into lesson activities particularly in science, art, drama and physical education.

Literacy and oracy

17. Pupils' use of language is encouraged across the curriculum and developed by opportunities for extended talk and the display of key words in some subjects. Technical vocabulary is used with confidence by many pupils who display good standards of competence in oral presentations. They research enthusiastically using a variety of sources, study texts and write adequately in many subjects. A recently introduced initiative is targeting the development of pupils' literacy competence throughout the curriculum.

Numeracy

18. Initiatives in mathematics lessons have enabled many pupils to acquire a good level of basic numeracy and calculator competence. These skills support their learning across the curriculum where key stage 3 pupils demonstrate accurate use of measurement in science and those in key stage 4 use graphical calculators effectively. Data handling and graphical representation are used confidently in geography, design technology and art lessons together with spatial awareness which is also well developed in physical education.

Information Technology

19. The majority of pupils are competent in logging on to the school's network, loading and saving files, using spreadsheets to create simple models, entering data and using simple graphic design software. Keyboard skills are poor throughout the school, however, and this limits efficiency in the use of ICT to support learning across the curriculum. Wide variations in the level of skill and understanding were observed in both key stages, with younger pupils in key stage 3 and those following specialist GCSE and GNVQ courses demonstrating the higher standards of capability.

· *Progress*

20. In lessons observed, the majority of pupils in all year groups were seen to make appropriate progress and a significant number made good progress. Pupils make progress in relation to prior attainment within the key stages and throughout their time in the school. In English, progress is at least satisfactory, in relation to the level of skill recorded earlier, and frequently good, particularly at key stage 4 and is supported by the department's grouping strategy. In mathematics also, progress is at least satisfactory and good for many pupils over time in both key stages but restricted in some lessons by the disturbance arising from the close proximity of other classes. On occasions, in both English and mathematics, the progress of the highest attainers is limited by a shortage of pre-planned extension tasks. In science, at both key stages, progress is good over time and in the gains pupils make in lessons. It is reported to have increased since the department's curriculum review. In these core subjects progress for the examination candidates of 1999, in relation to their attainment in standard national tests in 1997, was good in English and mathematics but less so in science.

21. In other subjects at key stage 3 progress in lessons and over time is good in art, drama, geography, history, modern foreign languages and physical education. It is at least satisfactory and good for many pupils in religious education and satisfactory in information technology and music. In design technology it is at least satisfactory in lessons but variable within different aspects of the subject over time. At key stage 4 the same pattern is repeated for all subjects except music, religious education and information technology. In music progress is often better than satisfactory and in religious education it is good in lessons and satisfactory over time. Pupils on the specialist information technology courses make good progress but relatively little is made by others.

22. The school has a most conscientious approach to the provision of high quality, comparative statistical data on individual pupil attainment on entry to the school and at strategic points in a pupil's passage through the school. This information empowers management at all levels to set individual, departmental and whole-school targets and is now filtering through departments to assist teachers in their planning. With increased understanding and application it has the potential to optimise pupil progress and secure maximum potential.

23. The generally good standards of attainment and progress in this school are influenced by good teaching, group composition, pupils' positive attitudes, encouragement for pupils to express ideas, pupils' awareness of learning objectives, strategies to raise boys' attainment, and in some classes the provision of tasks appropriately matched to pupils' differing and developing abilities. These positive features support the school's strong ethos for learning.

Attitudes, behaviour and personal development

24. Attitudes to learning are good. Pupils' approach to work is marked by a responsive attitude to teachers and, in almost all cases, enthusiasm within a learning environment that encourages progress and an atmosphere that promotes responsibility. Pupils are confident and sociable between themselves and in relation to adults. The school's 'Assertive Discipline' policy, regularly evaluated in consultation with parents and pupils, ensures that all pupils clearly understand the school's expectations with regard to behaviour within and beyond the school.

25. The school is an orderly and well-mannered community. This contributes well to the overall standards achieved by the pupils. There are few exclusions and the reasons for these are appropriate. The school makes an effort to avoid extreme measures. When incidences of bullying or other unsociable behaviour occur, these are dealt with quickly and effectively.

26. Relationships are very good at all levels. Pupils are responsive and willing volunteers. They are open, friendly, helpful and courteous to each other, staff and visitors. In class, pupils work effectively in small groups and pairs and display positive attitudes to fellow pupils who require support in lessons. Many are articulate and confident about sharing opinions and relating personal experience, and they demonstrate tolerance of different views and beliefs.

27. Pupils respond positively to the many opportunities to take initiative and to develop a sense of responsibility. A significant proportion of the older pupils respond to the challenge presented by the Project Trident Gold Award scheme in connection with work placement, community service and personal challenge. Year 11 pupils undertake prefect duties efficiently, including working closely with younger pupils in a constructive manner. All year tutors monitor individual personal development closely and ensure that pupils are encouraged to participate in activities beyond the curriculum. Throughout the week of the inspection, senior pupils were observed operating a lunchtime market place of mini-enterprises with efficiency and competence, requiring no adult supervision.

28. Opportunities for close involvement with the local community are somewhat limited by the school's location, but pupils are in touch with wider horizons through links with industry. A current year 7 project called "Trees for a Time and Place", sponsored by Esso, involves pupils in environmental considerations and they also reach out to good causes in energetic fund-raising activities, such as Children in Need.

Attendance

29. Attendance at the school is very good and is well above the national average. Unauthorised absence is below the national average and the majority of pupils arrive punctually for school. Lessons start promptly. To emphasise the importance of attendance and punctuality, the school has instigated a Tutor Group Attendance and Punctuality Award which is presented on a weekly basis, in addition to individual certificates and termly prizes.

30. Overall procedures for recording attendance and lateness are clear. Registers are accurately marked at the beginning of the morning and afternoon sessions and are closed in reasonable time. The recording and subsequent storage of information meets statutory requirements. Links with the LEA's educational welfare services are good.

Quality of education provided

Teaching

31. The quality of teaching is very good overall. 98% of lessons observed were judged to be satisfactory or better. The good, very good and excellent teaching seen in 74% of lessons was in all subjects and both key stages. The best and most consistently good teaching was found in art, drama, English, history, modern languages, physical education, and science.

32. All teachers have good knowledge of their subject material and of the relevant programmes of study in the National Curriculum. Classroom management skills are generally good throughout the school and most teachers have good relationships with their pupils.

33. Examples of very good and excellent teaching, promoting high standards of pupil attainment, progress and behaviour were seen in 31% of lessons, covering most subjects. Teachers in these lessons demonstrated a range of effective teaching strategies for the management of pupil learning, stimulated pupils' interest and involved them in self-assessment and evaluation. The full ability range was consistently challenged and lessons were conducted with appropriate pace and variety of activity. Significant features of the high quality teaching are lesson planning and the question/response technique which many teachers have developed to a high level of competence since the previous inspection. In the very few unsatisfactory lessons observed, isolated instances of poor planning and weak classroom management were the main weaknesses.

34. Teaching of pupils identified as having special educational needs is effective, supported by designated Learning Support Assistants in lessons and through withdrawal sessions. Teachers use individual education plans (IEPs) well to plan work for low attaining pupils, but subject teachers are not yet fully involved in setting targets for these pupils. Higher attaining pupils are appropriately challenged through the use of extension work in many subjects, but there is a need for greater consistency in the use of pre-planned written and other extension tasks of differing difficulty to provide for the enhancement of pupils' skills and learning

35. Homework forms part of pupils' learning and is generally well used throughout the school. Parents commented that pupils receive clear guidance with regard to quantity and time to be spent, but

some were concerned that not all teachers were consistent in their application of the guidelines. A number of parents expressed the view that the burden of homework was too great in years 7 and 8, but inspectors found that the amount and frequency of homework set in all years was appropriate to the age and stage of development of pupils, and contributed in no small measure to the high standards being achieved.

36. Although the quality of teaching in specialist information technology lessons is good, the use of ICT resources in support of learning has yet to be realised in many subject areas. The good practice observed in science and geography lessons needs wider dissemination. At present, too few teachers have the appropriate skills, knowledge, or regular access to equipment to effectively support their teaching with ICT.

37. The use of a range of performance data to inform planning for teaching is effective in some curriculum areas, most notably in English, geography and mathematics, and is a strong focus of the school's current developmental activities.

The curriculum and assessment

38. The school's curriculum provision is good overall. It provides breadth and balance in both key stages, includes all subjects of the National Curriculum and provides for religious education. The curriculum is well planned to provide for progression and continuity. It offers equality of access to pupils of all levels of attainment and effective support for pupils with a special educational need. It is enriched by a good range of extra curricular activities.

39. The teaching week of 25 hours meets recommended guidance. Curriculum planning matches closely the school's aims. Monitoring by the governors' curriculum committee is good and committee members play an active role in the curriculum planning process. The focus on literacy throughout the curriculum is doing much to develop basic skills related writing and discussion and has contributed to improved attainment across the school. An increase in joint curriculum activities would enhance further these outcomes.

40. In key stage 3, pupils are grouped by ability in English and mathematics from year 7 and in a wide range of subjects from year 8. Provision of some aspects of the design technology curriculum in this key stage is restricted. For example, food technology is not taught in year 7 and the current timetabling arrangement results in a concentration of lessons for some pupils within one week of the school's two week timetable. Similar difficulties are experienced by modern languages in key stage 4. These have an impact on continuity of progress.

41. The key stage 4 curriculum provides all pupils with the opportunity of studying a balanced range of courses. Following a curriculum review, non-GCSE courses have been removed from all subjects, except history. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, are now given the opportunity of studying the wide range of GCSE courses. Although for some pupils the non-GCSE course in history is appropriate and allows them to make progress, the relevance of this course needs to be re-assessed in the light of the school's policy of equality of opportunity. Planning for progression from key stage 3 to 4 is good. The allocation of time for religious education, a key issue at the time of the last inspection, has been positively addressed through the provision of a GCSE option course and an increase in time made available. However, the social and religious education course followed by all pupils has a time allocation that is insufficient for an in-depth study of the religious elements of the course.

