

INSPECTION REPORT

Sir William Ramsay School
High Wycombe

LEA area : Buckinghamshire

Unique Reference Number : 110506

Headteacher : Mr W D Richards

Reporting inspector : Mr D Hawley
2712

Dates of inspection : 8 - 12 November 1999

Under OFSTED contract number: 708048

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school :	Modern (Non-Selective)
Type of control :	Community
Age range of pupils :	11 to 18
Gender of pupils :	Mixed
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Appropriate authority :	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors :	Mr P Memory
Date of previous inspection :	January 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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Mr D Hawley, Registered Inspector	History	Attainment and progress
	English as an additional language	Quality of teaching
		Leadership and management
Mrs S Howley, Lay Inspector	Equal opportunities	Attitudes, behaviour and personal development
		Attendance
		Partnership with parents and the community
Mrs C Large	Religious education	Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development
		Support, guidance and pupils' welfare
Mr M Patterson	Design and technology	The efficiency of the school
	Information technology	
Mr B Payne	Art	Staffing, accommodation and learning resources
Mr B Cue	Sixth form	The curriculum and assessment
	Business studies	
	Key Stage 4	
Mr S Wrigley	English	
Mrs L Cooper	Science	
Mrs M Wood	Mathematics	
Mrs K Walker	Physical education	
Mr D Castell	Geography	
Mr J B Keenan	Modern foreign languages	
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MAIN FINDINGS

What the school does well

The school achieves good standards compared with similar schools. GCSE results have been improving steadily. Overall progress by the age of 16 is good. Standards are high in art.

- Teaching is good in a high proportion of lessons, especially at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form.
- Standards of behaviour are very good and this has a very beneficial impact on the standards pupils achieve.
- Relationships between pupils and between adults and pupils are a strength of the school. There is a high degree of tolerance, understanding and harmony.
- There is a very good ethos in the school; the school is effective in achieving many of its aims.
- Pupils are well supported by an effective pastoral system and feel secure and valued at the school.
- There is purposeful leadership by the headteacher, senior staff and many other managers in the school.
- There are strong links with the community.
- There is efficient financial planning and control.

Where the school has weaknesses

Pupils do not make enough progress in history by the age of 14. Progress in the sensing, measuring and control aspects of information technology and in the use of information technology across the curriculum is not sufficient.

- I. The school does not comply fully with the Code of Practice for special educational needs; there are shortcomings in the management of special needs provision.
- II. Overall attendance is unsatisfactory; the school has inadequate systems for the analysis of information on attendance.
- III. The management and monitoring of health and safety is unsatisfactory; some hazards in the school require urgent attention.
- IV. The school's approach to monitoring and evaluating its work at all levels of management, while developing, is not yet rigorous enough.
- V. Pupils do not always receive sufficiently detailed feedback about how to improve their work so that the process of helping pupils set and work towards meaningful targets is not yet working effectively in all subjects.

This is an effective school providing education of good quality. Pupils experience a very secure and caring environment where they are well known, well supported and make good progress. The school's strengths clearly outweigh its weaknesses. The governors' action plan will set out how the weaknesses identified during the inspection are to be tackled. The plan will be sent to all parents and guardians of pupils at the school.

How the school has improved since the last inspection

Results have improved steadily since the last inspection and the quality of teaching is clearly better. The school has maintained or enhanced many of the strengths previously reported. The school planned a clear and well thought through response to the previous inspection report. In particular, there has been excellent progress in developing religious education. Standards in religious education at Key Stage 4, previously low, are now good and well above average in terms of the proportion of pupils achieving very high grades. Weaknesses in Spanish have been resolved. The school development plan is costed and middle managers have a larger part in its creation. There have been clear improvements in arrangements for collective worship. However, the key issue concerning special needs from the last inspection has not been effectively dealt with and some lessons remain where more able pupils are not fully challenged. The school has made good progress on several issues and satisfactory progress overall. The school has a vision for the future and the capacity to improve further, building on its recently awarded status as a specialist arts college.

Standards in subjects

The following table shows standards achieved by 14, 16 and 18 year olds in national tests, GCSE and A/AS-level examinations in 1999:

Performance in:	Compared with all schools	Compared with similar schools	
			<i>well above average</i> A <i>above</i>
			<i>average</i>
			C <i>below</i>
			D
			<i>well below average</i> E
Key Stage 3 tests	C	B	
GCSE examinations	C	A	
A/AS - levels	E	n/a	

In 1999 Key Stage 3 results in the national tests for English were very high, well above the national average and a major improvement on the previous year. Results in mathematics and science were somewhat below average. Overall attainment by the age of 14 is approaching the national expectation but above expectation for similar schools. By the end of Key Stage 3 attainment in history is below the national expectation and progress is unsatisfactory.

Overall attainment by the age of 16 is close to the national average and much better than in similar schools. The school is effective in helping pupils build on their earlier attainment so that they make good progress and achieve creditable results in GCSE. The percentage of pupils on the school roll achieving a GCSE grade at any level was below the national average in 1999. Standards are notably high in art.

In the sixth form students' achievement is broadly in line with what might be expected from their earlier attainment although by national comparisons results are well below average. The best results are in art.

Quality of teaching

	Overall quality	Most effective in:	Least effective in:
Years 7-9	Satisfactory	art, design and technology geography, information technology, science	history, mathematics, music (see below)
Years 10-11	Good	art, geography, business studies	-
Sixth form	Good	art, English, geography, mathematics	-
English	Good	-	-
Mathematics	Satisfactory	-	-

The overall quality of teaching is good and has clearly improved since the last inspection. Teaching was satisfactory or better in 91 per cent of lessons seen. It was good or better in 49 per cent and very good in 15 per cent. There are examples of teaching of very high quality in almost all subjects. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen in the sixth form.

Teachers know their subjects, establish good relationships with pupils and manage classrooms well. Teaching of high quality readily engages pupils' interest and leads to high standards. In 9 per cent of lessons teaching was unsatisfactory. Shortcomings in these, and in some lessons seen which were otherwise competent, include inadequate

planning for the full range of needs and abilities in a class, too much teacher direction which limits scope for initiative and failure to communicate clearly intentions and expectations for pupils' learning. The overall quality of teaching in Years 7 to 9 in mathematics, history and music was satisfactory but relatively less effective compared with other subjects. The quality of teaching in mathematics is affected by temporary staffing and teacher inexperience and in history and music by curriculum and lesson planning which does not cater for the full range of ability in classes.

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. A strength of the school. Has a very significant impact on pupils' learning, attainment and the quality of life in the school.
Attendance	Unsatisfactory. Sound procedures for following up unauthorised absence. For a small but persistent minority of pupils poor attendance has a negative impact on attainment and progress.
Ethos*	Very good. Excellent relationships. Good attitudes. Commitment to high standards.
Leadership and management	Purposeful leadership has established a good learning environment. Some progress in monitoring and evaluation but not yet sharply focused or rigorous enough. Some departmental development plans need improvement. Governors are knowledgeable and supportive.
Curriculum	Broad and balanced. Some weaknesses in planning and in taking into account what pupils have learned previously. Does not meet statutory requirements for information technology. Good range of extra-curricular activities. Good careers advice.
Pupils with special educational needs	Pupils make satisfactory progress. They are often well supported in the classroom but aspects of the management of the learning support department are unsatisfactory. Not enough progress since last inspection.
Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Strong ethos promotes spiritual development well. Very strong moral development and very good opportunities for social development. Satisfactory cultural development but too few planned opportunities to learn from a range of cultures.
Staffing, resources and accommodation	Staffing satisfactory overall; some deficiencies of expertise. Adequate accommodation but some issues of cleanliness and health and safety. Resources satisfactory overall but some deficiencies in design and technology, information technology, geography and music.
Value for money	Good value for money. The school is efficiently run and financial management and planning are good.

* *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
VI. The school achieves good standards VII. The school is easy to approach with questions or problems VIII. Their children enjoy school and are well cared for IX. The positive effect on their children of the school's values and standards of behaviour	XI. Some parents would like more term XII. Able children are not always challenged

Inspectors agree with parents' positive view of the school. Standards are good in relation to similar schools, the school is open to parents' views and pupils enjoy school. The school's pastoral system supports pupils well and its ethos has a very positive effect on their attitudes and behaviour. There is a wide range of additional activities. Inspectors also found that the school has made progress in challenging its more able pupils since the last inspection, although there is still more to do. In some lessons in Year 7 mathematics, in music, religious education, physical education and Key Stage 3 history more able pupils were not always fully challenged. Inspectors found that the school provides reasonable information in advance of courses through the prospectus and option booklets but does not provide more detailed information about forthcoming content during each year or term.

· **KEY ISSUES FOR ACTION**

To build on the school's strengths and to raise standards and quality further the headteacher, governors and staff should:

- XIII. ensure, through improved curriculum planning, that pupils make better progress in history at Key Stage 3, in the sensing, measuring and control elements of information technology and in using information technology across the curriculum
[paragraphs 30, 78, 85, 91, 134, 140, 173-179, 180-186, 212]
- XIV. improve the management of special needs and ensure that the full requirements of the Code of Practice are met, especially in relation to the creation and use of individual education plans*
[paragraphs 28, 34, 35, 44, 64, 74, 79, 92]
- XV. take steps to improve overall attendance, with special emphasis on persistent absentees, and create better systems for the collection, analysis and monitoring of attendance information*
[paragraphs 22, 57]
- XVI. improve the management of and monitoring of health and safety in the school and give attention to the swift resolution of health and safety issues raised in this report
[paragraphs 58, 68, 76, 83, 84, 133, 140, 141, 160, 161, 212]
- XVII. build on work already done in improving monitoring and evaluation by:
 - . making it sharper and more rigorous
 - . creating a closer link to development planning at whole-school and departmental level
 - . applying the outcomes of evaluation to the planning of further improvement*[paragraphs 40, 70, 71, 72, 87, 90, 107, 119, 132, 179, 184, 186, 214]
- . improve the quality of marking and feedback to pupils so that they have a clear view of how to improve and can set themselves, and work towards, meaningful targets*
[paragraphs 27, 41, 54, 105, 108, 134, 140, 149, 161, 167, 177, 205, 210, 212, 214, 221]

In addition to the issues raised above the school should also consider giving attention in its action plan to: continuing work to meet the needs of more able pupils* [paragraphs 17, 26, 110, 177, 178, 199, 207, 210, 217, 221]: further identification and training of teachers who still restrict pupils' opportunities for initiative [paragraphs 9, 18, 26, 100, 101, 103, 116, 129, 134, 158, 167, 173]; improving the accuracy of teacher assessment at Key Stage 3 [paragraphs 43, 163, 168, 178]; and ensuring that in planning for Year 7 teachers take fully into account what pupils have achieved in their primary schools [paragraphs 15, 26, 35, 44, 65, 212, 214, 222].

* this issue is referred to in the school's current development plan.

INTRODUCTION

Characteristics of the school

1. Sir William Ramsay School is a non-selective secondary modern school for pupils aged 11 to 18 with 860 pupils on roll. The number on roll has risen since the last inspection in 1996 partly because the school now admits pupils into Year 7 in accordance with new local policy and partly because of parental preference. The school is over-subscribed. There are more boys than girls. The school has special needs provision for specific learning difficulty (dyslexia) and for physical disabilities and has the highest overall level of resources for special educational needs of any mainstream school in Buckinghamshire. The school is situated on the outskirts of High Wycombe but draws its pupils from 24 schools across a wide area including significant numbers from areas of relatively high social disadvantage. Levels of social disadvantage are higher than average. Nineteen per cent of the pupils are entitled to free school meals compared with a national average of 16.7 per cent.
2. Overall attainment when pupils enter the school is below average. This reflects the fact that most higher attaining pupils (about 30 per cent overall) go to grammar schools so that the school has few very able pupils. The school uses Cognitive Abilities Tests when pupils enter the school. These show that the school has many average attainers. Scores in the national tests for 11 year olds, which pupils take before joining the school, show that overall results of the intake are below average. Forty seven pupils (5.5 per cent) have statements of special educational needs. This is well above the national and local average. The total number of pupils on the school's special needs register is 96 (11.2 per cent). The proportion of pupils for whom English is an additional language is higher than average.
3. The school's aims are clearly set out in its prospectus. There is a vision to 'enrich the lives of all pupils' by encouraging pupils to make the most of their mental and physical abilities, preparing pupils for a changing world, encouraging personal development and forging links with the community. The school develops these main aims through a range of ambitious further intentions.
4. The school's current priorities are linked to its aims and to making an application for specialist arts college status. The desire to win arts college status looms large and is supported by a comprehensive and ambitious bid. The school has now been awarded arts college status. Other priority areas in a wide ranging development plan include curriculum development in line with national changes, continuous improvement in teaching and learning, raising achievement, personal development of pupils, pastoral management and community development.