42. The provision of relevant and planned homework has improved since it was raised as a whole

school issue, related to inconsistent practice, at the time of the previous inspection. Monitoring of homework provision across the whole school is good and the improvement in the range and variety of tasks set has led to an improvement in the quality of learning.

43. There is a good programme of personal and social education in each key stage with clear progression from year 7 to year 11. It includes an appropriate provision for sex education and drugs awareness with strong support from the local medical services. A wide variety of approaches is utilised and this ensures that students of all abilities can participate. Pupils are well supported in group and paired discussions.

44. Careers education is a strong feature of the personal and social education programme and is co-ordinated effectively. Good support for the school's programme of activities is provided by an adviser from the local careers advisory service. All pupils receive a well-planned programme of information and advice from year 9. This effectively links the option choices to the range of post-16 opportunities. Helpful advice given by subject teachers and good links developed with local colleges enable the majority of pupils to make appropriate choices in relation to post-16 opportunities.

45. Work experience is offered to all year 10 pupils in partnership with Project Trident. The majority of pupils undertake a two week work placement with a high level of support from the local business community. This activity forms one component of the Project Trident Award Scheme. Over half the pupils have chosen to be involved in raising their level of personal challenge and to perform a service to the community. The positive involvement of such large numbers of pupils in this challenging scheme is doing much to enhance individual personal development.

46. All pupils identified as having a special educational need have full access to the curriculum. The small numbers, for whom the study of a modern foreign language is inappropriate, are provided with an alternative learning activity which supports their individual need. All teachers have an individual record sheet for each student based upon their IEP. This is used to review progress in the general targets but does not fully address the development of individual subject skills. The learning support for pupils is satisfactory at key stage 3 and good at key stage 4 where there is a tighter focus on the precise support needed to improve attainment.

47. The provision of extra curricular activities is good. A range of activities is held in the lunch break and after school, including art, drama, science, a writers' club and opportunities for the use of computers. A mini-enterprise activity enables pupils to develop skills related to the design, production and marketing of a range of products. The music and drama activities and productions, such as the Hounslow Band, senior choir and the annual play, enable pupils across the ability range to perform together. Residential fieldwork activities and visits to places such as France, Israel and Prague are used to support learning in relation to geography, French, religious education and history. The provision for extra-curricular sport and inter-form competitions is good. The range is wide and pupil participation is high. Teams and individuals have been very successful at local and county levels. The homework club provides very good support for pupils finding difficulty in coping with the demands of individual tasks. Staff give generously of their time to plan and support all activities and many provide revision sessions after school to support year 11 pupils in their final GCSE revision.

48. Equality of opportunity for all pupils is a strength of the school's curriculum provision. The school's focus on the improvement of teaching and learning strategies, as a means of raising pupil attainment, has led to more opportunities for pupils in discussion and group-work activities.

· *Assessment*

49. The school's assessment policy provides a good framework for assessment and makes clear what is expected in each subject. Procedures for assessment are good in most departments and are very good in English, geography, art and drama. Information technology has yet to fully implement a strategy for recording achievement over time and across key stages. Teachers' recording of pupil progress is good and all subjects make good use of levels of attainment or GCSE grades when assessing key pieces of work.

50. Although there is a sound strategy for promoting literacy and numeracy across the school there is as yet limited subject-based recording of improvements in standards. The process of monitoring progress and reporting to parents is good. Progress checks and an in-depth annual review give pupils and parents a clear picture of attainment and progress over time. The identification of subject strengths and weaknesses and the setting of targets for future improvement have contributed to the improved progress many pupils have recently made. The school is meeting the needs of the Code of Practice for all pupils with special educational needs. IEPs are checked regularly and appropriate reviews are conducted for all pupils with statements.

51. Information gathering about prior achievement is very good. The school has developed a comprehensive system for collecting and recording data about each pupil's attainment and progress from benchmark data on entry and as they progress through the school. The data is analysed in depth to identify actual, and predict potential, levels of attainment. All staff have access to this wide range of pupil data. Recent in-service training on analysing and using performance data in planning is beginning to have a positive impact on its day-to-day use by staff and on curriculum planning. Data is already used effectively in subjects such as English, geography and mathematics. The use of the data to modify lesson activities and to set targets for pupils across the ability range is a strong focus of the school's current developmental activities.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

52. Understanding of moral, social and cultural values and attitudes is very well promoted and has developed further since the last inspection although the multicultural and spiritual dimensions remain relatively less well developed. There is an underlying ethos of mutual respect that pervades the whole school community.

53. Provision for collective worship still fails to satisfy the statutory requirement in terms of worship although some year assemblies observed were broadly in keeping with the spirit of the law. A 'theme for the week' and a 'thought for the day' are used in the planning of assembly content, and these are also used as a focus for tutor time. Support for pupils' spiritual development across all years is provided within religious education lessons and across the curriculum opportunities are created to reinforce reflective experiences, particularly in English, music and drama.

54. Provision for pupils' moral development is very good and the moral climate of the school encourages pupils to distinguish right from wrong. A firm, but fair, code of conduct, that is advertised in every classroom, reinforces the orderly behaviour of pupils. All pupils are familiar with this and some were involved in consultations during the development of the present policy. Pupils are encouraged to be self-disciplined, trustworthy, co-operative, and to respect others. Many moral and ethical themes are explored through group work in lessons, including in drama where improvisation is used to consider life situations. There is a broad range of extra-curricular activities, including sport, provided by the school to encourage and contribute to pupils' moral development.

55. Pupils' social development is strongly promoted and since the previous inspection has been greatly enhanced. Year 11 students are encouraged to apply for supervisory duties as prefects and also

to help with peer group support systems. For example, they counsel and help younger pupils through pairing systems, assist staff at tutor times, open evenings and parents' meetings. During the inspection, two year 11 pupils were observed during tutor time giving good and mature guidance and assistance to year 9 pupils, using their own initiative, and without the need to seek assistance from a teacher. There are year group student councils and a whole school council. Through these, pupils influence procedures and conditions and organise some social events. Teachers are present at meetings and offer support but the meetings are largely pupil-directed and organised. Local and national charities are supported both by the whole school and individual group initiatives. For example, some profits from the mini enterprise market held during the lunch breaks were being donated to charity.

56. Good opportunities exist for pupils to develop an understanding of their own heritage and European culture through a wide variety of school trips, including the school's annual French exchange. The diverse programme of clubs, societies, sporting and athletic activities supports cultural development. Opportunities for the stimulation of multicultural awareness are planned in religious education, music, geography, history and art, all of which provide experiences to enhance pupils' understanding of the significance and celebration of cultures other than their own. Many pupils take part in regular school performances of music and drama productions. During the inspection, the Hounslow Wind Band was observed enthusiastically rehearsing for the forthcoming carol service in the local church. For some pupils, cultural boundaries are crossed electronically by their use of e-mail and the Internet.

Support, guidance and pupils' welfare

57. The quality of care and support in the school is of a high standard and many staff give generously of their time to support pupils. Since the last inspection the provision for monitoring pupils' progress, coupled with the good pastoral system, has become a developing strength and fosters caring, positive and consistent relationships between staff and pupils. Great effort is made to get to know new pupils before they enter the school, including close liaison with the feeder schools, to ensure that they will feel welcome and that their academic and pastoral needs will be met.

58. Heads of Year are central to the support and guidance offered to pupils. They work with each other and with form tutors to keep a regular track of pupil behaviour and attendance. Good systems are in use for providing pastoral advice, monitoring and giving guidance to pupils, and for monitoring of pupils' academic progress. Early intervention is the practice when problems occur and pupils know what standards are expected. The system appears to be effective in picking up on individual instances of under-achievement at an early stage and giving pupils the necessary support to fulfil their expected potential. The disciplinary system is fairly applied by all staff. The school has an anti-bullying policy which is understood and applied.

59. Arrangements for looking after sick or injured pupils are good. The school has trained first aid personnel, a welfare assistant, a medical room and weekly visits from a school nurse. Satisfactory child protection procedures are in place and well documented. The school has effective links with the social services department and these allow staff to monitor any pupils known to be at risk or who give cause for concern. An appropriate health and safety policy is monitored by staff and governors. A risk assessment has been undertaken with regard to fire prevention and an area of risk has been identified in relation to the current design of the mathematics department, where there are no dividing walls or doors, and therefore no means of containing a fire in an emergency. Fire drills are undertaken each term and there are many good mustering instructions in case of emergencies posted around the school. Help-lines and other useful information, such as the Child-line phone number, are also clearly on display around the school buildings.

60. The special needs of pupils known to have specific difficulties are recognised by the school

and extra support and guidance is provided for many of these pupils. The special needs of able and talented pupils are currently less systematically recorded, although setting by ability and pastoral care appears to be generally effective in helping pupils to achieve their potential.

61. The programme of personal and social education includes good provision for career guidance, health education and some study skills sessions. There is a well resourced careers library with additional information available on CD-ROM. A career advisor also visits the school to set up career plans for pupils in years 10 and 11. Personal development is further promoted through opportunities such as those offered in the Resources Centre for pupils to take up posts as pupil librarians.

Partnership with parents and the community

62. Although the location of the school limits local community use of the school's facilities, overall the school enjoys good links and partnerships with parents and the community and these make a positive contribution to pupils' learning. Effective support for curriculum activity is provided by many local companies, including Minipak, Esso, Exxon, Ford and Manor Bakeries. Through Project Trident and other local employers, work experience opportunities are made available to all pupils in year 10.

63. The school is well supported by parents. Good quality information is provided to the parents in the form of reports each term on their children's progress, curriculum booklets, letters and frequent newsletters. These publications are of a good standard and inform about events and issues whilst also celebrating the school's successes. They are complemented by communication through the pupils' planners, well attended parents' evenings and personal contact. The school prospectus is informative and clearly presented. The governors' annual report to parents provides useful information in an easily accessible format, but there are some minor omissions of which the school is aware. Parents of pupils with statements of special educational needs receive appropriate information through an annual review and are invited to attend meetings to discuss these.