Key Indicators

Attainment at Key Stage 3¹

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

Year	Boys	Girls	Total
1999	90	82	172

National Curriculum Test Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Number of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	Boys	69	54	47
	Girls	72	40	36
	Total	141	94	83
Percentage at NC Level 5 or above	School	82 (57)	55(55)	48 (51)
	National	63 (61)	62(60)	55 (56)
Percentage at NC Level 6 or above	School	33 (25)	27 (27)	12 (16)
	National	28 (34)	38 (36)	23 (27)

Teacher Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Number of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	Boys	31	43	36
	Girls	53	40	31
	Total	84	83	67
Percentage at NC Level 5 or above	School	49 (48)	48 (43)	40 (57)
	National	64 (62)	64 (64)	60 (62)
Percentage at NC Level 6 or above	School	15 (13)	17 (25)	14 (16)
	National	31 (31)	37 (37)	28 (31)

¹

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

Attainment at Key Stage 4²

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

Year	Boys	Girls	Total
1999	81	78	159

GCSE Results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A* to G	1 or more grades A* to G
Number of pupils achieving standard specified	Boys	34	71	75
	Girls	35	71	73
	Total	69	142	148
Percentage achieving standard specified	School	43 (41)	89 (92)	93 (95)
	National	47.8 (46.3)	88.4 (87.5)	95 (94.8)

Attainment in the Sixth Form³

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 who were entered for GCE A/AS examinations in the latest reporting year:

Year	Male	Female	Total
1999	8	15	23

Average A/AS points score per candidate	For candidates entered for 2 or more A-levels or equivalent			For candidates entered for fewer than 2 A-levels or equivalent		
	Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
School	10.6	9.9	10.1(9.5)	7.3	n/a	7.3 (5.7)
National	-	-	17.6 (1998)	-	-	2.8 (1998)

Number in final year of approved vocational qualifications and percentage of such students who achieved these qualifications:

	Number	% Success Rate
School	4	80
National		n/a

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

³ Figures 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	11.98
	National comparative data	8.7
Unauthorised Absence	School	0.5
	National comparative data	1.0

Exclusions

Number of exclusions of pupils (of statutory school age) during the previous year :

	Number
Fixed period	66
Permanent	4

Quality of teaching

Percentage of teaching observed which is :

	%
Very good or better	15
Satisfactory or better	91
Less than satisfactory	9

PART A: ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS AT THE SCHOOL

Attainment and progress

5. The school achieves good standards compared with similar schools. By the age of 16 pupils' attainment is clearly much higher than that achieved in secondary modern schools generally.
6. Standards achieved by 14 year olds by the end of Key Stage 3 are broadly in line with the national expectation. In the 1999 tests for 14 year olds results in English were much higher than average, representing a marked improvement on previous years. Results for mathematics and science were a little below the national average. Compared with similar schools, test performance at 14 in 1999 is better than average, having been average in 1998. The results in the tests indicate that pupils are making good progress overall in the core subjects.
7. By the age of 16 GCSE results are high compared with similar schools, indicating that many pupils make clear progress during their time at the school. The proportion of pupils in 1999 who achieved five or more higher (A*-C) grades at GCSE (43 per cent) was a little below the national average but well above the average for similar schools. This performance places the school well into the top quarter of secondary modern schools. The trend in examination results has moved up steadily since the last inspection and at a higher rate than the national trend. GCSE results are usually better than might be predicted by Key Stage 3 test results. The school is clearly adding value. The proportion of pupils on the Year 11 roll who achieve five or more GCSE grades at A*-G is just below the national average. The proportion of pupils who achieve one or more GCSE grades at A*-G was below the national average in 1999 but average in 1998. All who were entered for GCSE examinations in 1999 achieved at least one grade at A*-G and 96 per cent of those entered achieved five. A very small number took no GCSE examinations mainly due to persistent non-attendance. The average points score per pupil (the best measure of performance of pupils across the full range of attainment) is in line with the national average for 1999 and very good compared with similar schools. While girls achieved better results than boys in 1999 the difference was less than the national difference. Pupils make good progress during Key Stage 4. The school has made good progress in GCSE performance since the last inspection. The statutory targets it set for 2000 are challenging for a secondary modern school and were almost achieved in 1999. The school is working actively on improving the use of performance data, raising staff awareness of it and tracking pupils' progress.
8. In the sixth form students' performance overall is as predicted by their earlier attainment at GCSE. The overall points score for the small number of students taking fewer than two A levels is higher than average but for students taking two or more A levels it is much lower. The performance of students who take the General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) course in business studies is average. Given the prior attainment of the pupils who stay on in the sixth form and the number of pupils who transfer to courses elsewhere, progress in the sixth form is satisfactory overall.
9. Pupils make good progress in **English**. By the age of 14 attainment in English is in line with the national expectation overall but the test results for 1999 were much better than this. The English test results for 1999 are well above the national average and compare very favourably indeed with those in similar schools. By the age of 16 attainment in English is on the national average and compared with similar schools well above average. Performance in English in 1999 places the school comfortably in the top quarter of secondary modern schools. The difference between the attainment of boys and girls at 16 is smaller than the national difference because there is a focus on drama and non-fiction approaches which many boys find appealing. At A level students' performance is below the national average overall but students make good progress, given their earlier attainment. Across the curriculum pupils' skills in reading are satisfactory. Many can read aloud fluently. Critical reading and reading for information are less well developed. Standards of writing across the curriculum are satisfactory with some good examples but there is too much straight copying in some lessons in history and science. Pupils' skills in speaking and listening are satisfactory across the curriculum but inhibited by the style of teaching in some lessons where pupils do not have enough opportunity to develop

their ideas orally. Pupils have difficulty in explaining their answers in mathematics. There is good emphasis on understanding technical and subject vocabulary in science, design and technology and in some history lessons.

10. By the age of 14 attainment in **mathematics** is slightly below the national average. Results in the national tests are comparable with those found in similar schools for pupils achieving Level 5 and above but rather better for the percentage achieving Level 6 or above. Overall progress at Key Stage 3 is good. By the age of 16 pupils' attainment is below average for schools generally but in the upper half of all secondary modern schools. Progress is good. Attainment at A level is below the national average but students make good progress given their previous attainment in mathematics. There is no whole school policy for the use of numeracy across the curriculum. Pupils' use of numeracy skills is seen to the best advantage in science and geography but their skills are less effectively used elsewhere.
11. In **science** attainment by the age of 14 is below the national average for maintained schools but in 1999 results in the national tests were in the upper half for all secondary modern schools. Progress during Key Stage 3 is satisfactory. Overall attainment by 16 is in line with the national average for pupils taking double award science. The proportion of pupils gaining a higher (A*-C) grade in science in 1999 was above the average for similar schools though well below the average for schools generally. Pupils have sound scientific knowledge and can carry out a fair test. They are less confident in evaluating the outcomes of an experiment. Progress is satisfactory overall and good for boys at Key Stage 4. The attainment of students taking the A level biology course is about average and progress is satisfactory.
12. In the other subjects of the National Curriculum attainment by the end of Key Stage 3 at the age of 14 is in line with the national expectation in **art** overall and often above in lessons seen; progress is good - a consequence of good teaching and a commitment to high standards in the art department. Attainment is in line with expectation in **design and technology, information technology, music, physical education and religious education** and progress is satisfactory. Attainment is below the national expectation in **geography** and **modern foreign languages** but progress is satisfactory. Attainment in **history** is below expectation and progress is unsatisfactory because planning and assessment methods do not encourage pupils to develop their history skills sufficiently between Year 7 and the end of Year 9.
13. In almost all subjects GCSE performance is better than that in similar schools. By the age of 16 at the end of Key Stage 4, attainment is well above the national average in **art** and progress is good. Attainment is above average in **music** and GCSE **information studies**; pupils make good progress. Attainment is in line with the national average in **geography** and progress is very good. Attainment is average in **business studies, drama, modern foreign languages, physical education and religious education** and progress is good. Attainment is average in **design and technology** and progress is satisfactory. Attainment is below the national average and the average for similar schools in **history** but progress is satisfactory. In the core **information technology** course taken by all pupils attainment is below expectation and progress is unsatisfactory because pupils do not have an adequate experience of using computers to sense, measure and control.
14. In the sixth form the relatively small numbers taking each subject make direct comparisons with national figures unreliable. Progress in the sixth form is good in **art**. It is satisfactory in **geography, information technology, music, theatre studies** and **A level business studies and GNVQ business studies**.
15. On entry to the school the attainment of pupils overall is below average. By the end of Key Stage 3 attainment is approaching the national expectation in most subjects. This represents in many respects good progress during the key stage. Progress at Key Stage 4 is clearly good. It is satisfactory in the sixth form. The school does not serve the full ability range but relatively higher attaining pupils make satisfactory progress in most subjects. There are exceptions to this in some lessons in history, music, religious education and physical education when the demands made on more able pupils are insufficient. Progress of higher attainers is not as rapid as it could be in Year 7 because teachers do not take enough account of what pupils have learned before. Average attainers make sound progress in most lessons. The progress made by lower attaining pupils is satisfactory but there are exceptions to this in some English lessons. Pupils with special needs make satisfactory progress overall and in some lessons the high quality of the support they receive enables them to

make good progress. Pupils who have English as an additional language make good progress when they have support and their progress overall is comparable with that made by pupils generally in the school.

16. In the Key Stage 3 national tests there are differences in the performance of boys and girls which are similar to national differences. Overall the gap between the performance of girls and boys at GCSE is lower in this school than in schools nationally but is wider than average in modern foreign languages.
17. The school has made good progress in raising pupils' attainment since the last inspection. There are issues for the school to work on which should help to improve attainment and progress further: increasing the proportion of pupils who achieve GCSE grades at 16 and ensuring that all lessons and subjects enable pupils of all abilities to make the progress of which they are capable.

Attitudes, behaviour and personal development

18. The majority of pupils have good, positive attitudes to their learning. They are usually keen and interested and there is a good work ethic in the school. In most lessons pupils willingly get on with their work although their capacity to take the initiative is limited in some lessons by teachers over directing them. Pupils are insufficiently skilled at taking responsibility for the organisation of their work, although when challenged to do so they mostly respond with enthusiasm. For example, Year 11 pupils in business education enjoy establishing and organising their own tasks when working on case studies and clearly would welcome the opportunity to work in a similar way in other subjects. Most pupils concentrate and listen well and enjoy answering questions, although some pupils find it harder to concentrate or listen especially for long periods. Others, including some sixth form students, sit passively through the lessons without really engaging in the learning, particularly when the teaching does not require them to produce any sort of response. Pupils clearly enjoy those practical lessons where they are able to actively participate for example, in physical education, drama, information technology, design and technology, art and some science this has a marked impact on their attainment. Pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language demonstrate good attitudes to learning and respond well to additional support. In the whole-school assembly held during the inspection, the level of attentiveness was very good and behaviour to and from the hall was very sensible.
19. The school is a very orderly community and parents comment favourably on the high standards of good behaviour. Behaviour is very good and has a significant impact on pupils' learning as well as on the quality of life in the school. Pupils respond positively to the school's high expectations of behaviour and have a clear understanding of what is acceptable, complying with the discipline and dress code. Many show good self discipline and the vast majority are very helpful, friendly and courteous. For example, it is common to see pupils holding doors open for one another. There is very little litter and no graffiti. A small minority of pupils find it difficult to behave as well as the vast majority during free time and whilst travelling to and from school. Unsatisfactory behaviour in lessons is rare and usually related to weaker teaching or poor classroom management. Exclusions have been high in previous years but there are currently far fewer and the school aims to reduce them substantially over the next year.
20. Relationships are excellent and a strength of the school. Pupils relate extremely well to one another and to adults in school. There is an exceptionally high degree of racial harmony. Pupils work very well together in lessons in many different groupings. They show genuine care and consideration for one another and demonstrate tolerance and understanding. They are respectful towards one another and good at taking turns. Year 11 pupils carry out their prefect duties with maturity and sensitivity and sixth form students are very supportive of younger pupils, particularly through the paired reading scheme, some of which is in mother tongues. Pupils feel secure and there are few incidents of harassment or bullying.
21. Personal development is good overall. Pupils willingly get involved in daily routines and are keen to participate in what the school has to offer. This was evident from the numbers seen during the inspection playing team sports and working in the information technology suites at lunch-times. A considerable number join in with the Ramsay Action activities and there is no shortage of volunteers for special charity events. Several sixth form students have been willing to devote time to training and running the Peer Active Listening Service (PALS) and others have been successfully involved in arts projects with junior schools. Pupils'

personal development through opportunities to take the initiative in their own learning is less fully developed because some teachers limit scope for pupils to develop the appropriate skills.