64. The format for the annual review for all pupils provides parents with an adequate range of information and a standardised system of reporting in all subjects. These reports include information about pupils' progress, response to homework, effort, attainments, future targets and examination results. Pupils' planners are well used and act as an effective link between school and home for many pupils on a range of matters, including behaviour management, attendance and punctuality, as well as in managing their homework. Parents are active in supporting pupils' learning and achievements and the school can rely on high attendance rates at parents' meetings, school concerts and dramatic productions. An active Hounslow School Association organises fund raising events, curriculum evenings and social occasions for the school. A few parents are able to help in school or offer assistance with supervising school outings and trips abroad.

65. Sound links exist with the local junior schools and good curricular and pastoral links promote continuity and progression of learning. Time is provided for pupils from the junior schools to visit the school and for Hounslow teachers to visit the junior schools. These procedures are helpful in smoothing the process of transfer between schools. Strong links also exist with two other local secondary schools involving most subject departments, local colleges of further education and other post-16 providers.

66. Good use is made of local expertise to provide extensive input into careers advice, personal and social education, including a mentoring system for older pupils which offers opportunities to talk directly with adults from the community, drawn from a range of experience and occupations. The police offer supportive advice on drug education.

The management and efficiency of the school

Leadership and management

67. The school is very well led and managed. The positive and effective leadership of the headteacher, supported by the senior management team and committed staff, guides the school's work. There is a clarity of purpose, articulated within the school's published aims, and reinforced through its policies and practices. Management is very good, and often excellent, at all levels and is reflected in the high standards achieved by pupils and the high quality learning environment provided for them.

68. The governing body uses its committee structure effectively, provides good support for the headteacher and plans carefully for the school's future development. Good relationships between the headteacher and members and some effective working practices ensure that the governing body plays an active role in the life of the school. There is a commitment to induction training for new governors aimed at increasing understanding of the developing role and responsibilities of governance, together with forging a strong sense of partnership with the school managers.

69. Sound strategic planning is demonstrated by a well-structured School Improvement Plan now in its second year. Three focus groups, with voluntary membership, are responsible for the development and implementation of the plan which is monitored by the senior management team, relevant governors' committees and a school improvement steering group. This is providing an effective management tool for improvement and has already had a significant impact on the improvement of teaching and learning in the school. Development planning at departmental level is also sound and the cycle is well documented. The school is strongly self-analytical and reflects carefully on its successes and failures.

70. The school now operates with a line management process which enables and facilitates middle managers to embrace full professional responsibility. Systematic monitoring and evaluation of curriculum, teaching and pupil attainment is in place, and communication is effective. Although the school does not currently operate a recognized system of individual staff appraisal, the developing framework of competence monitoring allied to significant professional development analysis, which forms the basis of this programme, fulfils this function and integrates corporate and individual needs well. The induction of newly qualified teachers is well planned and carefully monitored. The school's commitment to raising standards is further supported by a thorough analysis of available assessment data and its appropriate use in determining end of key stage performance targets.

71. Oversight of special needs provision is undertaken by the governors' curriculum committee. The school's special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO) maintains effective and efficient procedures to manage provision and the school meets the requirements of the Code of Practice. Arrangements and administration of records for pupils with special educational needs are good, as are procedures for review of statements and IEPs.

72. Internal day-to-day communication systems are efficiently organised between all levels of management and between the school and its clients. The efficient collection of data about pupil performance and achievement, and the application of management systems in support of attainment and curriculum development are well advanced and contribute significantly to the efficient and effective management of the school.

73. The ethos of the school is one of achievement and improvement, embedded in respect for traditional values and collegiate professionalism.

Staffing, accommodation and learning resources

Staffing

74. Teachers and support staff at Hounslowdown are very committed and hard working. Although significantly reduced in number since the time of the last inspection, the school has a sufficient number of teachers who are appropriately qualified for the ages and subjects they teach. The distribution of female and male teachers within teaching and management roles provides relevant role models for all pupils. Job descriptions for all staff identify curricular and managerial roles, and deployment of teaching staff is generally appropriate although class contact time is higher than is usually found in schools of similar size and type.

75. Learning Support Assistants have a range of experience and appropriate qualifications to help them in their work with pupils identified as having special educational needs.

76. There is an effective system of induction and support for new staff and the school has fully implemented the arrangements for newly qualified teachers who are very well supported by the heads of department and by the deputy heads who monitor their work. There are good opportunities for in-service training to support all staff in their work. Since the last inspection there has been a comprehensive programme of staff development, although whole-school in-service training in the use of ICT to support learning across the curriculum has yet to be introduced.

77. Good support is given by well-qualified ancillary staff employed as technical, support, clerical and administrative assistants. Following the previous inspection, an external review of administrative support services was commissioned which resulted in a revised support staff structure and some re-location and retraining of administrative staff. All staff, including cleaning and care-taking staff, make a valuable, supportive contribution to the school's aims and continuing development. However, in the light of the school's developing ICT infrastructure, the provision of adequate technical support remains an issue.

Accommodation

78. In general, the school's accommodation is good. The reception area is welcoming. All subjects have discrete teaching areas and specialist provision is mainly of a high standard. Most departments benefit from good storage facilities and pastoral managers have appropriate administrative offices. The library has recently been upgraded to a Resources Centre with multiple access to the school's ICT network and the Internet. Plans are in hand to provide enhanced facilities for drama. This addition will enable the school to re-allocate some accommodation and to improve access for greater numbers to such key areas as the Resources Centre and ICT. Most classrooms are well appointed with many good displays, although few contain sufficient or adequate computing facilities.

79. The school grounds are in regular use and although subject to becoming waterlogged, are attractive and maintained well. There are ample outdoor sports facilities and a heated indoor swimming pool. The outdoor environment enhances the quality of educational provision. Pupils are appreciative of their surroundings and this is reflected in the absence of graffiti and litter around the site.

80. The school hall and drama room are in constant use but the hall does not always offer adequate space for scheduled activities or the numbers of pupils, especially during break times and lunch times.

81. Throughout much of the school, a shortage of suitable racks or lockers results in poor storage of school bags and pupils' clothes during lesson times. The introduction of racks, such as those in the science department and some design technology areas, would do much to alleviate this situation. Inspectors observed that the intrusion of bags into classrooms was potentially hazardous, particularly where movement around the room was required. The facilities provided for pupils to prepare for physical education are limited. The changing rooms and showers are under great pressure at times due to large numbers. The size of the present indoor gymnasium imposes restrictions on some activities.

82. During the inspection period it was noted by several inspectors that pupils and staff using the 'open plan' area designated as the maths department were frequently unable to hear what was being said due to the level of residual noise from other classes nearby. This difficulty impacts negatively on the quality of learning and progress during lessons. The open plan design becomes inadequate as a teaching base when several classes are in session simultaneously.

Learning Resources

83. A good range of resources is available to meet the needs of the curriculum. The amount, quality accessibility and use of learning resources is good in most areas of the curriculum, and all pupils have equal access to them.

84. Access to computers is not uniform across departments. However, the overall pupil to computer ratio is close to the national average and the resources available are used well. Access to the Internet and to email is available to all pupils within a school code of practice, which is monitored appropriately. The recently refurbished Resources Centre contains sufficient books to support the curriculum as well as a networked suite of computers designed to support independent learning. The library stock is constantly updated and is computerised. Resources are used well by the staff and pupils.

85. Learning resources for physical education are good. The gymnasium is equipped with fixed apparatus and a satisfactory range of movable equipment and small games items. There are good resources for pupils with special educational needs. Displays around the school are bright, informative, stimulating and attractive.

The efficiency of the school

86. As the school has experienced a period of financial stringency it has been necessary to apply considerable management time, effort and ingenuity to maintain appropriate levels of resources, facilities and services. Recently, the use of reserves secured a balanced budget.

87. A significant reduction in its staffing provision since the last inspection enabled the school to avoid excessive overspending and provided an efficient match with identified needs. The portion of the budget spent now on teachers in this school is less than in the majority of secondary schools and there are now less teachers than in schools of similar size and type. The time they spend with classes is greater than that found nationally in comprehensive schools but all have access to a greater than average number of curriculum or administrative support staff.

88. The portions of the budget associated with most of the other essential services the school provides are similar to those in other schools. The total expenditure per pupil (£2240) in 1998-99 was

lower than that found in many schools of similar type and includes a sum (£35,870) generated by the school. The school spends a higher than average amount to provide for pupils thought to have special educational needs and resources received for pupils with statements of special need are used appropriately.

89. The deployment of resources is influenced by the school's published aims and priorities. Good use is generally made of learning resources in the classroom and the grouping of subject areas facilitates efficient sharing. In the current year (1999-2000) the sum available for learning resources per pupil is more generous than the national average for secondary schools. To maximise the return for the investment in ICT, increased training to improve staff competence is needed.

90. Sound, internal financial administration procedures are established and value for money is pursued actively in purchasing. The governing body, through its finance committee, maintains an appropriate oversight of budget planning and expenditure and has given careful consideration to longer-term financial survival strategies. The intention to include an evaluation of expenditure in relation to its probable influence on standards, in the school's conscientious approach to evaluation, should now be realised. In response to a recommendation in the previous inspection report, budget planning now indicates appropriate financial provision for future planned developments.

91. Daily routines for pupils usually work well and good use is made of time. The school's efficient and effective use of its available accommodation has the potential for further community use when planned projects are completed. Efficiency of spending is enhanced by pupils' respect for the environment and property.

92. There are many favourable features in the context in which this school works but it is reported to be striving against a background of reduced resources. Spending levels to support many areas of its work are low. In relation to the quality of education it provides and the high standards of attainment it secures for its pupils, it currently provides very good value for money.