Attendance

22. The great majority of pupils attend regularly and punctually and are happy to come to school. However, attendance overall is unsatisfactory and has been below the 90 per cent benchmark for the last three years. Authorised absence last year was high at 11.98 per cent. Whilst there are pupils in the school who are absent due to particular medical problems and other specific reasons known and understood by the school, there are significant numbers in each year group whose levels of absence give cause for concern and this has a negative impact on attainment. Unauthorised absence has been below the national average for the last three years and reflects the effective follow up systems and generally well kept registers. There is little undetected truancy and term-time holidays are not a major feature as the school rightly takes a strong stance on this issue. There is no written attendance policy and the current lack of data prevents the school from highlighting trends for specific groups even though the monitoring of individuals is effective.
23. Punctuality is generally satisfactory although a significant number arrive late in the morning, often because of unreliable bus transport, which can disrupt the start of the day. Most lessons start on time but there are significant delays to the start of the first lesson due to the over running of assemblies. Some pupils can be casual about re-entry into school after the morning break and many pupils are late to afternoon registration or miss it completely due to lunch-time clubs over running.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED

Teaching

24. The quality of teaching is good overall and has improved since the last inspection. Teaching has a positive effect on the attitudes of pupils and the standards they achieve. In 91 per cent of lessons the quality of teaching was satisfactory or better. It was good or better in almost half and very good in 15 per cent. Examples of good teaching were seen in all subjects. The teaching is strongest in art where there was no unsatisfactory teaching and 80 per cent of the lessons were good or very good. Teaching in art is noteworthy for lively, well-structured expositions, brisk pace and a commitment to high standards. Teaching is also strong in geography and business studies at Key Stage 4 and in aspects of core information technology. The overall quality of the teaching is satisfactory at Key Stage 3 and good in Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. The quality of teaching is most consistent in the sixth form where no unsatisfactory lessons were seen. Weaknesses were most noticeable in Year 8 where more of the teaching is in the hands of inexperienced or temporary staff and teachers working outside their specialist subject area.
25. Several factors account for the good and very good teaching seen in almost half of lessons. Teachers have in most cases a secure knowledge of the subjects they teach. This is particularly apparent in sixth form teaching. In art and geography teachers' knowledge and understanding of their subject has a noticeable impact on teaching quality. Teachers work hard and plan well. Relationships between teachers and pupils are often very good. This arises from the effective classroom management of many teachers which ensures a good environment for learning and high expectations of behaviour. Praise and encouragement are frequent ingredients of the most effective teaching. In science there is some good practice in planning lessons which meet the different needs of all pupils in the group. There is effective questioning which encourages pupils to think. Well-designed case studies which encourage pupils to work independently are a good feature of business education.
26. A proportion (9 per cent) of the teaching is unsatisfactory in that it fails to promote sufficient learning and progress, but there are also shortcomings in some lessons otherwise judged satisfactory which have an effect on pupils' learning. In some lessons teachers take up too much of the time in direct teaching and so limit pupils' opportunity to take the initiative and learn actively for themselves. Although this shortcoming is less apparent than at the time of the last inspection it remains a feature of some lessons. In their planning some teachers place more emphasis on what they intend to say and do than on what pupils are intended to learn. The intentions of a lesson and what pupils are supposed to learn are not always clearly communicated. There

is too much copying in some lessons in science and history. Some lessons are poorly managed in terms of time with too little expected in the time so that the pace slackens. In others too much is expected so that pupils are confused and cannot gain the satisfaction of understanding what is going on or completing their work properly. Planning for the full range of needs in the class is not evident in some lessons in English, geography, history, GCSE physical education and religious education.

27. Teachers mark pupils' work regularly and there is marking of high quality from some teachers which clearly indicates to pupils what they need to do if their work is to improve. A good example of this is the marking and feedback in Year 11 business education where pupils become clear about what they need to do to improve and are able to set themselves meaningful personal targets for improvement. In many cases the marking acknowledges the effort a pupil has made but does not move learning forward. There are some very good examples of verbal feedback to pupils in mathematics and science. Across the school the style and quality of marking is variable and capable of improvement.
28. Subject teachers are aware of pupils with special needs and take time in lessons to ensure that they understand the work they are doing. Learning support assistants are often effective in helping pupils with special educational needs gain access to the curriculum, and ensuring that they understand what they are doing so that they are able to make good progress. In some English lessons and in support options in Key Stage 4 teachers and learning support assistants are caring and supportive but do not have high enough expectations of what pupils might achieve in the time. There is a limited amount of additional support for pupils who are at the early stages of learning English. This is well targeted and effective.
29. Teachers enhance pupils' learning by well chosen homework tasks. Particularly good examples of homework which builds effectively on lessons and is well designed to develop pupils' skills were seen in English, mathematics and art.

The curriculum and assessment

30. The school has made good progress in its efforts to improve the quality of the curriculum since the previous inspection. In the sixth form, lessons in physical education and moral and ethical studies have been introduced, the latter ensuring that the requirement to teach all pupils religious education is now met. The amount of private study time for Year 12 students has been reduced through the introduction of the general studies programme, although a few students still have more than 5 hours private study time each week. Most of the subject issues raised in the previous report have been dealt with successfully, but the curriculum still does not meet all requirements for information technology at both Key Stages 3 and 4.
31. The curriculum at both Key Stage 3 and 4 is broad and balanced and meets most of the statutory requirements. At Key Stage 3, the curriculum in geography does not include the handling, analysis and presentation of information, and at both key stages some of the information technology requirements of the National Curriculum are not met in full for all pupils. There is a satisfactory range of vocational courses at Key Stage 4, including GCSE in motor vehicle studies, office applications and physical education. The vast majority of pupils respond very well to these vocational courses. The school has considered the introduction of GNVQ (General National Vocational Qualification) courses at Key Stage 4.
32. The sixth form curriculum includes a small number of courses at GCE A level and 1 at GNVQ Advanced level. There is also a small range of GCSE courses for pupils wishing to increase their qualifications at this level. The school offers a GNVQ course at Intermediate level, but take up for this year was low and the course did not start. The sixth form curriculum is strengthened through a well-planned programme of moral and ethical studies, which forms part of the compulsory curriculum for all students. GCE A level general studies has now been introduced. Overall, the range of courses is appropriate for the size of the sixth form. The school has been monitoring the planned changes to sixth form qualifications which involve new structures and syllabuses for all Advanced level qualifications and is in the early stages of planning for these changes.
33. The curriculum is well planned to provide all pupils with equal access to all subjects and other activities. Some subjects place pupils into sets at Key Stage 3. These arrangements are based on appropriate criteria within subjects and are having a positive impact on the learning of pupils. The arrangements for design and

technology and modern foreign languages at Key Stage 4 are working to the advantage of pupils in these areas.

34. The curriculum in most subjects meets the general needs of many pupils with special educational needs. However, the learning support requirements set out in the individual educational plans lack the necessary precision to allow for detailed curriculum planning at the subject level. There is inadequate targeting of support to meet the individual needs as identified in pupils' statements. Pupils disapplying from aspects of the curriculum at Key Stage 4 receive a support option. Whilst this does give pupils the opportunity to complete some course-work, something they value, there is little within this provision which addresses the individual needs of these pupils.
35. The curriculum is well organised to ensure that pupils progress in most subject areas. Planning for progression has unsatisfactory elements in history at Key Stage 3, music, modern foreign languages and in the cross-curricular information technology course. The school does not plan effectively to ensure the continuity and progression of the curriculum when pupils transfer to the school. Whilst some information on pupils' individual educational needs is sent to the school it is not used effectively by the learning support department.
36. The curriculum is enhanced through a well-planned programme of social education, which includes health, drugs and sex education. There is also a good range of extra-curricular activities. The quality of the extra-curricular provision is exceptional in information technology, very good in physical education and pottery, good in drama and art and satisfactory in music. Pupils have the opportunity to take part in educational visits, including trips to the theatre and residential activities, as well as subject based clubs. The take up for many of these activities is good.
37. There is a good quality programme of careers education and guidance, delivered in partnership with Buckingham Careers Services. The careers programme is generally well planned in terms of what teachers should teach but could be improved further by clearly specifying the skills pupils should learn. Pupils in the sixth form preparing applications for university entrance are very well supported as they prepare their personal statements in support of these applications.
38. All pupils at Key Stage 4 undertake a period of work experience. GNVQ pupils have the opportunity for additional work experience in the sixth form. Pupils further develop their understanding of the world of work in some subject areas. In business courses teachers have designed good quality case studies which are linked to business examples. Many pupils respond very positively to this approach. Courses in design and technology are also appropriately work related, and pupil responses are positive here as well. However, these are rather isolated examples of the use of the world of work to add interest to subject-based work. There is no policy for the work related curriculum.
39. The progress in improving assessment procedures since the previous inspection has been variable. Progress has been unsatisfactory in history, religious education and in modern foreign languages, where some assessment procedures are still not in line with requirements. Good progress has been made in explaining the assessment criteria used within subjects to pupils, to the extent that most do now understand these.
40. There is a clear and appropriate school policy for assessment, which is understood by most teachers. Most subjects have developed a clear assessment policy in line with the requirements set out in the school policy. Teachers in geography have yet to develop an understanding of the departmental policy. Most of the heads of subject do not evaluate the impact assessment is having on pupils' learning. The head of business education does undertake this evaluation and the quality of marking and assessment is improving as a result. Not all members of the senior management team undertake effective monitoring of the impact of assessment within the subjects they are linked to. Overall, the lack of clear guidance to subject leaders on the implementation of the assessment policy produces inconsistent assessment practice across subjects.
41. Most subject areas have started to involve pupils in assessing their strengths and weaknesses, although teachers in modern foreign languages and religious education have yet to involve pupils in this way. Teachers in business education, the core IT option and some teachers in mathematics are now supporting pupils setting specific targets for improvement. In business education, nearly half of all Year 11 pupils are able to explain

clearly how they can improve their GCSE grading, using the good quality feedback they get from their teachers. Many are motivated as they know precisely what they need to do in order to improve.

42. Teachers' use of the information they have on pupil performance has weaknesses. Teachers in English and information technology make good use of this information in their planning. Teachers in modern foreign languages, geography and PE make no real use of this information in any form of curriculum planning. Teachers in design and technology and information technology do link their planning to assessment information. In business education, teachers change their lesson plans if their assessment of work shows a lack of understanding, but the analysis of GCSE exam results is not used effectively in the review of the curriculum.
43. Where teachers are required to assess pupils' work against national criteria, most do so accurately. In history and geography the teacher assessments at the end of Key Stage 3 are not accurate. In modern foreign languages there is no portfolio of evidence for teachers to refer to. In GNVQ, teacher assessments are effectively verified, and all meet the requirements of the national Awarding Body.
44. The assessment of special needs is effective in identifying pupils with learning and behavioural difficulties. However, the assessment of the progress of pupils with special educational needs has shortcomings in that needs in individual education plans are too narrowly focused on literacy and the review of progress is not rigorous enough. There is inadequate use of assessment from previous schools to plan for future provision for pupils.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

45. The school's core aim is to enrich the lives of all pupils and this is done very successfully. The most striking feature of the school ethos is the harmony and sense of order in the whole community. This harmony is based on excellent relationships and high levels of pastoral care. The school actively promotes the core values of mutual respect, tolerance and self-control. Staff set a very good example and work hard to maintain high standards.
46. Since the last inspection, the school has made improvements in its provision for collective worship. There is a variety of occasions when pupils meet together; for example, in individual years, lower and upper school groups and as a whole school. In some tutor groups, there is a "thought for the day" opportunity. There is very good student participation in collective worship, for example, sixth form students performing a song in the whole-school assembly, and Year 8 pupils presenting a high quality drama to their year group. On most, but not all, of these occasions, pupils were given opportunities to reflect upon the theme and its relevance to themselves, and this was most evident in the whole-school collective worship on the theme of remembrance. The school should now build upon these improvements by establishing a coherent approach to the planning of themes and by identifying strategies, for all staff, for more effective means of promoting the spiritual dimension of collective worship.
47. The spiritual dimension of the curriculum is well promoted through religious education, art, drama and English. For example, as Year 10 pupils study the background to the text of Macbeth they gain insights into the human tendency to want scapegoats. In other subjects, there are few planned opportunities for the spiritual dimension to be promoted, and the school has not explored the curriculum potential of this provision in any systematic way since the last inspection. In general terms, the ethos of the school promotes spiritual development well.
48. The moral development of pupils is very good overall. The policies and practices of the school promote respect for others and the environment. There are clear expectations about behaviour, and these are supported consistently by staff in their everyday work. Pupils develop self-discipline and their behaviour in lessons and around the school is very good. There is a good understanding of right and wrong, and staff set a good example. Within the curriculum, subjects such as English, drama, religious education and business studies provide good opportunities for the consideration of social and moral issues. For example, Year 11 pupils gained a clear understanding of the moral dilemmas surrounding the issue of euthanasia as they watched a role play of a hospital scene. In business studies, Key Stage 4 pupils and post 16 students consider

the impact of the location of new businesses on communities and the environment.

49. The social development of pupils is very good. Within the general life of the school, pupils have opportunities to take responsibility, and contribute to the life of the school and wider community. Pupils always undertake responsibility for showing visitors around the school at open evenings, parents' evenings and a range of other occasions. There are form captains and monitors, and an exceptionally effective group of Year 11 prefects who take their role very seriously and behave in a mature manner. Another striking feature of the school's provision for social development is the Ramsay Action Group. The group encourages high levels of pupil participation in school and community projects such as a garden for the elderly, supporting the establishment of cycle paths, and organising school social and charity events. It is a very commendable feature. Associated with it is the peer counselling service PALS (Peer Active Listening Service), operated by trained sixth form students. This is highly regarded by younger pupils and provides an excellent vehicle for support and the personal development of all concerned.
50. Within the curriculum, the personal and social education programme make good provision for pupils' development across areas including health education, study skills, careers and moral and social issues. The programme makes effective use of external agencies to support learning and generally raises pupils' awareness of the world beyond school. The work experience for all pupils at Key Stage 4 and in the GNVQ business studies programme is a very valuable element of provision for pupils' personal and social development.
51. The cultural development of pupils is satisfactory. Pupils have opportunities to visit theatres and there are some very good fieldwork opportunities in geography in some but not all year groups. In art, pupils are able to explore a range of cultural dimensions, including their own. Religious education makes a very positive contribution to pupils' understanding of faiths other than Christianity. In English, pupils study texts from other cultures. The school has organised a day that had a special focus on cultural diversity, but overall there are insufficient planned opportunities for pupils to learn from a range of cultural experiences. In this respect, the school has made only limited progress since the last inspection.

Support, guidance and pupils' welfare

52. Since the last inspection, the school has maintained its strong commitment to promoting the well-being and self-esteem of pupils, and this is reflected in policy and in practice. There is a distinctive quality of order and co-operation in the school, which creates a good learning environment and supports pupils as they move into the school and through the key stages.
53. The pastoral system is well established and effective. Form tutors and heads of year know their pupils well and promote home-school links. The work of the heads of year makes an important contribution to good discipline and effective pastoral care. Pupils understand school procedures and expectations and respond to them to an unusually high degree. Pupils feel confident about approaching their form tutors and heads of year. The school matron also makes a very positive contribution to the support mechanisms in the school, and is often involved in the counselling of pupils, as is the pastoral staff at all levels. There is good pastoral support and guidance for pupils with special educational needs who are fully integrated into the life of the school. Pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds are well supported and integrated, and the school is a very harmonious community.
54. At the last inspection the role of form tutors and heads of year in monitoring the academic as well as the social progress of pupils was identified as needing improvement. The school has implemented a number of strategies to address this, through the use of half-termly monitoring sheets, homework diaries and planners. Pupils' work is also checked by senior managers. In order to monitor progress, heads of year are establishing procedures for using data on pupils' prior attainment. These strategies are having a positive effect. Target setting is beginning to have an impact, but there is more to be done in this aspect of guidance. The use of tutor time varies across groups but is generally better than at the last inspection. There is no specific plan for the use of tutor time, but some of the tutors observed made good use of this time. Assemblies occupy much of the tutor time allocation.

55. At the end of Key Stage 3 there is effective support at times of subject choices, and pupils feel confident about the process and its outcomes. Careers guidance is good and pupils have career modules in their social education programme at Key Stage 4 as well as in tutor time. This guidance presents them with a range of information about different routes post 16. Guidance for students in the sixth form is good.
56. The personal and social education programme at Key Stage 3 is clear and coherent, and well supported with tutor guidelines. It includes a range of topics, including health education. The sex and drugs education policies are clear and well implemented. At Key Stage 4, the social education programme is taught by a small group of staff and there is a clear weekly programme which, over the course of the year, includes a range of health-related topics, consumer affairs, careers guidance and social and moral issues. A particular feature of social education is the wide range of external agencies and local visitors who contribute to the programme. Students continue to receive a good programme of personal and social education in the sixth form.
57. The school has very good procedures for securing the good behaviour of pupils. There are good procedures for dealing with bullying. Procedures for ensuring good attendance are satisfactory for most pupils. Truancy is usually detected. There is good follow up of individual absences and of unauthorised absence. The collection and analysis of data has some weaknesses. The overall approach to absence from school has not been sufficient to ensure adequate challenge to over-regular authorised absence and to secure satisfactory attendance overall. The school has clear and appropriate procedures for child protection, and staff are given guidance. The designated teacher is known and regularly gives updates to staff.
58. There are some serious concerns about health and safety matters in the school, particularly in design and technology, art, physical education and science. Many of the deficiencies noted in the inspection were reported when a health and safety audit was carried out by the LEA earlier in the year. A significant number had not been addressed at the time of inspection. Not all of the required annual electrical checks had been carried out. The health and safety sub-committee of the Governing Body has been slow in responding to the audit report.
59. The school has grave concerns and frustrations about health and safety on one of the bus routes used by pupils. The bus service is commercially operated and as such is not the responsibility of the school or the LEA. However, the unreliability and frequent overcrowding causes anxiety in the school and amongst parents. Often there is only one bus when there should be two. The school does all it can to support parents in their concerns, and carefully supervises the arrival and departure of pupils.

Partnership with parents and the community

60. This is a popular oversubscribed school which attracts a large and increasing number of prospective parents to its open evenings. Many parents support the life and activities of the school by attending special concerts and performances and a significant number sponsored the recent arts bid. The school is keen to involve parents from all sections of the community and continuously looks at ways to boost attendance. The Ramsay Association (a parent teacher association) is a small, committed group who have provided the school with some valuable additional resources as a result of their fundraising efforts. They constantly explore ways of enlisting the support of parents but are increasingly disappointed with the level of response.
61. The school aims to work in partnership with parents and is largely successful when dealing with individual children who may be experiencing difficulties. Parents are appreciative of the time and care taken by pastoral staff and matron and are supportive of the behaviour policy. Parents were consulted about the newly issued Home-School Agreement and have also recently received clear guidance about the homework policy and timetables. The homework planners are well used by pupils and provide a useful communication tool between staff and parents. The relationship between the school and parents has a good effect on the standards pupils achieve and the progress they make.
62. The school produces effective written documents and takes care to ensure that parents receive all letters and newsletters which contain helpful and relevant information. The prospectus provides all necessary guidance. There is good curriculum information supplied with the prospectus. Some parents indicate that they would welcome more information about what is to be taught each term. The school arranges information evenings,

although staff were disappointed with the level of attendance at a recent session on study skills. The governors' annual report to parents is lively and interesting and the school helpfully arranges the meeting to include the PTA annual report. No information is produced in other languages as those parents surveyed did not perceive a need; however the school makes appropriate individual arrangements if they are required.

63. Reports are very thorough and both the interim and full reports provide parents with clear details about attainment and effort and areas for improvement. Target setting is developing and the written comments by staff and pupils are useful. The school makes good provision for consultation with parents. The school is sometimes disappointed with the number of parents who attend consultation evenings. The Year 9 options and entry into sixth form evenings are generally well attended.
64. Parents of pupils who have statements of special educational need (SEN) are now appropriately involved in annual reviews. However, the school does not take any interim steps to review and discuss progress with parents. The parents of those pupils who are at stages two to four on the SEN register are not involved in setting and reviewing targets in individual education plans which is unsatisfactory and shows no improvement since the last inspection.
65. The school continues to have good links with feeder primary schools which supports an effective transfer process. Curriculum links are very limited and are not sufficiently well established to ensure continuity and progression for pupils from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3. This issue was raised at the last inspection. There are teachers who are not sufficiently well informed about what children are learning and the standards they are achieving at Key Stage 2.
66. The school is justifiably proud of its links with the community and the recent work on the arts bid has been a valuable catalyst in further developing links with other schools, community groups and business whilst having a significant impact on the attainment and personal development of many pupils. The school has very good links with external agencies, a number of which contacted the inspection team to provide very positive evidence of the value of the links. There are good links with the pupil referral unit nearby. This successful partnership has produced very good joint work for a small number of pupils experiencing difficulty in mainstream school and has had a significant impact on their ability to cope. The Ramsay Action group continues to grow and works successfully with other schools and groups to raise the profile of the school and provide benefits for the local community. Work experience and Young Enterprise also benefit from good links with business. These very effective partnership arrangements, which the school constantly seeks to develop, have a very positive impact on the attainment, progress and personal development of pupils.

THE MANAGEMENT AND EFFICIENCY OF THE SCHOOL

Leadership and management

67. The headteacher provides principled leadership for the school centred on meeting the needs of the school's wide range of pupils. There is a clear sense of purpose and a vision for the future, most clearly seen in the school's successful bid for Arts College status. The school's stated aims are influential and to a high degree achieved in its daily life. Parents are very supportive. Pupils are very committed to the school. There is a very positive climate in the school and a commitment to raising achievement. Overall it is an effective learning environment characterised by excellent relationships and equality of opportunity. There is reflection on what the school is achieving and how it can be improved. The leadership of the school is positive but there are some shortcomings.
68. Governors play an important and useful role in the management of the school. They play a part in setting the direction of the school. They know about the school and take steps to understand its work through links with subject departments and presentations in committees and full governors' meetings. The quality of links between individual governors and subject departments is uneven. Some departments report strong and positive links; in other cases links are very infrequent. Since the last inspection governors' involvement in the development planning process has increased. The committee structure provides a good model for scrutiny of the school's work but the health and safety sub-committee has not been effective in dealing with a range of issues.

69. The headteacher, supported by the senior management team, provides detailed professional leadership. Leadership is clearly focused on maintaining the strong and supportive ethos of the school. This leadership has led to the improvement of standards in terms of test and examination outcomes over recent years.
70. The quality of management in subject departments and by heads of year is good overall but there are weaknesses in development planning, monitoring and evaluation in several departments. Middle managers, both subject and year heads, are aware of their responsibility for raising standards and implementing policy. They have a sense of purpose both in terms of their own areas of responsibility and in relation to the school as a whole. The link between the senior management team members and departments is often supportive. There are some sound results from the relatively new procedures for monitoring and evaluation, but meetings between senior management team members and heads of subject or heads of year are not sufficiently structured or focused on the outcomes of planned developments.
71. Since the last inspection there has been action to improve monitoring and evaluation through the observation of lessons, scrutiny of work and analysis of test and exam performance. The record of lesson observations undertaken by the senior management team members indicates a valuable emphasis on teaching and learning and the sharing of effective practice. There is some uncertainty about individuals' roles in supporting, line managing, monitoring and evaluating the work of subject leaders and pastoral heads. This points to a need to clarify processes and embed them clearly into management practice across the school. There is evidence of weaknesses that have not been remedied, for example in the management of special educational needs, but also of processes which have been successful. There is not sufficient structure or rigour in current monitoring and evaluation arrangements. It is not clear how they lead to changes in planned developments of the curriculum and improvement in quality. There has been progress in monitoring aspects of pupils' work and progress and improved examination results, but there is little use of development plans as a focus for monitoring the quality of departments' work. There is a need for clearer lines of accountability and clarifying and firming up the links between the senior management team and departments.
72. Development planning has improved but the current whole-school two year plan is very complex and the supporting departmental plans are not always good instruments for achieving action. Targets in the school plan are appropriate and resources are channelled towards them. There are some measurable targets. This represents an improvement since the last inspection as does the increased involvement of middle managers in the planning process.
73. The school runs smoothly and is well supported by skilled non-teaching staff. Day-to-day administration and organisation are very good.
74. The school supports the large numbers of pupils with special needs well in a number of respects. They are valued and very much part of the school. They make satisfactory progress. Aspects of the management of special needs are unsatisfactory. In particular there has been insufficient progress since the last inspection in relation to the key issue concerning the development of individual education plans (IEPs). The IEPs that have been developed are not of good quality. They are too narrowly focused on literacy and are not subject to sufficiently regular review. The school does not make appropriate use of information provided when pupils transfer to the school. The requirements of the *Code of Practice* for special educational needs are not worked out in detail.
75. The school pursues effective policies to secure equal opportunities. The integration and academic success of pupils from a wide range of backgrounds is a strength of the school. There is effective and well-targeted support for pupils for whom English is an additional language and support staff play a full part in the life of the school. There has been little training to alert teachers to the impact of English as an additional language on pupils' full understanding of what is taught and discussed in the classroom.
76. The school does not fully meet the statutory requirements of the National Curriculum programme for information technology and is not fully compliant with expectations for the management of health and safety.
77. The school has made satisfactory progress overall on the key issues raised by the last inspection. There has

been excellent progress in developing the religious education curriculum at Key Stage 4 and post 16 and examination outcomes are very good at GCSE. There have been improvements in Spanish. Good progress has been made on providing acts of collective worship. Middle managers are more involved in the development planning process and in developing policy in the school. The development plan is now costed and the resources used for sixth form provision have been kept under careful review. Some progress has been made in meeting the needs of more able pupils and there is more evidence of active learning. However, some over-directive teaching remains and the needs of able pupils are not effectively met in all lessons. Most importantly there remain important weaknesses in relation to the implementation of the *Code of Practice* for special educational needs. Given the progress the school has made on several fronts and the clear improvement in examination performance there is every indication that the school has the capacity to make further progress.