PART B: CURRICULUM AREAS AND SUBJECTS

English, mathematics and science

English

93. The high level of pupil enjoyment in this subject is matched by high standards of attainment which have improved steadily since the time of the last inspection. The evidence from lessons observed and from previously completed work shows attainment for many pupils at the end of both key stages 3 and 4 to be above the level expected nationally.

94. The end of key stage 3 standard national test results in both 1999 and 1998 showed the percentage of pupils attaining at least the nationally expected level (level 5) to be significantly above the national averages and at this level in 1999 the difference in the performance of boys and girls was less than that found nationally. A greater than average percentage of pupils attained higher levels (6 and 7), particularly girls.

95. External examination results in GCSE also show high levels of success. In English in 1999 the percentage of pupils attaining A*-C grades was well above the national average for all maintained schools and was a significant improvement on the school's performance in 1998. Almost all pupils were entered for English literature also and in 1999 the percentage who attained grades A*-C was significantly above the national average and the results of 1998. Initiatives introduced by the department have lessened the difference in performance of boys and girls which is now similar to that found nationally. In both subjects all candidates consistently secure a pass grade.

96. In response to a recommendation in the previous inspection report, attention has been given to the development of pupils' spoken language skills and now a strength of the department is its consistent provision for pupils to participate in purposeful talk in whole class, paired work or collaborative group situations. The oral fluency pupils show at key stage 3 develops well as they become increasingly competent in engaging the listener's interest. The standard of spoken language skills in all year groups is high as many pupils are confident users of standard English. They answer questions well in a range of curricular contexts and reveal an awareness of both literary and social issues. Ambitious and sustained contributions were observed in upper sets. Most pupils are patient listeners and very attentive to others' ideas. Pupils' oral communication skills are enhanced by their work in drama.

97. All pupils benefit from the department's aim to foster an enjoyment of reading and develop their critical literacy through an emphasis on reading for information, understanding and pleasure. Standards of reading competence are very varied across both key stages but many pupils read aloud with fluency and expression. Interest is stimulated by guided, close reading of suitably challenging texts and this approach supports significantly the study of language. Pupils engage with book and screen text when seeking information in relation to their studies in other subjects.

98. Written work, in both key stages, is wide-ranging in topic, form, style and approach. Standards vary considerably but by the end of both key stages most pupils are adept at matching the style and structure of their writing to its intended audience and purpose with many producing imaginative and sustained writing of good quality. Re-drafting for improved structure and precision is encouraged and progression in writing and improved technical accuracy occur from key stage 3 to key stage 4. Standards of handwriting and presentation are generally satisfactory throughout. Pupils'

writing skills would benefit from greater access to, and more structured opportunities to use ICT within the department.

99. Conscientious monitoring of pupils' progress shows competence in the key English skills to improve as pupils progress through the school. In relation to the levels of skill recorded earlier, most make at least satisfactory progress in their work over time and in lessons and often good progress, particularly at key stage 4. Pupils identified with special educational needs are supported well, make good progress and generally attain standards appropriate to their specific difficulties but in a minority of lessons the highest attainers in the ability sets could be challenged further by pre-planned extension tasks.

100. In English lessons pupils behave very well, are motivated by the tasks, work successfully in collaboration with others, respond well to their teachers' high expectations and share their enthusiasm for the subject. A consistently high degree of teacher commitment and subject knowledge contributes significantly to the high standards pupils attain and produces a quality of teaching which is at least satisfactory, usually good, frequently exhilarating and occasionally inspirational. All lessons are planned diligently, resourced carefully and incorporate skilful classroom management techniques. The most successful secure a constantly brisk pace and include planned questioning and written tasks of differing difficulty to consistently challenge the full range of ability within the group.

101. A co-operative team approach and effective evaluation support the department's commitment to development and to the raising of standards of attainment. An enriched curriculum makes a valuable contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of all pupils.

Points for action:

- increase ICT provision within the department and promote more structured opportunities for its effective application within the subject;
- extend the department's approach to the provision of differentiated tasks;
- maintain the emphasis on the raising of attainment, particularly that of the boys.

Mathematics

102. End of key stage 3 assessments in July 1999 continued an upward trend and were good when compared with national results. Pupils are taught in sets determined by their prior attainment. Within these sets, attainment is generally good, particularly for lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs. Insufficient extension work sometimes limits the attainment of more able pupils.

103. The 1999 GCSE results continued an upward trend with all pupils gaining a grade, and with very good A*-C grades when compared with the results for all maintained schools nationally. In key stage 4 lessons, most pupils attain above national expectations. Individual needs are supported through the setting arrangements, with high attaining pupils able to progress to extension work and low attainers working in smaller classes. All pupils demonstrate a good understanding of number using the four rules competently. Higher attaining pupils can extend their understanding of trigonometrical ratios and algebraic manipulation to three-dimensional problems, demonstrating the sound basis which underpins the mathematics of most pupils.

104. Numeracy across the curriculum is a current school issue supported by this department. Key stage 3 pupils demonstrate accurate use of measurement in science, while in key stage 4 they use graphical calculators effectively. Data handling and graphical representation are used confidently in geography, design technology and art lessons together with spatial awareness which is also well developed in physical education.

105. In key stage 3, the majority of pupils make at least satisfactory progress, with one third making very good progress. Much time is spent consolidating learning, in class and for homework. This may restrict the progress of some able pupils, as does the insufficient opportunity in most lessons to probe understanding and extend spoken communication of mathematical ideas. Good use of ICT in some lessons, for number work and for calculating the sizes of angles in polygons, supports individual progress. Most pupils are able to identify their achievements of each lesson, while others measure their progress by the quantity of work completed. A few are bored by repetition. The end of topic records, with grades and targets for improvement, are well received by pupils but underdeveloped to support progress.

106. In key stage 4, most pupils make at least satisfactory progress and many make very good progress. Most use prior learning in new situations with those in higher sets able to take greater responsibility for their own learning; however, few pupils demonstrate interest in the mathematical concepts involved. A minority, mostly in lower sets, need additional attention to enable sustained concentration when the work is more demanding.

107. The progress of pupils sitting close to adjoining classes is reduced by the lack of adequate soundproofing between classes. In particular, some pupils have difficulty hearing their teacher; some report their inability to hear responses from pupils in their own class, effectively being prevented from taking a full part in their lessons.

108. The majority of pupils want to achieve good standards. They take a pride in their work, behave well and work co-operatively with other pupils and teachers, showing appreciation for the help they receive. Written work is presented carefully. A significant minority of pupils do undemanding work without enquiry; others lack developed listening skills and lose concentration during teacher explanations.

109. Teaching observed was at least satisfactory in the great majority of lessons and very good in almost half of these. Lessons are planned well to address objectives and teachers give good explanations and provide materials to consolidate learning. Individual support for pupils is very good and promotes confidence in all, including those with special educational needs. Homework is set and marked but written advice is limited. Expectations of behaviour are high with a good working atmosphere in most lessons. The observed pattern of many lessons, with a teacher explanation followed by pupils working through a scheme of graded examples, limits the instant recall and rapid manipulation of knowledge, pupil dialogue to develop communication skills and mathematical creativity. When teachers are enthusiastic about mathematics, this enthusiasm is effectively communicated to pupils; in a minority of lessons, teaching is dull, assessment is not used to inform teaching, and lessons become an unchallenging routine.

110. The department has a developing culture of self-review. Major school and national initiatives are identified and recent developments include work on numeracy, ICT as a tool for extending mathematical learning, and improvements in key stage 4 resources. A longer term plan would enable the prioritisation of further developments. The open plan accommodation does not support good teaching or learning, but the department is very well resourced and attractively maintained with good displays featuring pupils' work.

111. Since the last inspection, progress has been made in extending base-line data to inform setting arrangements and the end-of-topic assessments now complement marking of work. Very small classes benefit pupils with special needs but additional learning support in year 7 classes might aid further progress.

Points for action:

- extend the end-of-topic assessment practice to maximise its contribution to raising attainment;
- extend the sharing of good teaching to increase the range of effective strategies with particular emphasis on improving pace and challenge for pupils;
- include ICT and oral communication development within schemes of work.

§ **Science**

112. In 1998, the end of key stage 3 standard national test scores exceeded the national expectation. A small improvement was evident in 1999, particularly at the higher levels, with boys outperforming girls by a small margin. All pupils in key stage 3 develop scientific understanding through investigations. The majority demonstrate sufficient understanding of scientific concepts across all attainment targets, and they can plan and undertake experiments under the guidance of teachers. Higher attaining pupils demonstrate high levels of curiosity about scientific knowledge. Pupils following the revised curriculum in the year 8 'accelerated set' showed good command of balancing equations for the reactions of acids and alkalis while pupils in one of the other mixed year 8 sets clearly understood and recalled from their recent investigation the factors which affect the rusting of nails and the impact of rusting on our daily lives.

1. At key stage 4, in the 1998 GCSE examination, the proportion of pupils achieving A*-C grades was below national average. Results in 1999 showed significant improvement and were slightly above the average for all maintained schools nationally. All pupils entered for the examination in that year achieved grade G or above. In both years the results were broadly similar for boys and girls. Overall, for all levels of attainment, investigative and practical skills are satisfactory. Pupils in the upper sets use technical vocabulary, are quick to clarify research tasks and readily suggest strategies for effective group research. In a year 11 middle set, pupils could describe clearly how the reaction of calcium carbonate with hydrochloric acid depended on the concentration of the acid and the surface area of the chippings. Pupils in the lowest year 10 set were able to organise and carry out very effectively an investigation into the effect of increasing the number of turns of wire round an electromagnet on the strength of its attraction. Pupils with special educational needs are well assimilated and enabled to experience success in classroom activities, and achieve appropriate standards.