Staffing, accommodation and learning resources

Staffing

78. The school has sufficient qualified and experienced staff to match the demands of the curriculum. There are some deficiencies in teachers' knowledge and expertise. In mathematics, problems with recruitment have led to the use of temporary staff and there are some shortcomings in teachers' knowledge and understanding of mathematics which have a negative impact on attainment and progress. In science, there is no physics specialist which means that the teaching team is lacking in breadth of knowledge and expertise. In modern foreign languages, staffing is good for French but less good for Spanish. In information technology (IT), there is a lack of staff expertise to cover the modelling, sensing, measurement and control aspects of IT, and a general lack of expertise amongst staff, to deliver IT across the school curriculum.
79. There is a good level of support staff for special educational needs, although planning for the development of these staff is not well focused. The lack of technical support staff in design and technology results in inefficient use of teachers' time and some poorly organised work and storage areas. Similarly, in art there is very little technical support and, if the art curriculum develops as planned, the demands on staff will increase.
80. The school has recently had a considerable influx of new staff due to the school accommodating an additional year group as a result of changes in ages of transfer. Induction arrangements are the responsibility of relevant heads of departments and are satisfactory. Arrangements for newly qualified teachers are satisfactory and include regular meetings with the senior management team mentor and meetings with relevant heads of departments. There is inconsistency in negotiating individual action plans for newly qualified teachers to meet the new statutory requirements.
81. The school has run an appraisal system for teachers and non-teaching staff. This has been based on classroom observation of teachers by their heads of department. The system has tailed off as the school waits for new national performance management procedures to develop. In particular, heads of department have not been recently appraised. However, the school has a good staff development policy with clearly stated aims linked to professional review opportunities. Observing good practitioners is identified as one of the school-based opportunities for staff professional development. The policy and the continuing professional development profile for individual staff are designed to promote self-reflection and personal target setting. The school has an in-service education and training (INSET) working party drawn from all sectors of the school. This working party determines some of the content of staff training days, approves requests for training and sets these against the school's wider agenda as set out in its development plan. Overall, the school has good procedures in place to promote staff professional development; this is an improvement since the last inspection. The overall staffing of the school has a satisfactory impact on the standards pupils achieve and the quality of their education.

Accommodation

82. The accommodation allows the curriculum to be taught effectively and has some good features. There is good access for pupils with physical disabilities. In science, the only subject taught in a two storey building, a lift is

being installed to provide access for pupils with physical difficulties. However, accommodation is unsatisfactory for music where space is too limited and insufficient soundproofing means that noise carries from practice rooms into other areas. There is no assembly hall and this has a negative impact on the work of the school in terms of assemblies and performance drama. Playing fields are satisfactory for physical education but physical education storage is too limited. In mathematics, one room was designed for 20 pupils but has to accommodate larger classes. Another mathematics room is used as a corridor due to delays by the LEA in completing safe access to the neighbouring room. In the art department there is insufficient natural light.

83. In design and technology, there are serious health and safety issues that adversely affect accommodation that already suffers from leaking roofs. Dated equipment is ill-maintained, stores are poorly organised and there are trailing cables. Machines are inadequately fixed down and a preparation room is far too small.
84. Much of the accommodation is in good order, but it is dirty in some parts of the school. In particular, the pottery room is dirty and needs thorough cleaning to comply with health and safety requirements. There are other serious health and safety issues in the pottery room that were clearly identified in a health and safety audit in March 1999 and should be remedied without delay.

Learning resources

85. Learning resources across the curriculum vary from very good to poor. They are very good in modern foreign languages, good in English and art, satisfactory in mathematics, science, history, physical education, religious education and business studies but unsatisfactory in design and technology, information technology and geography and poor in music. In music there are insufficient paper resources and equipment. There are insufficient text books in science and geography. The geography department has no fieldwork equipment. In design and technology there is insufficient equipment to deliver control technology and for design work. In information technology there is insufficient sensing, measuring and control equipment to meet National Curriculum requirements. Teachers make insufficient use of information technology in most subjects.
86. The school library is in good-sized accommodation and is well maintained. The library is open daily, with staff always available, and is well used, particularly by Key Stage 3 pupils. There are 5000 books, which is below the national target level of ten books per pupil. There are periodic culls of out-of-date books and an exchange scheme with the County Library Service to ensure stock is kept up to date. By subscribing to the County Library Service, the school also ensures access to project collections. An arrangement with the nearby local library entitles the school to a further 50 books per term. Subject departments are invited to make requests for books, although many do not take up this offer. The art department makes particularly good use of the library. A library committee looks at the balance of reference, fiction and non-fiction books. The library has two computers and a collection of CD-ROMs. Weekly library classes are given to Years 7, 8 and 9. There are good arrangements to cater for the range of pupils in the school, for example through developing new contemporary fiction to attract sixth form students. There are plans to develop use of information technology in the administration of the library. Staff await training through the New Opportunities Fund. The library is ready for Internet access once a suitable computer is installed.

The efficiency of the school

87. The efficiency of the school is good. Developments are properly linked to school initiatives through an annual consultation process. However, whole-school priorities are not responded to in any detail by some subject areas. Some department development plans need to be more detailed so that a more meaningful evaluation can take place. Evaluative reviews need to be more clearly focused on the impact of the department's and school's actions upon the quality of provision and the standards and progress of pupils. The allocation of funds to departments is based upon a formula which gives added finance to those areas with a heavy resource and equipment bias. Departments have the opportunity to bid for extra funding to support their development plans and whole-school initiatives. However, neither resource is currently evaluated for its impact upon the quality of provision. The school needs to make its review system more accountable at all levels of management.
88. The governors' oversight and involvement with financial matters is very good. The governors' on-site tracking

of developments through the link with curriculum areas is more effective in some areas than others. A strong and effective partnership exists between the governors and the school. However, the governors as yet do not have well-established systems to evaluate the impact of spending decisions upon the quality of educational provision. Financial control is very good. The governors have managed successfully to reduce the potentially serious effects created by low funding. The small number of issues in the latest auditors' report has been successfully addressed. The day-to-day management of finances is handled well by the administrative assistant and the key office staff. This aspect is another strength of the school.

89. Two of the 1996 inspection report key issues related to efficiency. The governors' ability to measure the effectiveness of outcomes based upon costed developmental priorities has significantly increased. The school's development plan is appropriately costed with sufficient detail to measure the impact upon provision. An analysis of the cost effectiveness of some small classes in the sixth form and the impact upon the rest of the school has been very thoroughly undertaken.
90. The school achieves value for money through an appropriate tendering process. Best value for money decisions are considered by the resource management committee of the governors and the senior management team. The school is at an early stage of development in gaining and using value for money information. Governors have begun to review the impact of their recent spending on the information technology *Successmaker* package for Year 7, but as yet heads of department do not review the predicted outcomes and actual benefit of their spending .
91. The efficiency with which resources, teaching and support staff are used is good. Most class sizes are appropriate throughout the school and have been reduced by the decision of the governors to put a slightly higher proportion of its resources into Key Stage 3. The resultant reduction of class sizes is beginning to show benefit in terms of the quality of education available to each pupil in the key stage. However, there remain some large classes which has an impact on the quality of teaching and pupils' attainment and progress, especially in Year 7 and Year 10 design and technology lessons. Staff are efficiently deployed with a good match between experience, qualifications and teaching commitments, although Year 8 has a higher proportion of less experienced teachers, leading to a higher proportion of unsatisfactory lessons in English and mathematics. Staff teach, on average, for 82 per cent of the teaching week, which is above average. This arises in part from the policy of reducing class sizes in Key Stage 3. The use of time within lessons is usually good. However, there are too many lessons which are negatively affected by the over running of assemblies, and lessons do not always start with the full complement of pupils: these are efficiency issues for the school. The use of support staff is generally sound, especially the learning support staff for pupils with special educational needs. However, the limited amount of technician support for art and the current lack of support for design and technology is inefficient. The accommodation is well used, with a usage rate of 93 per cent. Resources for learning are also well used overall. The school has significantly added to its quality, range and availability of computer facilities since the last inspection. However, the number of computers in the school remains below the national average. In addition, the current facility is not used in a co-ordinated manner to deliver the National Curriculum requirements for information technology, especially in Key Stage 4. This is a key issue for the school.
92. The efficiency of special needs provision is sound, although the strategic management is unsatisfactory. The resources provided for special needs are efficiently used. The overall progress made by students with special needs is satisfactory. The support they receive from learning support assistants is often good. The learning support department provides sound value for money.
93. The school has a relatively low financial allocation. Staff both teaching and support, are used well. Accommodation and learning resources are used in a satisfactory manner, although there are important health and safety and cleaning issues in some areas. The pupils make good progress as they pass through the school. The attitudes, behaviour and personal development of pupils are good, and relationships are excellent. The management has successfully developed the school's ethos. The quality of teaching is good, and makes a significant contribution to the quality of education and the standards achieved. The school has made sound progress on many of the issues in the previous report and now provides good value for money.

PART B: CURRICULUM AREAS AND SUBJECTS

ENGLISH, MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCE

English (including drama)

94. On entry to the school pupils' attainment in English is below average. Progress is satisfactory in Years 7 and 8 and good in Year 9. However, attainment and progress in some Year 8 classes are unsatisfactory, affecting approximately a quarter of the pupils in the year. Over the last three years standards in Key Stage 3 have risen, keeping pace with or exceeding the national rate of improvement, so that overall attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is now in line with national averages and above that in similar schools. In 1999 the results in the national tests in English at the end of Year 9 were very good indeed, though teacher assessments were much closer to average. The progress made by pupils with special needs is unsatisfactory in some English lessons at Key Stage 3 because teachers do not expect enough. Pupils with special needs make satisfactory progress at Key Stage 4. Pupils for whom English is an additional language make satisfactory progress.
95. At Key Stage 3 pupils speak clearly and effectively when making presentations, although their language is often colloquial. Skills of drama improvisation and staging are generally better than the drama skills of evaluation. The majority of pupils read for pleasure and can talk confidently about book choices. They make progress in selecting information from a range of texts, although less able pupils make slower progress in critical reading. Standards of writing are generally lower than reading; there are some outstanding examples of sustained and well-constructed narratives in conversational styles. However, control of more formal language is less well developed and grasp of silent letter spellings such as in 'campaign' is insecure for otherwise able pupils.
96. Standards at Key Stage 4 have risen steadily over the last three years and are now close to the national average for English and English literature and well above average compared with similar schools. Most pupils do better in English than in many other subjects. Boys achieve less well than girls, particularly in English literature. This reflects national patterns. Pupils develop confidence and skill in performing, discussing and debating. Higher attaining pupils in Year 10 begin, with support, to sustain talk about advertising with animation and insight. Pupils progress in reading beyond the literal and undertake a range of imaginative and critical writing in a variety of styles and use subject-specific vocabulary with increasing assurance. Lower-attaining pupils are weak in note taking in literature and need more explicit teaching of this skill. Spelling remains weak with reversals and omissions frequent, particularly in the work of some pupils whose first language is not English and certain lower attaining pupils who have poor understanding of the sounds that different letters can make. Overall progress is good at Key stage 4.
97. At Key Stage 4 standards of drama in lessons and in GCSE examinations are about average. Progress is good. The increasing popularity of the subject over the past three years has resulted in a much wider spread of pupils taking drama, which is reflected in examination results. Relative to other subjects, drama is a strength of the school.
98. Standards in A level English are slightly below national averages. Students read to a good standard with appropriate emphasis and can identify themes and characteristics in texts, but are less confident in discussing the language and structures of Shakespeare. More able students can construct coherent interpretations, but average and lower achieving students' essays lack consistency. There is a tendency amongst weaker students merely to identify literary devices, such as metaphor, without considering how these may have been chosen to colour and affect meaning. Overall progress is satisfactory.
99. In the first year of an examination group with four students, standards in theatre studies are below average but progress is satisfactory. Students make progress in understanding a range of theatre styles and rehearsal strategies. They draw effectively on each other's ideas to shape improvisations and can explain their intentions with some reference to leading practitioners in the theatre.
100. Across the curriculum pupils' skills in reading are satisfactory. Boys achieve somewhat lower standards than girls. Many pupils can read aloud fluently. Critical reading and reading for information are less well

developed. Shared reading is well used in several subjects to strengthen pupils' knowledge and application of key words and concepts. Standards of writing across the curriculum are satisfactory with some good examples. Where time is allowed for discussion and note taking, for example in science and religious education, pupils raise the standard of their written work. Opportunities to write at length raise the standards achieved by higher attaining pupils at Key Stage 4. Pupils do not spend enough time planning before writing or checking after writing and there are too few systematic opportunities for them to do so. There is too much straight copying in some lessons in history and science. Pupils' skills in speaking and listening are satisfactory across the curriculum but inhibited by the style of teaching in some lessons where pupils do not have enough opportunity to develop their ideas orally. Pupils have difficulty in explaining their answers in mathematics. There is good emphasis on understanding technical and subject vocabulary in science, design and technology and in some history lessons. Pupils are able to focus group discussion, supporting and extending each other's learning in geography and English. They make clear spoken presentations in religious education and English.