114. The department has been monitoring pupil performance closely and has identified where its curriculum, its prediction process and the style of examination were not effective in anticipating or contributing to pupils' attainment. The complete rewrite of key stage 3 schemes of work to a new standard of detail and consistency is well underway. More reliable prediction processes have been introduced and the department has changed to a modular GCSE course. This already shows significantly higher levels of achievement in module examinations and a closer match of predictions to outcome. Progress made by pupils is now good, in terms of their development through and between the key stages and the gains they make in lessons. Many pupils with special educational needs in the lower sets in key stage 3 were observed to make very good progress in lessons.

115. The quality of teaching is always satisfactory and in most cases is good or very good. Skilled and knowledgeable staff usually set high expectations for pupils in terms of behaviour, involvement in discussion, independent use of literacy skills and their self-reliance in investigative work. Only occasionally in practical work is there a need for some staff to foster pupils' self-organisation and safe practice (for example in overcoming pupils' reluctance to wear goggles). Where the teaching was less successful, attainment was inhibited by a failure to establish fully a purposeful working atmosphere. The previous inspection noted the need for greater challenge for abler pupils. This has been addressed successfully by creating an 'accelerated group' in each cohort from years 8 to 11 and by improving the description of expected learning outcomes and their match to National

Curriculum and GCSE levels in the schemes of work for all classes. The marking of homework, though now generally conscientious, often fails to give pupils specific guidance on how to improve as scientists and staff are failing to exploit the potentially very useful check sheets as a means for involving pupils more in self-assessment.

116. The curriculum includes the appropriate specialist use of ICT to support learning and adequate time is allocated for every pupil to study the double certificate course at key stage 4. The schemes of work in both key stages are now extremely thorough and even include explicit opportunities for language development in some of the new year 7 topics. The inclusion of intended learning outcomes enables staff to evaluate and direct the learning of individual pupils. However, the overview of how schemes of work cover the key stage 3 programmes of study remains to be completed and there is little evidence in schemes of work, books or displays, of consideration of women or non-European scientists.

117. Effective teamwork among the experienced teaching staff is very well supported by the thorough and well-organised work of the technician team. Excellent accommodation and a good range of resources contribute significantly to the quality of learning and the work of the department is enhanced by the head of department's active involvement in the School Improvement Group.

Points for action:

- continue the development of strategies to improve standards of attainment;
- ensure health and safety principles are implemented at all times;
- maximise pupils' involvement in their own assessment.

Other subjects or courses

Art

118. Art is a strength of the school. At the end of key stage 3, the National Curriculum teacher assessments for 1998 and 1999 show that the majority of pupils reached or exceeded the level expected nationally. This was confirmed by the work seen in lessons and displayed during the week of the inspection. By the end of the key stage 3 pupils have mastered and understood a range of skills and techniques to produce good quality art work. Year 8 pupils have produced some striking and practical designs for lino printing based on graffiti art. Most pupils know the difference between collagraph and eliminating printing. Year 9 pupils, after experimenting with tonal effects, produced some effective observational pictures of hands using charcoal and chalk. The pupils are beginning to develop a technical language for art, describing their own work and the work of artists using words such as tone, line, colour, pattern and texture which they understand.

119. Attainment at key stage 4 is very good. In 1998 and 1999 the proportion of pupils achieving A*-C grades at GCSE was well above the national average, with boys' results particularly notable as they too were well above the national average. By the end of key stage 4, most can analyse why they prefer certain styles of art. They are willing to experiment with a range of techniques and different media before deciding how to interpret a certain theme. Model making, a variety of drawing, painting wire sculpture and ceramic work is used most effectively to interpret GCSE project requirements. Work in folios shows some sensitive and imaginative creative work where one theme is illustrated in a variety of ways, and some cross-curricular links with design and technology are evident. In a theme of 'contained spaces' a painting on acrylic material was designed to have a vacuum-formed moulding mounted on wood. Pupils' sketch books show evidence of careful research into the work of past and more recent artists, using books, the Internet and gallery visits. The attainment of pupils with special educational needs is in line with their perceived ability in written work, but their practical work is comparable with that of other pupils and often with the highest attainers.

120. Pupils make good progress in lessons and over time throughout both key stages. They enter the school with a wide range of previous experiences in art. As a result of links with their primary schools, the curriculum has been adapted to avoid unnecessary repetition of work and to enable progress. In key stage 4, pupils work more independently and the work produced is imaginative, underpinned by increasing confidence in skills. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress and in 1999 the five pupils in this category who were entered for GCSE all obtained grades A-C.

121. The response to art throughout the school is very positive. Pupils work with evident enjoyment, take a pride in their work and respect that of fellow pupils. Many pupils attend the after-school art clubs and one-day work shops organised during school holidays.

122. Teaching at both key stages is good, promoting high standards of attainment and good progress. The skills of investigating and making are well integrated with increased knowledge and understanding of art. A feature of the teaching that makes a major contribution to the high attainment of the pupils is the assessment of work. Pupils are given targets and clear objectives, and are helped to assess their own work. They are made aware of their attainment in relation to national expectations and GCSE potential. The department has had particular success with pupils with special educational needs.

123. Art contributes well to the spiritual and cultural development of the pupils. Pupils are presented with stimulating resources in the classroom and gallery visits are arranged. The guided discussions of artists' work increases their awareness of many social and moral issues. Currently there is limited use of computers to support art work but there are plans for staff training and increased curriculum use. There is also little evidence of the commercial applications of art.

Points for action

- implement the ICT work planned as soon as possible;
- consider ways of introducing commercial applications of art.

Design Technology

124. Attainment by the end of key stage 3 is above the national expectations. In 1998 and 1999, the National Curriculum teacher assessments showed that the number of pupils attaining or exceeding the expected standard (level 5) was above the national average. Pupils acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to design and make good quality products. Throughout the key stage, they work through design-based, problem-solving modules in resistant materials, electronics, graphics, food, textiles, control technology and information and communications technology. Most pupils know the names of the tools they are using and can select the appropriate tool for the task. They formulate effective simple surveys before planning a new food product. Computer aided design and making (CAD/CAM) is used to produce hand held games. In a textile project, pupils design pennants, using a variety of fabric decorating techniques, basing their designs on art and symbols of other cultures. These successful designs are then considered as a promotional feature for the appropriate country.

125. At the end of end of key stage 4 in 1998, overall results in the A*-C grade range for design technology were below the national averages for all schools, but in 1999 they were above. These results mask significant differences between the achievements of girls and boys. In 1999, grades achieved by girls were well above the national average, but boys continued to be below this level. During the inspection, some good work was seen in all of the specialist areas which make up the design technology curriculum, but there is considerable difference in attainment between the specialisms. For example, attainments in food and textile technologies are well above those for graphics and resistant materials. Most pupils are able to integrate the two attainment targets of designing and making. In a graphics project, pupils showed competent use of information and communication skills and effective use of CAD/CAM. One pupil, for example, had designed and made a styrofoam model and then produced a CD cover in acrylic. Some pupils working in resistant materials and graphics found difficulties in addressing a real problem and exploring more than one solution. The attainment of those with special educational needs is in line with their ability and often exceeds that level due to the quality of support they receive.

126. Most pupils make satisfactory or good progress in lessons at both key stages. Progress over time is variable within the separate elements of design technology with most progress being made in food and textiles. Lower attaining boys make least progress with their design sheets. They complete less relevant research, do less evaluation of their work and are reluctant to modify designs once chosen. Practical skills are often sound and result in good quality products but both 'designing' and 'making' are necessary for the GCSE course requirements. Throughout the key stages there is sound progress in the application of their work to large scale production. In a year 9 resistant materials lesson, pupils made a prototype for a personal organiser. They followed a logical flow sheet that they had planned using injection moulding for the bolts, and card and paper to represent more durable materials. They now plan how to batch produce the project. Year 10 pupils in a food technology lesson made good progress in understanding the quality control and health and hygiene aspects in food production. After visiting Manor Bakeries in a subsequent food lesson, they role-played the part of an

environmental health officer, observed another pupil working with food and wrote up a report noting hazards and strengths.

127. Pupils' response to design technology is good. Most are enthusiastic, take pride in their work and respect the work of fellow pupils. Some pupils in key stage 4 find the design folder work takes more time than they wish to give to it.

128. Teaching in most lessons is good. Lessons are carefully planned and pupils are aware of what is expected of them. Teachers have good specialist knowledge. In practical work, clear demonstrations are enhanced by clear explanations. Relationships with pupils are good, discipline is well maintained together with high expectations of all pupils. Assessment is thorough and is particularly good in food and textiles. Pupils are made aware of their strengths and areas for development. In some resistant materials work, assessment tends to be too generous. Teachers give freely of their time to raise the attainment of pupils. Technicians in the department give valuable support.

129. There is some effective use of computers to support learning but not all areas of design technology have adequate access to equipment. Some pupils can only use computers in class time once a fortnight. Very good links with industry have been made giving a commercial relevance to the work of the department. Visits to companies such as Manor Bakeries, Ford and Minipak contribute to enhancing pupil understanding and knowledge. For example, the link with Minipak has resulted in work for year 10. Following a visit to the school by the company's designer, the pupils produced attractive, well-made blister packs with eye-catching graphics. These products were later displayed in the Minipak's reception area.

Points for action

- focus on strategies for improving boys' design technology attainment at key stage 4;
- address minor safety issues brought to the department's attention and promote greater awareness of safety;
- implement the planned links with the feeder primary schools.

Drama

130. At the end of key stage 3 standards are in line with nationally expected levels for most pupils and some are working beyond the standard. Pupils understand and use a range of dramatic skills, techniques, forms and conventions. They express ideas and emotions effectively as they make and present drama. Pupils in year 9 can plan storyboards, include moments of tension and comedy and use mime, tableaux and speech appropriately to present their ideas. Speaking skills, movement and expression are satisfactory. Improvisations are often imaginative, appropriately set and enacted with good characterisation. Higher attaining pupils control movement and facial expression very well and their understanding of tasks set is good. Pupils can assess and appraise peer performances and identify areas for development. They demonstrate understanding of the processes involved and use correct terminology in their descriptions.