101. At all key stages pupils' support and consideration for each other contribute to their progress. They listen obediently - sometimes too passively - and enjoy working together. Pupils' ability to work independently is weaker, particularly amongst less able pupils who are less willing to take responsibility.
102. The vast majority of teaching is satisfactory or better - always so in drama and in the sixth form. Nearly half the teaching is good or very good. Teaching is very occasionally unsatisfactory at Key Stages 3 and 4. Teachers' subject knowledge is a major strength. Resources, including the library, are generally well used and teachers frequently make clear the key characteristics of different types of writing and demonstrate particular language skills with enthusiasm. They point out connections between different parts of texts, such as the patterning of a Ted Hughes' poem. The lessons are often clearly focused with careful sequences of tasks linked to homework in which pupils are allowed a degree of choice. Imaginative and challenging tasks tackled in groups characterise the better teaching, such as writing for younger audiences or reflecting on demands made by different kinds of reading. Lower achieving pupils are well supported with frameworks for thinking, and when discussion and questioning help to reinforce learning at the end of lessons.
103. Teaching is weak when teachers are over-bearing or do not let pupils formulate their own interpretations. Teaching sometimes does not sufficiently consider the needs of different pupils. Occasionally learning is unfocused and undemanding, activities are barely connected - mechanical rather than investigative - and involve copying out or using techniques out of context. Not enough use is made of information technology and visual reinforcement. Learning is not often enough reinforced at the ends of lessons. Standards are not high enough in Year 8 where there are classes taught by teachers who lack the subject knowledge and teaching expertise to deliver appropriate quality.
104. The curriculum is well planned and schemes of work ensure more thorough coverage than was the case in 1995. The department plans to add further examples of lesson structures, including activities designed to meet pupils' different needs. These schemes do not yet sufficiently build on the National Literacy Strategy and its systematic teaching of spelling, or complement the learning support department's introduction of the *Successmaker* computer learning package.
105. Assessment which helps pupils understand how to improve is well developed and makes a major contribution to raising standards. Not only are past assessments used to gauge expectations, but there are particularly good examples in Years 9 and 10 of focused praise and precise targets reinforced in reports to parents. Good work has begun on target-setting which should be developed to involve pupils in self-assessment.
106. The department supports moral and cultural development within the planned curriculum, as in GCSE drama work on the impact of American pioneers on native cultures. There is also a variety of extra-curricular opportunities which are open to all, such as Energise, Rock UK, theatre visits and participation in language competitions.
107. The English department is very well led. Staff work hard and resources are efficiently managed. The department's connection with an examination board enhances the quality of staff development. Record-keeping is exemplary. However, development plans need to identify priorities for action that will be monitored and evaluated in particular with those staff who are not meeting appropriate standards.

108. Good progress has been made since the last inspection. To develop the quality of English further the department should: continue staff development programmes by sharing good practice and strengthening literacy links with the library, learning support and other departments; adjust schemes of work to include examples of good practice in active learning, information technology, links with the National Literacy Strategy and the introduction of *Successmaker*; and review the introduction of target-setting so that pupils can develop more independence over their learning.

Mathematics

109. Pupils of all abilities make good progress as they move through the school. By the time they reach the end of Year 11, attainment is a little below expectation for this age group. The overall progress made by pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language is good. Key Stage 3 national test results are below the national average for all schools, as are GCSE results graded A*-C. These results are above the average for similar schools. Levels of attainment found in the A level course are below the national average overall but the small number of students sitting A level examinations means that no reliable comparison can be made. Students' progress is good overall and the standards they achieve are in line with their earlier attainment.
110. Pupils entering the school in Year 7 are taught in mixed ability groups. There is little evidence in these groups of different work being given to pupils according to their abilities. This has a negative impact on the quality of provision for the most and least able pupils, resulting in progress in one third of lessons being unsatisfactory.
111. In Years 8 and 9 pupils are taught in ability groups. Progress in some is unsatisfactory, largely because of unsatisfactory teaching by temporary or inexperienced teachers. However, by the end of Key Stage 3, pupils have made good progress. Two features that support this good progress are the detailed scheme of work to support teachers' planning and the careful work in pupils' books. Pupils present their work well and in many cases notes taken during lessons are used to support learning. By Year 9 pupils have a developing understanding of algebra, can solve simple linear equations and work with formulae. They are developing an understanding of probability using statistics and interpreting graphs and charts. In lessons pupils have too few opportunities to develop and refine explanations and share strategies for solving problems.
112. At the end of Key Stage 4, the attainment of GCSE grades A*-C is below the national average. However, the proportion of pupils gaining A*-G grades is slightly above. Progress in lessons is always satisfactory and in more than half the lessons observed was good. Pupils respond well to their teachers and readily follow directions. Many lessons are very teacher-directed. There is a strong emphasis on preparing pupils for GCSE examinations through lessons based on revision and consolidation of previous learning followed by taught routines, supported by notes and practice. The setting arrangements at Key Stage 4 have a positive impact on standards by allowing pupils of differing abilities to progress appropriately. Pupils are properly prepared to tackle mathematical investigations of the type required for GCSE coursework
113. Numbers in post 16 classes are small. Students benefit from small teaching groups. The A level teaching is good and students make good progress over time. During an observed lesson, they were able to discuss their ideas in a supportive environment. They tried hard even though the work was clearly challenging. With teacher and peer support, they successfully completed their tasks.
114. Mathematics workshops are held for post 16 students following the GNVQ business course as part of their study of key skills. Appropriate organisation and highly focused teacher support enable them to make good progress. They seek help, learn from their mistakes and help each other. A similar style of workshop is used to help pupils who are retaking GCSE mathematics.
115. Pupils make good use of numeracy skills in science and geography. In some other areas of the curriculum, notably modern foreign languages and business studies at Key Stage 4, pupils display a poor grasp of numeracy. In science, pupils collect, display and analyse data, use measuring skills and apply mathematical

skills in context, for example when working out the number of bacteria after infection. At present, the mathematics scheme of work does not adequately reflect the mathematical demands or opportunities in other areas of the curriculum. There is a need to develop a whole-school policy for numeracy.

116. Pupils' behaviour is always good. Their attitude towards their work is good or very good in a majority of lessons and is always satisfactory. Classroom relationships are very good. For example, in one lesson, a pupil with learning difficulties tried very hard to work out an answer in a quiz. With support from her teacher, she eventually gave the right answer, to be greeted with spontaneous applause from her classmates. Pupils try hard, even when teaching is unclear and difficult to follow. There are limited opportunities to work collaboratively, show initiative or take responsibility in Key Stages 3 and 4.
117. Teaching at Key Stage 4 and post 16 is good overall. At Key Stage 3 teaching is satisfactory overall but inexperience and temporary staffing is detrimental to the quality of teaching in some lessons. Classrooms are well organised and pupils well managed. Teachers make good use of praise and encouragement. Support for pupils with special needs is well targeted and is effective in helping pupils to gain confidence and make good progress. Most lessons are well structured and heavily teacher focused. All lessons are well prepared, but, in the less successful lessons, the object of the lesson is unclear. There is a strong emphasis on the development of written work, but the pupils get little mental calculation practice.
118. The best teachers provide high quality support and feedback, both in lessons, and in their comments in pupils' books. When this happens, pupils are aware of what they need to do in order to improve their work. Homework is used well to support learning. In the most successful lessons, teachers ask questions to make sure that the work has been understood. In less successful lessons, written materials are used rigidly without any thought being given to the overall purpose of the lesson.
119. The curriculum is broad and balanced. The quality of subject leadership and co-ordination is good. The departmental handbook, together with the scheme of work, provides detailed and helpful guidance, leading to consistency and progression in the topics taught. The departmental development plan rightly identifies the need to monitor the detailed scheme of work and enhance the use of information and communications technology to support learning.
120. The quality of education provided represents an improvement on the standard indicated in the previous Ofsted report. Planning for improvement is now set out in the departmental development plan and many references are found in the minutes of departmental meetings and workshops. Underachievement is no longer a significant problem; the teachers monitor the work of pupils who give them cause for concern.
121. To improve the quality of education in mathematics, further attention should be given to developing pupils' ability to perform mental calculations and enhancing the use of computers in enriching the curriculum. These issues are not yet fully resolved following the previous Ofsted report. The department should also extend the range of teaching styles to stimulate the pupils further and give attention to improving the teaching at Key Stage 3.

Science

122. The level of scientific ability of pupils on entry to the school is below the national average. The national tests at the end of Key Stage 3 show that achievement for pupils remains somewhat below the national average. This has been a consistent picture for some time. Compared with similar schools pupils' attainment by the end of Year 9 is above average and their progress is satisfactory.
123. In 1999 attainment in science as indicated by GCSE results for double award science was slightly above the national average and well above for secondary modern schools, with boys getting better results than girls. This is an improvement on the 1998 GCSE results. In 1999 a third of pupils took single award science. Results for girls were better than for boys. Overall results in single award science were below the national average and the average for similar schools in 1999. Almost all pupils now take double award science. Current attainment is approaching national expectations for Key Stage 4 and progress is satisfactory.

124. At Key Stages 3 and 4 the level of scientific knowledge is sound. For example, lower attaining pupils at Key Stage 4 are able to describe a Van der Graaf generator and discuss static electricity with some knowledge. Other more able pupils show a good understanding of disease and can explain immunity in terms of protein recognition. Younger pupils are able to investigate friction and to ensure that they are carrying out a fair test. Pupils are less confident in evaluating an experiment and need more opportunities to practise this skill.
125. In the sixth form students show levels of knowledge and understanding that are broadly in line with national expectations. For example they handled equipment confidently and were able to discuss the drawbacks of a certain approach to an experiment. There was evidence of a range of understanding regarding enzyme activity consistent with previous achievement. Progress is satisfactory.
126. The quality of pupils' learning and response was good in most lessons observed. Where the quality of learning was good pupils used scientific terminology and were able to explain what they had learned with confidence, showing real gains in knowledge and understanding. Where learning had shortcomings less progress was made due to teachers' low expectations, the slow pace of lessons and undemanding tasks.
127. Progress is satisfactory for pupils of all abilities. At Key Stage 4 boys make good progress. In the Key Stage 3 tests 13 per cent of pupils gained Level 6 despite a below average starting point for the year group. Progress is better where teaching has clear learning objectives, where the pace of lessons is brisk and where learning styles are varied.
128. Pupils with special educational needs are working satisfactorily towards their targets and make satisfactory progress. Recent improvement in the provision of information on pupils' individual action plans will enable the department to plan better. Pupils for whom English is an additional language make satisfactory progress.
129. Behaviour is good in most lessons and acceptable in all. Pupils come to school willing and keen to learn. They are very good at helping each other and work well in groups. Pupils respond well when asked to collaborate and work independently but are given too few opportunities to work in this way.
130. The quality of teaching in more than half the lessons observed was good or very good. There is some weaker teaching at Key Stage 3 where teaching was satisfactory overall. Teaching was good at Key Stage 4 where no unsatisfactory lessons were seen. The best teaching is characterised by clear learning objectives, planning which is influenced by assessment, skilled management of pupils and resources and lively and varied styles of delivery. Weak teaching involves too much copying from the board and books and clumsy and poorly planned explanations. There is good and skilful use of questioning in many lessons enabling all pupils to benefit from recap and consolidation of learning. There is good practice in the department concerning planning for the range of different learning needs in a class. All teachers of science have good subject knowledge.
131. The curriculum meets statutory requirements and is broad and balanced. Information and communication technology is not included in the schemes of work although the department has some responsibility for covering the measurement and sensing aspects of the National Curriculum programmes for information technology. Equality of opportunity is good and special needs pupils are well catered for. This is a strength. Planning for the spiritual, social, moral and cultural dimension would further enrich the curriculum.
132. The leadership of the department is sound. Development planning lacks clarity. More sharply defined targets are required for the development of teaching. Technician support is a strength of the department; this could be further enhanced by the inclusion of the technician in departmental planning. The monitoring of teaching is sound and new staff and newly qualified teachers are well supported. However, induction could be improved by ensuring that schemes of work are received before the term begins. Where teachers are deployed across two departments special care should be taken to support them, especially when they are new in post or teaching in a relatively unfamiliar area. The ethos for learning is sound but there is a lack of inspiration and sparkle in some lessons which should be tackled by sharing good practice in a systematic way.
133. The accommodation is good but is showing signs of age, especially in the island structures for delivery of gas, water and electricity. These cause some difficulty and inconvenience at times. Resources are well planned and used, with the exception of information technology. Training of teachers in measurement and sensing has

taken place and there should now be emphasis in the departmental plan to implement and develop classroom use. There is a health and safety issue concerning the frequency of electrical testing which should be resolved as soon as possible.

134. The department has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection. To raise standards and improve its work further the department should match planned work more closely to pupils' needs; communicate more effectively with pupils by ensuring that marking and feedback tells them clearly what to do to improve; consider a programme of mutual observation to share good practice; enhance the teaching of science by developing the use of information technology especially in the delivery of measuring and sensing; ensure that students have more opportunities to become independent learners and enhance pupils' experience in science by addressing issues which will add to the spiritual, social, moral and cultural dimensions of the curriculum.