131. At key stage 4, GCSE results have been below the national standard in recent years but are now broadly in line with the national average and there is evidence of a probable further rise beyond this with the increasing popularity of drama as an option choice. Pupils can vary tension, manipulate pace and build imaginative improvisations in response to a musical stimulus. Movement and use of space are well controlled and characterisation is good. Pupils can analyse performances thoughtfully with good attention to detail, and suggested strategies for improvement demonstrate good understanding. They understand concepts of abstract and naturalism and can use both when building time-lines for characters. They explore a variety of issues with sensitivity.

132. Progress is good and often very good at both key stages. Pupils consolidate and develop their understanding of drama skills through a variety of tasks. They learn to create story lines, plan staging, plot story-boards and choose styles of presentation as they respond to different stimuli. They learn to build characters thoughtfully and to add more and more detail to their presentations as they progress across the key stages. They increase their understanding in appraisal of peer performances by selecting appropriate criteria for assessment and by identifying areas of improvement. They record and assess their work in weekly diaries and set targets for improvement and they also have opportunities to watch video performances of their own work. Pupils of all levels of ability make equally good progress and pupils with special educational needs are very well supported. Progress over time in the recent past at key stage 3 has been slower as not all pupils had a weekly drama lesson.

133. Response is very good at both key stages and, at times, it is excellent. Pupils create drama with conviction, concentration and imagination and they work very hard to improve. They co-operate very well in group work and respond sensitively to others. Trust between them is well developed as they learn catching and falling techniques. They perform confidently, listen attentively, enjoy their work and obviously value the subject. Extra-curricular activities are very well supported and pupils 'book' the drama studio at lunch-times to practise their presentations.

134. Teaching is a strength of the department and good, very good and excellent teaching was seen. Teachers have very good subject skills and use them well to explain, to ask pertinent questions, to assess and to adapt tasks appropriately. Lessons are very well planned with a variety of tasks which are either progressively more difficult or approach the subject from different perspectives. Lessons are lively, they move at a good pace with teachers' high expectations constantly encouraging the pupils to achieve their best. On-going assessment is used well to support the needs of pupils with praise and humour used appropriately. There are very good relationships between pupils and teachers who take care to build confidence in all pupils.

135. The department's curriculum and assessment plans are excellent and make a noticeable impact on the progress of pupils. The curriculum is comprehensive in its coverage of styles and conventions and by re-visiting skills in progressively more complex tasks it can be adapted to meet the needs of classes and individuals. It also makes a very good contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils. Assessment is thorough and meaningful with both pupils and teachers agreeing targets for improvement. Accommodation and resources are limited at present but a new performing arts facility is planned which will resolve these difficulties in the near future.

Point for action:

- secure the predicted rise in standards at key stage 4.

Geography

136. At the end of key stage 3 in 1998, National Curriculum teacher assessments were slightly below national standards. In 1999 an increased number of pupils achieved the expected level and standards were close to the national average with girls achieving more of the higher grades. Attainment observed now at key stage 3 is in line with the nationally expected standard. Pupils with special educational needs achieve levels commensurate with their perceived ability.

137. By the end of key stage 3, pupils of all abilities show good gains in knowledge and the ability to use a variety of geographical techniques to display information about different environments. Most can draw diagrams accurately and use a range of maps confidently. They are encouraged to use a range of geographical terms accurately and this together with the sound focus on the development of writing skills has raised standards of attainment.

138. At key stage 4, in 1998, GCSE performance in the A*-C range was slightly above the standards achieved by all schools nationally. There has been a further improvement in 1999 with A*-C grades well above the national average and girls achieving more of the higher grades than boys. All pupils with special educational needs were awarded a pass grade.

139. By the end of key stage 4, all pupils show clear gains in knowledge and the ability to collect and analyse information about a variety of environments. Fieldwork investigations have enabled them to develop a fuller understanding of topics studied in lessons. The high standard of fieldwork reports, produced by many pupils, has contributed to the improved level of attainment.

140. Progress made by pupils in both key stages is good. Most of the pupils with special educational needs make positive gains in knowledge as a result of the attention they receive from teachers and, in some cases, targeted learning support. Pupils are provided with well-structured activities with the tasks matched to their level of ability. The use of structured resource materials aids progress and promotes good understanding. In a minority of lessons, where pupils are set over-ambitious targets for the completion of work, limited progress results for lower ability pupils.

141. Pupils enjoy the subject and many are keen to participate in the opportunities provided for review and discussion. Behaviour is good. The many and varied group-work and paired activities enable pupils of different abilities to work together and be actively involved in their learning. Standards of presentation are very good and this is reflected in the fieldwork reports, assessment tasks and many exercise books.

142. Teaching is satisfactory overall and often good. Teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge. They encourage pupils to use and understand a wide range of geographical terms and this, together with the emphasis of writing in-depth answers, contributes to improvement in literacy and to higher attainment levels for individuals. Lesson planning is thorough and matches the schemes of work but some lessons commence with an excessively long review activity. Targeted questioning is positively used to involve a wide range of pupils in recalling information from a previous lesson but the opportunities for pupils to provide information from their own research, or a homework task, are somewhat limited. In the most effective lessons pupils are made clearly aware of the lesson objectives, the activities they will undertake and given clear time reminders during the lesson. All teachers include extension tasks in some of the planned lesson activities but in a minority of lessons higher attaining pupils are not sufficiently challenged. Marking is effective with all teachers providing in-depth comments on key pieces of work. Assessment is a strength of the department. It is appropriate and accurate, and clear information about actual and potential attainment is given to all pupils.

143. The department makes good use of the Learning Resource Centre for topic based investigations. Good use is made of the Internet as a source of information and there is positive planning for the use of ICT but overall it remains under-utilised as an integral part of lesson activities. Fieldwork is effectively integrated into lesson activities and is promoting very good standards of enquiry and analysis. Its use has enabled many key stage 4 pupils to make additional progress and to raise their overall level of attainment.

Points for action:

- develop further the use of ICT to support investigation activities and the analysis and presentation of data;
- review the use and timing of review activities within lessons;
- further develop the range of extension tasks and ensure that these are high profile within individual lessons.

§ History

144. Attainment at the end of key stage 3, measured by teacher assessment, was in line with the national average in 1998 and well above the national figure in 1999. More girls than boys achieved level 6 and above in 1999.

145. At key stage 4, the proportion of pupils who achieved A*-C grades at GCSE in 1999 was well above the average attained in all schools nationally. In 1998, it was broadly in line with the national average for all maintained schools but above that of comprehensive schools. In both years all pupils achieved grades in the range A*-G. Boys and girls have both performed above national averages, although in 1999 the proportion of boys achieving A*-C grades was higher than girls. The small group of pupils who completed the alternative Certificate of Achievement course in both years achieved creditably.

146. In both key stages pupils possess sound historical knowledge. Their understanding of the causes of historical events is strong. They competently use and evaluate sources. They recognise and can discuss different interpretations of the past and test historical hypotheses. They convey their knowledge and understanding orally with competence and confidence and demonstrate real enthusiasm for the subject. A particular strength is their ability to write extended, well-organised historical accounts. In some of these, they show their capacity to empathise with people in historical situations. They can undertake individual research and work effectively in groups.

147. Boys and girls of all abilities make good progress in history in both key stages. Progress during lessons was always satisfactory and usually good or very good in lessons observed. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress and higher attaining pupils are set challenging tasks, supplemented by extension work where appropriate. The Certificate of Achievement course provides an appropriate opportunity for low attaining pupils, including many with special educational needs, to make good progress. However, some pupils following this course would be capable of attempting GCSE.

148. Many pupils enjoy their study of history. They invariably behave well in lessons, work conscientiously and listen attentively. They listen courteously to the views of other pupils whose work they assess sensitively.

149. History teaching is always satisfactory, almost always good and occasionally very good. Teachers possess good historical knowledge, manage classes effectively and enjoy good relations with pupils from whom they demand high standards of work. They plan lessons well, choosing appropriate resources and providing a variety of activities. They keep the pace brisk, by limiting the time to be spent on each task. Work is marked regularly and thoroughly. Searching questions and challenging tasks were strengths of one year 7 lesson on The Black Death. A well designed imaginative task, which required groups of year 9 pupils to make oral presentations on World War I, produced some high quality work. In year 11, clear exposition and probing questioning, lightened by humour, helped high attainers gain clear understanding of the reasons for The Cold War.

150. The emphasis on 20th Century history in years 9, 10 and 11 constricts the breadth of the history curriculum. There is minimal use of ICT to support learning or research.

Points for action:

- make use of the school's ICT resources to support pupils learning and individual research;
- reconsider the breadth and balance of the curriculum across key stages.

Information Technology (IT) ³

151. Since the last inspection, the high standards reported in this subject have been maintained, the hardware and software resource has been upgraded, and the school has significantly increased access for pupils and staff.

152. At the end of key stage 3 attainment is in line with the national expectation and frequently above. Pupils log on to the school's network, load and save files competently, use spreadsheets to create simple models, enter data and use graphic design software. Keyboard skills are generally poor. A wide variation in the knowledge and skills of pupils is partly influenced by frequency of access to computers, including outside school. Whilst the majority of pupils in this key stage demonstrate confidence and competence in the application of generic software, fewer pupils are secure in their understanding of the construction and use of data sets.

153. In key stage 4, pupils following the recently introduced GCSE and GNVQ courses demonstrate above average competence. Inspectors were unable to assess the attainment of the remainder of pupils in this key stage as there was insufficient evidence of work and no systematic teacher assessment is in place. For these pupils, when IT was used in lessons, a wide variation in the level of skill and understanding was observed. The majority of pupils were able to log on to the network, load files, use a word processing package at a basic level and print their work. A minority of pupils in this key stage expressed reluctance to use computers and were unable to do so without considerable individual help.

154. Most pupils make satisfactory progress through key stage 3 in IT lessons and over time. Many pupils in years 7 and 8 have made very rapid progress whereas in year 9 this is less evident and can be traced to earlier levels of provision and access. The progress of pupils following examination courses in key stage 4 is good, but other pupils in this key stage make very little progress – in part due to a low base level of skill, but also to limited access. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress in developing IT skills.

155. Teaching of IT is good. Teachers have sound subject knowledge, are well organised and enjoy a very good rapport with pupils. They are aware of individual pupils' needs, and use good support materials. Course assignments are imaginatively produced and guidance is provided. On many occasions, however, opportunities to improve keyboard skills and to educate pupils about health and safety risks associated with the use of computers are missed.

156. The use of ICT across the curriculum is increasing, and inspectors observed well-integrated activity in geography and science lessons. Pupils are at an early stage in using the Internet as a supplementary resource to support investigative work, and this is well promoted by some teachers. Lack of access to computers is cited as a constraint by other teachers, and strategies to overcome this are needed to ensure that all pupils are fully supported in the use of IT, and in developing capability, across the curriculum.

157. The school's ICT Co-ordinator provides very good support to the school in both technical and curriculum leadership. The department reflects a strong ethos for learning. Planning priorities are appropriate and very good progress has been made in the provision of specialist IT courses and teaching. To enable this to be extended, so that pupil capability is further extended and assessed

³ IT refers to the National Curriculum subject of information technology. ICT is used to denote the use of information and communications technology in support of teaching and learning in other subjects

within subject teaching, consideration should be given to the allocation of appropriate time for the co-ordinator to work alongside other subject teachers within lessons.

158. Resources are much improved and extended, although these are still insufficient in quantity to meet current and future demands, particularly in subject areas. The appropriate expansion of the resource base, linked to the management of an intranet and curriculum support database, will require a greater level of technical support than that currently available.

Points for action:

- provide structured opportunities for pupils to acquire efficient keyboard and data entry skills through extra-curricular and incentive schemes;
- promote greater awareness among staff and pupils of potential health and safety risks associated with working at computers;
- match assignment worksheets to the needs of individuals, particularly lower attainers;
- implement a cross-curricular system for the assessment of pupil skills capability in key stage 4.

Modern Languages

159. At the end of key stage 3 attainment is at least in line with, and more usually beyond, national expectations in both French and German. In the National Curriculum end of key stage teacher assessments in 1999, 91% of pupils were reaching at least the nationally accepted standard for this subject (level 4). Of the 44% who were above this, the majority were girls.

160. At the end of key stage 4, GCSE results in French are in line with those for all maintained schools, with boys' results having improved significantly over the past three years. All pupils gained a grade in the range A*-G in 1999. In German, examination results are well above the national average. More girls than boys study two foreign languages and pupils who take the examination in German are in the higher attaining bands. The skills of reading, writing, listening and speaking are developed to levels at or beyond national expectations in both languages. In the case of lower attaining pupils, speaking is usually the least well developed skill. Comprehension of the written and spoken word is good in both languages across both key stages. Pupils have good study skills; they can use dictionaries and other reference books correctly; they listen carefully and can adapt French or German to fit what they want to say by changing agreements or verb endings.

161. Pupils make good progress in both French and German throughout the key stages, with many lower attaining pupils achieving beyond expectation in relation to previous attainment. In lessons observed, new words or structures introduced early in the lessons had been well learned by the end and confidence in the use of the languages was increased by practice in pair and group work, conversations, quizzes, games and written work.

162. Attitudes and behaviour observed in lessons were excellent. With the exception of a small minority of pupils in two French lessons, all pupils worked well and co-operatively. Relationships are very good. Pupils respect their teachers and appreciate the quality of language teaching and the amount of trouble taken on their behalf.

163. The teaching observed was always satisfactory and in ten out of twelve lessons it was good or very good. Some excellent lessons were seen. All teachers have fluent command of the languages they teach, one being a native French speaker. Most of the lessons seen were conducted in the target language (French or German) except for grammatical explanations. Expectations of pupils are high. They are given challenging work and lessons are conducted at a brisk pace and a wide variety of teaching methods is used. Relevant homework is set and marked, although not always consistent with

the agreed timetable. Little regular use is yet made of the school's ICT resources in support of language teaching or cultural awareness.

164. Timetabling restrictions mean that some classes are shared by two teachers. This, in conjunction with the two-week timetable, can result in long gaps between lessons. The nature of language learning, requiring frequent contact and rehearsal of learned material, means that some pupils are placed at a disadvantage in this respect.

165. The department contributes well to the cultural development of the pupils.

Points for action:

- review timetabling of modern foreign languages to ensure that continuity of progress is not affected
- make greater use of the school's ICT resources to support language learning and cultural awareness

Music

166. This inspection came at a difficult time for the department at the end of a period of long-term sick leave of key personnel. It is to the school's credit that recovery from this difficult period is already underway.

167. At key stage 3, work seen across the key stage is broadly in line with national expectations for the stage of the course. There are some areas of weakness, reflecting the recent difficulties, but signs of improvement were noted in all these areas. In performing most pupils are achieving the national expectation for this key stage. They play melodies or chords in group performances on keyboards, maintaining a steady pulse and sense of unity in the ensemble. Some instrumentalists who play fluently are working beyond the national expectation for this key stage, while a few, who have difficulty in maintaining accuracy, are working towards this level. Vocal work in year 9 is of a variable standard with tone control and intonation not always secure but year 7 pupils can sing accurately in two parts against a choral accompaniment. In composing, standards vary. Pupils can create successful arrangements of melodic and bass patterns; most understand layering techniques and can select suitable backing tracks. Some can improvise against chord sequences. Most demonstrate some understanding of tone colour, texture and tempo but there are weaknesses in the control and use of harmony and structure. In listening and appraising, most pupils' understanding of the musical elements is broadly in line with expectation and most are able to use musical terminology in their descriptions. There are weaknesses in both the depth and breadth of knowledge of pupils in year 9 whose musical experience to date has been limited.

168. At key stage 4, GCSE examination results were well above the national average in 1998 and just below this in 1999. Standards of performance are in line with and above national standards for most. Pupils play a variety of instruments in a range of musical styles demonstrating technical control and musical understanding. A few pupils also improvise in line with national standards. In composing most pupils make satisfactory use of a variety of techniques, forms and styles in their work. Some pupils make good use of sequencing programmes to realise their compositions and scores. Where there are weaknesses, the relationship between melody and harmony is not always secure and some work is overly repetitive with insufficient development of ideas. In listening and appraising, those who achieve the required standard are able to identify and critically describe musical elements and styles using correct terminology. Those just below the standard sometimes confuse terminology and, for most, there is a lack of awareness of world music.

169. Progress in lessons at key stage 3 is satisfactory and it is satisfactory or better at key stage 4.

Pupils of all abilities make equal progress. In year 7 pupils internalise rhythms and create compositions in simple structures. In years 8 & 9 they learn to form chords and to extend them to use sevenths. Across the key stage they practise maintaining a steady pulse in ensemble work and develop keyboard skills and part-singing. They learn performance skills in their lessons as they demonstrate their pieces and compositions. Pupils develop understanding of musical techniques in their work and they practise using musical terminology correctly in their appraisal of peer performances. In key stage 4 pupils made good progress in a lesson developing their listening skills by comparing two versions of the same piece. They then used the techniques identified in their own arrangements. Progress over time has been slower in the recent past as, due to staff absence, there has been no curriculum plan and some teaching by non-specialists. Progress is still affected adversely for some classes that share teachers for different lessons.

170. Pupils' response is at least satisfactory across all years. In some classes at key stage 3 it is very good and at key stage 4 it is consistently good. Pupils arrive punctually for their lessons and in good spirits. They settle quickly, are keen to succeed and most enjoy their work. They co-operate well with each other in group work, respond to questions, listen attentively to peer performances and celebrate them. When tasks are unvaried for a long time there is restlessness and loss of interest by a few. Group sizes in the option groups are increasing and pupils demonstrate a love for the subject and interest and determination in a variety of tasks.

171. The quality of teaching observed during the inspection was satisfactory and better with both good and very good teaching observed. Teachers have good subject skills and lessons are well prepared with a variety of tasks of progressive difficulty. Pace was good in year 7 lessons working with rhythm, and in year 10 attainment targets were very well integrated leading to clear learning gains. There are good relationships with pupils whose work is praised and valued. Pace of lessons slows at times when tasks are over-long or when time is lost in organisation of group work. Sometimes background chatter is not checked and groups are not always arranged in mixed gender in all lessons.

172. In instrumental lessons standards are satisfactory and good. They reflect both good teaching and the new management of the teaching programmes and pupil attendance. Teachers have detailed records of pupils' prior attainment which, combined with clear lesson plans and schemes of work, ensure good use of short lesson times. There is increasing interest in instrumental lessons with approximately one-tenth of the school participating. Interest in extra-curricular activities is also increasing, with numbers growing in the Wind band, Chamber Choir, Brass band, Rock band and a variety of other small ensembles. Standards are good and there are regular concerts and links with feeder schools.

173. The curriculum plan currently meets the National Curriculum requirements and the GCSE syllabus although ways to deliver world music need further consideration. The assessment schemes are currently under development in accordance with school policy and the department development plan. Pupils' achievements are recorded.

174. Accommodation for the subject is good and the school has responded well to the points raised regarding resources during the previous inspection. A sufficient number of large keyboards have been purchased for each room and all have multi-tracking facilities. The recording studio has a multi-track recorder and a computer. Expanding the number of computers would give access to more detailed editing functions for GCSE use and would support the learning for pupils of all abilities at key stage 3. There is a need to repair the pianos in the department.

1. Music is now a part of the performing arts department and the management of the quick recovery from recent difficulties has been good.

Points for action:

- complete development of assessment schemes in accordance with the whole school policy;
- instigate a regular programme of maintenance for the pianos in the department;
- plan for the expansion of world music within the curriculum.