OTHER SUBJECTS OR COURSES

Art

135. By the end of Key Stage 3, pupils achieve the national expectation, and often exceed it in lessons. At Key Stage 4, pupils' work is well above average and includes work of very high quality, particularly in Year 10. A level students meet the standard expected, with examples of very high level work. The school achieves GCSE and A level results in art that are much higher than other schools. This high standard has been maintained since the last inspection. In 1999, 89 per cent of pupils taking GCSE in art at the school achieved grades A*-C, compared with 63 per cent in all schools nationally. The numbers achieving A* and A were also very high. At A level, all candidates at the school have achieved grades A-C over the past three years, with over half achieving a grade A in 1999. This high achievement in art is a major strength of the school.
136. Pupils make good progress at Key Stage 3. They learn to select from a variety of source materials. In Year 8, for example, they are building up a rich, varied unit of work based on investigations into a variety of techniques and materials and based on the theme of fruit. They are making very good progress in developing their use of sketchbooks to collect information and develop ideas. In Year 9, pupils show good progress in using visual research and selecting from source materials. The after-school pottery club for a carefully targeted group of Year 7 pupils makes a very significant impact on their progress. At Key Stage 4, pupils are making very good progress in Year 10. They have excellent sketchbooks and make very good progress in the use of both two-dimensional materials and ceramics. Year 11 pupils make satisfactory progress, with some good progress in developing painting and drawing techniques that show secure technical skill. Year 11 responses tend to be a little more superficial than in Year 10 and some written work includes judgements that are not effectively argued and there is some copying from existing texts. At all key stages, there are examples of pupils learning to resolve their own problems without the teacher providing solutions, which is an improvement on the last inspection. More able pupils have the opportunity to do more challenging work and thus make the greater progress of which they are capable. Pupils with special needs and for whom English is an additional language make good progress. The club for pupils with special needs in Year 7 has a very significant impact on their progress.
137. A level students make good progress, with some individuals making very good progress. In Year 12, they learn to experiment with ideas using a variety of media, recognising the potential of techniques and learning to create circumstances in which new visual effects happen. There is a good balance between observation and experimentation. These students are making very good progress in ceramics, learning to work effectively with the characteristics of clay. They do need prompting to refer to primary sources as they develop their work. In Year 13, students are making satisfactory to good progress, with some very good progress where individual students pursue personal lines of enquiry.
138. Pupils respond well to art. They often show a high level of concentration and are well motivated by the activities. At all key stages, pupils are willing to try out new methods and approaches. They learn to make decisions independently. Pupils are prepared to take on challenging work.
139. Teaching is nearly always good or very good. There is no unsatisfactory teaching. In more than four out of ten lessons, teaching is very good and in more than eight out of ten lessons it is good or very good. At Key

Stage 3, the teachers use effective strategies to introduce pupils to new ways of using visual elements. Expositions are lively and well structured. Lessons proceed at a brisk pace. There is very effective reinforcement of visual research in sketchbooks, which provide the background to all work. Homework is very effectively used. Activities are well organised. There is encouragement and praise, and a commitment to high standards. Teaching has a direct impact on the progress pupils make. Sometimes the lessons would benefit from a calmer, quieter atmosphere and there are occasional details that need more attention in planning. At Key Stage 4, very good teaching in Year 10 has a direct impact on the very good progress these groups make. There are extremely well conceived and planned sequences of activities that incorporate a high level of visual research used to produce equally high level finished pieces in two- and three-dimensions. The teaching sets high standards. Pupils are well prepared for GCSE examinations in Year 11. The teaching needs to focus on helping some pupils make more incisive written commentaries to help critical studies work in Year 11. Teaching is good in the sixth form. Staff strongly promote independent experiments with ideas and materials and this leads to good progress. A brisk pace is maintained in Year 12 lessons, which pushes students to experiment and investigate. Teaching in ceramics is very effective in taking students from basic to more ambitious ceramic work over a relatively short period. In Year 13, students are encouraged to pursue personal lines of enquiry. Some over-reliance on second-hand imagery in Year 13 needs attention.

140. The department is committed to high standards and the ethos is very positive. Practice is better than written documentation at all key stages. On the written evidence, the department does not cover the Key Stage 3 programme of study. In practice, the developing Key Stage 3 programme promotes visual research and investigation through well-conceived units pitched at an appropriately high level of challenge. The department needs to clarify the learning objectives for each year group each term to ensure that the full programme of study is covered. There is very little use of information technology and this was a weakness identified in the last inspection. The department does not maintain adequate assessment records and should do so in order to build up a picture of an individual's achievement and to track progress and set targets. More use is made of the pottery room than during the last inspection, but this room has several serious health and safety hazards that need urgent attention.
141. Overall the department has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection. In order to continue to develop art and design in the school, the department should: develop written schemes of work, particularly to map against the National Curriculum programme of study for Key Stage 3; develop the use of information technology at all key stages; develop assessment procedures, particularly for Key Stage 3; and deal with health and safety issues in the pottery room.

Business Studies

142. There are no business courses at Key Stage 3. The department teaches GCSE courses in business studies and office applications at Key Stage 4. Standards in these GCSE courses are broadly satisfactory, but with some recent variations. The results achieved in both courses in 1998 were in line with the national average and well above those achieved by pupils in similar schools. However, in 1999 the results achieved in both of these courses fell sharply.
143. Attainment in lessons at Key Stage 4 is satisfactory. Pupils in Year 11 are starting to make good use of the information in the business-related case studies in their planning. Not all pupils are giving precise answers to specific questions posed by their teachers. The progress made by many pupils at Year 11 is good as they respond positively to the good quality teaching. The progress made by pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory.
144. A very small number of students complete sixth form courses each year. Results at GCE A level in 1999 were just below those for modern schools nationally. The progress made by these students from their GCSE performance, the value added by the school, was broadly in line with national expectations. The grades achieved by students completing the GNVQ courses, particularly the Advanced programme, are good, but a small number of students failed to complete courses successfully.
145. Attainment in sixth form lessons is satisfactory, although, again, the level of precision in answers is not yet at the expected level. Whilst the progress of sixth form students is broadly satisfactory, progress of the Year 13

Advanced GNVQ students is unsatisfactory as they have yet to complete, in full, a single unit of the 12 required.

146. The quality of teaching is usually good, with no unsatisfactory lessons. Teachers have a good command of the subject and use a wide range of business-related case studies which interest the vast majority of pupils. These case studies are very well designed to ensure pupils develop the skills of independent study. Teachers give clear instructions and explanations, but in a very small number of lessons teachers talked to pupils for lengthy periods, and pupils' levels of concentration fell. Teachers work well with individual pupils, achieving a good balance between praise for work done and challenge for improvement. However, not all teachers maintain full awareness of what other pupils are doing whilst they are involved with individuals. A small number of pupils do spend some time within lessons gossiping rather than working and are not challenged quickly enough.
147. The quality of the oral questions used by teachers is good, but in a few lessons the impact of these questions is lost as some pupils are not fully involved in the lessons. These pupils are content to let others do all the work. Teachers do not always insist that pupils give detailed and precise answers to questions.
148. The response of pupils to the teaching is usually good at Key Stage 4 and satisfactory in the sixth form. Year 11 pupils respond very positively to the well-designed case studies which form the basis of much of the teaching.
149. Pupils' exercise books are usually marked in line with requirements. The quality of the feedback to pupils on their work is variable. In the best practice pupils are made fully aware of the GCSE grades they are working towards. In some lessons at Key Stage 4 pupils are beginning to set subject specific targets for improving these current grades. One Year 11 pupil was not only able to explain that she needed to give more details in her answers, but what that actually meant. She was also able to show how she was using this information in her planning. She was clearly motivated by knowing what she had to do to improve. Whilst many pupils were also planning to improve their own work using targets agreed with their teachers, over half of all Year 11 pupils are not yet able to set personal learning targets.
150. The quality of subject management is good, with clear leadership shown by the head of department. The quality of the teaching is monitored, and some analysis of exam results is undertaken in most years, although this was not sufficiently detailed following the 1999 GCSE results. There is a development plan in place which contains all the required policies. However, the plan does not link with the analysis of exam results or with the monitoring of the teaching. There are no targets for improved attainment in the plan.
151. The management of the GNVQ course is satisfactory. The course meets national requirements. There is effective verification of the assessments made by individual teachers. The school does take on board the recommendations of the national Awarding Body, but there is no formal planning to address any issues raised. The Quality Framework is not used by the school to evaluate the courses. There is no plan for the implementation of the new GNVQ courses to be introduced in the next academic year.
152. The department is well resourced, and makes very good use of the computers in each of the rooms. The accommodation for the department is generally good, but the partitions across several of the rooms allow noise from adjacent rooms. This makes concentration difficult for pupils and is having a negative impact on the rate of progress of many pupils in the classes affected.
153. To improve the quality of business education further, teachers should ensure that all pupils are fully involved in oral question sessions; maintain a full awareness of what is happening in lessons and insist on precise answers to questions. The department should continue to implement the assessment policy so that all pupils can set clear targets for higher grades and include clear and measurable targets for improved attainment in the development plan. In order to ensure the continuing quality of the GNVQ courses, the department should prepare a plan for the introduction and development of the new GNVQ specifications.

Design and technology

154. Pupils make sound progress as they move through the school and by the time they reach the end of Year 11

attainment is in line with expectations for these age groups. The overall progress made by pupils with special educational needs and English as an additional language is good. In lessons, attainment levels are less high in Key Stage 3. The quality of some products made by pupils, especially in Key Stage 4, is good, especially in electronics, food, graphic and textiles work, with some thorough research work leading to detailed and effective design solutions. Examination results at GCSE were above the national average in 1998 and average in 1999 but were well above the average for secondary modern schools. Standards in electronics, graphics and resistant materials are lower than for textiles and food, due to poor facilities, accommodation and some staffing difficulties.

155. By the end of Key Stage 3, pupils' attainment is broadly in line with the national expectation. They can use a range of processes to shape and form materials. They can use design briefs as a basis for planning and making. Attainment is equally strong for designing and making (an improvement on the previous inspection) but pupils are not regular users of information technology to support their projects. Pupils can take sound account of the working characteristics and properties of materials and components when deciding how and when to use them. The access to suitable reference materials and encouragement for pupils to research and make independent decisions and take more control over their own progress is being successfully developed. The Key Stage 3 teacher assessment scores are in line with the national average.
156. By the end of Key Stage 4 pupils' attainment in the vast majority of design and technology areas is in line with the expectation for their age. They are able to build on their understanding of the design process to generate sound proposals against stated criteria, and are able to modify their proposals in the light of on-going analysis and product development. They clearly understand nutritional values of food and can follow, modify and design recipes using the principles that they have learned, leading to some good research projects. They can design, shape and sew an attractive range of waistcoats. The current graphics GCSE work has led to some very effective prototyping of solutions. Year 10 pupils' presentation techniques for their proposed power drills and hair dryers are particularly effective. There are good examples of work produced in all of the design and technology GCSE coursework, including good use of computers to design in graphics work. With the exception of resistant materials, the department's GCSE results are above the national average. However, pupils' experience of work with the use of computer-controlled equipment is very limited by lack of suitable facilities and the expertise of some staff.
157. Pupils' progress in lessons is sound in both key stages. During lessons, with the exception of some resistant materials lessons in Key Stage 3, clear improvements in pupils' skill levels can be observed; this is especially the case in Key Stage 4. Pupils with special educational needs are well integrated into lessons and make good progress. Where, on a small number of occasions, progress is less than satisfactory this is because expectations are too low and the teaching is too controlling and not effective in inspiring pupils. The lack of gender balance in some Key Stage 4 groups does not affect the quality of pupils' education, but the department needs to keep this aspect under review.
158. The overall response of pupils is generally good. Pupils behave well and are very interested in their designs and their practical work. They work in groups, relate exceptionally well to each other and to their teachers. In most cases they can sustain concentration and work with intensity on their tasks. Most older pupils show some evidence of independent working and are confident using machines, but not computers, to support their work. Some opportunities for developing pupils' initiative and independence are not taken throughout the department.
159. The quality of teaching is mainly good at both key stages. All the staff work hard but are significantly limited in their effectiveness by the current lack of any technician support. The use of teachers in this role is inefficient. There are many strengths in the teaching. Relationships are particularly effective, teachers talk to pupils in an open friendly way and pupils appreciate this and respond well to it. Lessons are prepared against a plan of activities, and the demands they make on the pupils are challenging especially in Key Stage 4, although the dated nature of the furnishings and fittings within all areas continues to hamper teaching significantly. Projects are appropriate and, in the best practice, pupils are encouraged to work independently and to be imaginative and creative. The range and quality of work on display is particularly good for textiles. The balance of strengths and weaknesses within some resistant material lessons leads to satisfactory lessons that, with more attention to a more imaginative range of teaching strategies, would be good. Some teaching

does not offer sufficient scope for pupil initiative. The overall impact of teaching upon standards is positive.