Physical Education

176. In 1999, National Curriculum teacher assessments at the end of key stage 3 indicated that the proportion of pupils achieving at or beyond national expectations was higher than the national average, with boys performing better than girls. In lessons observed, the attainment of the majority of 14 year-olds meets national expectations in games and gymnastic activity. All have a good understanding of health-related fitness and the effects of exercise on the body. They lead their own warm-up and can name the muscle groups being stretched. In gymnastic activity, such as trampolining, many are able to refine a series of movements into increasingly complicated sequences. In games, pupils have awareness as to how individual skill refinement influences the outcomes of competitive games. There are no significant differences in terms of gender.

177. At key stage 4, groups of pupils have the option to follow GCSE courses in dance and physical education. Results have tended to vary from year to year but since 1996 the proportion of the small groups of girls gaining A*-C grade passes in dance has decreased. The first mixed group of pupils following the GCSE physical education course will take the examination for the first time in 2000. Predicted grades indicate that the majority of pupils are attaining standards above the national average. A scrutiny of a sample of year 11 pupils' written work, arising from theory lessons, reflected a good understanding of body systems and of the place of sport in society. In their practical lessons all display a good knowledge and understanding of health-related fitness issues, both in general and in relation to specific sporting activities.

178. The attainment of the majority of 16 year-olds in non-GCSE physical education lessons meets national expectations. A significant number, particularly those who are also in the GCSE groups, demonstrate a higher level of performance. Their performance is more consistent and effective in, for example, health-related fitness activities where they apply their knowledge and understanding of fitness programmes for specific games to develop their fitness levels in circuit training. This is having a positive impact on overall standards of attainment in the course that all pupils follow.

179. Progress over time and during lessons is good and often very good in key stage 3. The attainments of the majority of pupils on entry to the school are as expected for their age in gymnastics, generally good in swimming but variable in games. Pupils make good progress throughout the key stage. In key stage 4, pupils following the GCSE physical education course make good progress in both their theory and practical lessons in relation to the syllabus requirements. In the non-GCSE course, pupils continue to refine their individual and teamwork skills in games and gymnastics' activities. In basketball, for example, they develop their understanding of strategies and tactics through playing 'conditioned' games and experience a variety of different roles such as coach and official.

1. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported and integrated in lessons and make progress in line with their capabilities. Pupils with statements of special educational need who receive in-class support make good progress.

181. The great majority of pupils have very positive attitudes to the subject both in their lessons and extra-curricular activities. They respond well to the teachers' consistently high expectations of good discipline, behaviour and commitment to practising and refining skills. When given responsibility in leading aspects of their warm-up or coaching and evaluating one another, pupils show

respect for the efforts of their peers. All handle and move equipment safely and sensibly. Pupils show clear respect for the ethos within which the subject is taught.

182. The quality of teaching observed during the inspection was always satisfactory and in eight out-of-ten lessons was good or better. Aspects of very good and excellent teaching were seen. All lessons have a clear structure and learning objectives are shared with pupils at the start. Skills are clearly demonstrated and structured so that pupils can understand what they have to do in order to make progress. Effective questioning by teachers encourages pupils' speaking and listening skills as well as their use of correct terminology. All teaching allows for pupils to plan and perform and there are sufficient opportunities for peer evaluation but evaluative opportunities tend to be created by teacher questioning rather than pupil instigation. Good use is made of praise, encouragement and constructive criticism. There are effective whole group summative sessions at the end of lessons and appropriate homework is set for those pupils following the GCSE courses. However, there is a need for greater consistency in the marking of work in year 10. Although non-participants are usually involved in planned observation tasks, they are not always as fully involved as they should be. Sometimes they are not part of whole group introductions, demonstrations or summative sessions.

183. The school benefits from the provision of an on-site indoor heated swimming pool and has extensive playing fields. Poor drainage of the field area curtails use at times and the lack of adequate indoor accommodation makes it difficult for older pupils to extend their skills, for example, in basketball and trampolining. Changing facilities are cramped.

184. A strength of the department is the extra-curricular provision that further enhances pupils' learning experiences. The activities provided include both recreational, inter-class and inter-school competitive fixtures. Due to the enthusiastic commitment of department staff, as well as other teachers, individuals have gained representative honours at both district and county level in athletics, cricket, cross-country, football and hockey. Athletics teams have been very successful at district level and the under-13 girls are national champions at sports acrobatics. Very good links continue with other sporting organisations and these are of benefit to pupils, for example, through access to specialist coaches.

Points for action:

- develop a departmental programme for the observation of specialist teachers to disseminate good practice;
- ensure that the indoor element of the GCSE physical education course is resourced sufficiently; to enable all pupils to experience the full range of skill-related activity at the appropriate level.

Religious Education

185. At key stage 3 attainment is satisfactory. Pupils possess sound knowledge of several major world religions. They can use the correct terms for the ceremonies and symbols of these religions and understand the meaning behind them. They have some ability to compare aspects of these religions, including their respective attitudes to the environment, and appreciate the impact of religious beliefs on people's lives.

186. At key stage 4, examination results are good. Of the small number of pupils entered for GCSE the proportion gaining A*-C grades in 1998 and 1999 was well above the national average for both boys and girls. Pupils currently in year 11 produce work of a high standard. They possess a thorough knowledge of Judaism and Buddhism, their rituals, ceremonies and underlying beliefs. They make competent notes. Their written work reflects not only their knowledge and understanding but their ability to argue a case and assess the relative importance of different aspects of religious life. Attainment in the key stage 4 non-GCSE course is satisfactory. Some work displays a clear grasp of

moral issues and the religious principles which influence them. Most pupils can look at both sides of a problem and evaluate evidence. Their insights into ultimate questions are perceptive. Many pupils write competently, but a minority find it difficult to express their understanding in writing and the work in some books lacks evidence that pupils are aware of the religious issues behind moral questions.

187. Progress in lessons and throughout the key stages is satisfactory overall. In key stage 4, the short time allocated to the non-GCSE course impinges on continuity in the learning experience.

188. Attainment of pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory. In-class support for these pupils is very limited and not all work is appropriately adapted. However, the style of teaching adopted allows them to make satisfactory progress in both key stages. Higher attaining pupils achieve very good standards in both key stages. In key stage 4, they can write well, at length, and when appropriate in an imaginative way.

189. The behaviour and attitudes of pupils in religious education are good. In the majority of lessons observed, they listened quietly and attentively, worked conscientiously and responded readily. On rare occasions, a minority of pupils were apathetic and reluctant to keep to task. Usually pupils show interest in the subject, put forward their own ideas, discuss freely and work effectively in small groups.

190. The quality of teaching observed was always satisfactory, mainly good in key stage 3 and consistently good in key stage 4. Teachers possess good subject knowledge, manage classes competently and mark work thoroughly. Lesson planning is effective, with appropriate resources and a variety of activity. In many lessons, a brisk pace was maintained because teachers allocated strict time limits for each task. Individual help is offered to pupils and appropriate extension work is provided for higher attainers. Some imaginative written assignments are set, and there are good pupil-teacher relationships.

191. Since the last inspection, the time allocation for the subject at key stage 4 has been doubled but is still low. The number of books available to support key stage 3 teaching and the non-GCSE course in key stage 4 is low. Very little use is made of ICT to support teaching.

192. The department makes a significant contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils in the school.

Points for action:

- use ICT resources to enhance subject teaching;
- ensure that appropriate resources and tasks for pupils with special educational needs are provided.

PART C: INSPECTION DATA

Summary of inspection evidence

193. The inspection team consisted of 12 inspectors, including two lay inspectors, who spent a combined total of 50 days in the school. During the inspection, 190 lessons, parts of lessons or in-class group activities were observed for a total of 145 hours. School assemblies and extra-curricular activities were attended and the registration of year groups was observed. Examples of pupils' work in all subjects were examined for all year groups and planned discussions were conducted with some of these pupils.

194. Discussions were held also with the school's key personnel, including all those in posts of responsibility, the chair of the governing body, teachers, support and service staff. The school provided willingly a large amount of well organised documentation which was analysed both before and during the inspection.

195. The Registered Inspector held a meeting, attended by 40 parents before the inspection. The team considered the 284 responses from parents to a questionnaire about their views of the school. Issues raised were investigated during the inspection.

Data and indicators

PUPIL DATA

	Number of pupils on roll (full-time equivalent)	Number of pupils with statements of SEN	Number of pupils on school's register of SEN	Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals
YR7 - Y11	1022	10	162	60

TEACHERS AND CLASSES

Qualified teachers (YR7 - Y11)

Total number of qualified teachers (full-time equivalent)	56.5
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	18.1

Education support staff (YR7 - Y11)

Total number of education support staff	14
Total aggregate hours worked each week	343

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes:	79
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Average teaching group size	KS3	23.5
	KS4	21.2

FINANCIAL DATA

Financial year:	1998/9
	£
Total income	2,147,038
Total expenditure	2,188,017
Expenditure per pupil	2,240
Balance brought forward from previous year	111,504
Balance carried forward to next year	66,062

PARENTAL SURVEY

Number of questionnaires sent out:	1022
Number of questionnaires returned:	284

Responses (percentage of answers in each category):

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I feel the school encourages parents to play an active part in the life of the school	17	65	14	3	0
I would find it easy to approach the school with questions or problems to do with my child(ren)	29	63	5	2	1
The school handles complaints from parents well	17	42	34	5	1
The school gives me a clear understanding of what is taught	25	64	8	3	0
The school keeps me well informed about my child(ren)'s progress	30	61	6	3	0
The school enables my child(ren) to achieve a good standard of work	28	63	6	2	0
The school encourages children to get involved in more than just their daily lessons	25	62	10	2	1
I am satisfied with the work that my child(ren) is/are expected to do at home	16	64	10	7	4
The school's values and attitudes have a positive effect on my child(ren)	26	60	11	2	2
The school achieves high standards of good behaviour	20	64	13	2	1
My child(ren) like(s) school	32	52	10	4	2