160. There is a broad range of experiences within the design and technology curriculum, which is an improvement upon the previous inspection. The department has strong links with the world of work and makes good use of local industries to make work relevant and interesting. With the exception of the annual and successful technology days, the strands of the subject are not sufficiently viewed as an integrated subject and, as a result, approaches to designing and making are not reinforced in each of the components of Key Stage 3. Large class sizes in Year 7 and some Key Stage 4 food areas have a negative impact upon standards achieved. Assessment processes are undertaken regularly, but teachers do not give enough detailed written guidance about pupils' strengths and weaknesses to let pupils know clearly what they need to do to improve their learning. Reporting to parents gives limited information about their children's progress within different elements of the subject. The teaching areas for resistant materials have poor learning atmospheres due to the dated nature of much equipment and the unsatisfactory organisation of materials. The high number of health and safety risks, especially in food and resistant materials areas, are urgent issues for the school.
161. The department is well led and the quality of this leadership has made a significant contribution to the department's strong position within the school. The monitoring of the work of the department is developing and a clear understanding exists of the aspects that need further attention. The quality of education represents a good improvement upon the standard indicated in the previous Ofsted report. In order to improve the quality of provision, attention should be given to the following: continuing to build upon the sound standards by setting clear and measurable targets for pupils; improving the provision for and teaching of information technology; attending to the significant health and safety issues and improving the equipment, furnishing and fabric of all rooms.

Geography

162. Pupils make sound progress in Key Stage 3 and at the end of Year 9 attainment is below the national expectation but in line with expectations for pupils in similar schools. Progress is very good in Key Stage 4 so that attainment at GCSE is well above the average for pupils in similar schools and in line with national averages for pupils in all maintained schools. For the small number of students who have taken GCE A level in the last two years, results have been below the average for similar schools but students who are at present in Years 12 and 13 are making satisfactory progress.
163. Progress in Key Stage 3 is satisfactory and attainment in line with expectations for pupils in similar schools. This was not reflected in the low teacher assessment results for 1999 which were not subject to any rigorous procedures for standardisation or moderation between teachers in the geography department. Pupils demonstrate a good understanding of physical processes and inter-relationships within ecosystems, for example in Year 8 work on tropical rain forests. They are able to weigh up issues. Year 9 pupils take account of conflicts arising between different users of national parks and formulate proposals for development of a small area of the Lake District in an assessed exercise at the end of a unit on tourism. Knowledge of place is good amongst higher attaining pupils but insecure for pupils of lower ability who are also unable to locate the same area on different scale maps. At Key Stage 3 there are no differences in the attainment of boys and girls, nor of pupils of minority groups, including those for whom English is an additional language. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress.
164. Pupils make very good progress in Key Stage 4. Results at GCSE in the last three years have been well above the average for similar schools, especially for boys, for whom the number of A*-C grades achieved in 1999 was in line with the national average for all pupils in all schools. There has been a marked increase in achievement at GCSE in the last three years compared to previous years. Coursework based on London Docklands and Seven Sisters Country Park in Sussex is impressive; pupils make careful field observations, describe their methods clearly and higher attaining pupils are able to evaluate their work. Their enquiries demonstrate a very good knowledge of processes of urban redevelopment and coastal geomorphology. Year 11 pupils have a sound understanding of the causes of natural hazards which result from tectonic activity and an awareness of the implications for society, derived from using evidence from a variety of sources, for example in the study of earthquakes in San Francisco. Year 10 pupils showed a good understanding of issues arising from human migration in a case study of Turkish "guest workers" in Germany. All pupils use subject

specific vocabulary with confidence. The attainment of pupils of ethnic minority groups is in line with that of other pupils. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress.

165. The progress of students who are currently in Years 12 and 13 is satisfactory overall and at this stage in their course their attainment is in line with expectations for students in similar schools. Students have a good understanding of graphical representation of statistical information. Although there is a range of attainment in Year 13, students are very reserved in discussing geographical topics. GCE A level results in 1999 were disappointing, but comparison of results with national figures is inappropriate due to the small number of students involved.
166. The quality of pupils' response is good; it is very good in Key Stage 4 and good overall in Key Stage 3 and the sixth form. Pupils show interest in their work and geography is a popular option choice at Key Stage 4. Positive attitudes to learning are promoted by the ethos of the department and excellent relationships in the classroom. Behaviour is very good: pupils settle to work quickly and show impressive levels of concentration in oral and written tasks. Although pupils are keen to contribute answers, they have limited opportunities to develop them at length in oral work. They do not have enough encouragement to develop their own initiative in learning, particularly in Key Stage 3 and the sixth form. Pupils' GCSE coursework shows good capability, but within a very structured framework.
167. The quality of teaching is good in each key stage and is most effective in Key Stage 4 where it produces a very positive response from pupils and contributes to their very good progress. None of the lessons observed during the inspection were less than satisfactory and over three-quarters were good or very good. Teachers have a secure knowledge of the subject, work hard, have high expectations of their pupils and are committed to achieving high standards of work and behaviour. Lessons are well planned and are generally broken down well into periods of different activities so that pupils sustain concentration. A limited range of resources is supplemented by materials and data prepared by the teachers. Sixth form students cited fortnightly target-setting as a strength in supporting their A level individual investigations. However, there is variation between teachers in the quality of day-to-day assessment and marking of pupils' work. There is inconsistency in applying the department's marking policy but at its best marking indicates clearly to pupils how to make progress. There is still some tendency for learning to be over-directed by the teacher and reliance on answering textbook and worksheet questions for all pupils. However, new schemes of work for Years 7 to 11, written in Autumn 1999, suggest a variety of teaching strategies and more pupil-centred learning, such as the decision-making exercise on the Lake District National Park in Year 9, which offers greater scope for pupil initiative. At present, work designed to meet different learning needs is only provided for pupils with special educational needs. While while the more able pupils are now suitably extended, all pupils would be likely to benefit from teaching strategies which encourage work in groups and which take account of individuals' needs and prior attainment.
168. Major progress has been made in curriculum planning since the appointment of a new head of department in September 1999. New schemes of work have been prepared collaboratively by all the geography teachers and will apply to all classes in a year group, allowing central resourcing and standardised assessment. The Key Stage 3 scheme of work includes more regional studies than required by the National Curriculum and this should allow more reinforcement of the skills and themes covered. However, a major shortcoming of the curriculum throughout the school is the lack of any planned provision for teaching or using information technology. In this respect the Key Stage 3 curriculum does not comply with the National Curriculum requirement for pupils to be taught to use information and communications technology to handle, analyse and present geographical evidence. Another major weakness of the curriculum in 1998-9 was the absence of any fieldwork in Years 8 and 9 and in the sixth form. Until this term there have also been inadequate systems to assess, record and monitor pupils' progress; for example, there was no standardisation and inadequate moderation of pupils' attainment for teacher assessment throughout and at the end of Key Stage 3. Monitoring pupils' progress is now in hand and the recent development of self management sheets will involve pupils more fully in responsibility for their learning.
169. The availability of resources in the geography department restricts teaching and learning opportunities in several respects. There is a lack of fieldwork equipment. Access to computers is limited. There are no video facilities specifically for geography. The range of texts is limited.

170. The leadership and management of the department is good. The appointment of a new head of department has stimulated the appraisal of practice and the collaborative working of colleagues so that real progress has already been made on curriculum and assessment issues. Areas for development have been identified in a well thought-out and costed development plan. The teachers work well as a team but there is a need to strengthen the monitoring role of the head of department and senior management team.
171. The quality of education represents an improvement on the standard indicated in the previous Ofsted report, especially in the quality of teaching, the standards achieved by pupils, particularly in Key Stage 4, and in the challenge provided for more able pupils. However, systems for assessing and recording pupils' progress which were being developed at the time of the previous inspection remain inadequate and there also remains a need for formal monitoring of the work of the department. Opportunities for fieldwork in all years, noted as a strength in 1995, were not provided for Years 8, 9 and the sixth form in 1998-9 and have yet to be planned for the current year.
172. To improve the quality of education in geography, attention should be given to: incorporating information and communication technology into the schemes of work; developing fieldwork and ensuring opportunities in all year groups; continuing the developments initiated in assessment practice; continuing to extend teaching strategies to enable more active learning and incorporating more activities designed to meet the different learning needs and abilities of pupils.

History

173. Pupils' attainment is below the national expectation at 14 and overall progress is unsatisfactory because pupils do not have enough opportunity to develop and extend their history skills during Key Stage 3. Progress made by pupils with special needs and English as a second language is not significantly different from that of other pupils. Pupils do gain an understanding of chronology and of the key features of the past times and societies they study. From their arrival in the school they undertake work which helps them understand the use of evidence and how to assess its reliability. They learn to analyse a sequence and causes of events, such as the background to the revolt of Queen Boudicca. There are too few opportunities for pupils to investigate beyond the textbook and to take the initiative in raising questions for themselves and seeking out the answers. Although pupils do a fair amount of writing, there are not enough opportunities for pupils to write at length in their own words. Although pupils' access to information technology is limited, there are effective examples of the use of CD ROMs and selected internet sites which develop pupils' skills in information technology and research simultaneously.
174. For the small number of pupils who continue to study history in Years 10 and 11 expectations of what they can cope with and achieve are higher and they respond to this. In recent years results have been below the national average in terms of higher GCSE (A*-C) grades but usually above the average for secondary modern schools with some pupils gaining high grades. This results from attention to detail in the teaching and careful preparation for the examination. In answering questions and explaining their ideas in class pupils, particularly higher attainers, show a sound understanding of events and can assess the value to their studies of a range of historical sources. Progress is satisfactory for pupils of all abilities and backgrounds.
175. Pupils' response is often good in lessons. They show interest in their work, pay attention, apply themselves to tasks and behave well. They work co-operatively in groups. The presentation of work in pupils' books is good in many cases.
176. The overall quality of teaching seen during the inspection was satisfactory and there is some good teaching. Relationships between teachers and pupils are usually good. Explanations are often clear and teachers' knowledge is good. Some teachers give attention to making sure pupils understand key words they will need to progress in their studies. There are examples of good thought-provoking questioning which requires pupils to consider their own and other's ideas carefully. Lessons are often brisk and business like. There are some good examples of activities which require pupils to work together to develop their ideas based on well-prepared resources.

177. There are shortcomings in some lessons and, more particularly, in the overall planning which limit the progress pupils make. Expectations of what pupils should achieve do not increase sufficiently between the ages of 11 and 14. Pupils tend to do the same work regardless of ability. There are not enough opportunities for higher attaining pupils in Key Stage 3 to extend their knowledge and skills through additional reading and research and to demonstrate that they have reached deeper levels of understanding. The work pupils are given in Year 9 is scarcely more demanding than what they encounter in Year 7. Too much of the work recorded in the books of Year 9 pupils is copied. Teachers do not always move pupils on to deeper levels of understanding through questioning during class discussions. There are examples of good marking and feedback to pupils but some teachers' marking does not routinely make clear to pupils what they need to do to improve, especially in the case of good quality work which could be better still with more guidance. Marking needs to be sharper and more focused on raising pupils' history skills.
178. The overall management of history is unsatisfactory. Curriculum planning through schemes of work at Key Stage 3 has not been evaluated, reviewed or updated for several years. Promising work has just started on a new scheme of work for GCSE. Planning is not ensuring that pupils in different classes have a similar range of learning experiences and develop their history skills progressively. The planning pays little attention to the Key Elements of the National Curriculum history programme. Aspects of assessment are unsatisfactory. There are regular tests which are marked and recorded but these provide only a limited picture of what pupils can do. The teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 are based too much on these tests and are too low. The department has no portfolio of assessed work which would help teachers agree on standards and gain confidence in the assessment of the full range of work pupils do. A consequence of these shortcomings in assessment is that teachers are ill-equipped to plan on the basis of assessment outcomes. An improvement in overall standards, especially for more able pupils, will depend on much greater clarity about assessment and communicating to pupils precisely which aspects of their work they need to improve.
179. Progress since the last inspection has not been sufficient. In order to raise standards the department should: create schemes of work for Key Stage 3 which clearly influence the teaching, plan for the progressive development of pupils' skills and provide challenge to more able pupils; build on the work already done to extend the planned use of information technology; bring the Key Elements and National Curriculum level descriptions to the heart of assessment enabling teachers through comparing their assessments to have confidence in their judgements without over-reliance on mechanically marked tests; develop pupils' ability to undertake sustained enquiries using a wide range of resources; improve the management of history through a clear development plan, more collaborative working and more focused monitoring and evaluation of the quality of work in history.

Information technology (IT)

180. Pupils have lessons specifically focused on IT ('core' lessons) and also encounter IT in other subjects of the curriculum. In using computers for the communication aspects of the subject progress is good within the 'core' provision in both key stages and in this respect pupils' attainment is in line with the national average. However, there is insufficient coverage of the National Curriculum requirements in using computers to sense, measure and control. Pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 is below expectations in these aspects, and information technology is insufficiently developed and used in most subjects of the curriculum. GCSE examination results in information studies have been consistently above average in the past three years. Pupils with special educational needs often make good progress.
181. By the end of Key Stage 3, pupils are taught information technology through a very well planned series of 'core' lessons for all communication aspects and the handling of data via spreadsheets and overviews of research, including 'what if' statements and interpretation. Pupils can use software to enter and print out writing and can compare this with writing by hand. They use computers to organise, refine and present information in different forms and styles and use computers well in the communication of knowledge and experiences in relation to observed uses in everyday life. Many pupils use computers to reinforce skills and concepts in numeracy and literacy. This was especially well undertaken in the learning support area for pupils with learning difficulties. Whilst there is sound use of IT in modern foreign languages, geography and the *Successmaker* work in mathematics lessons and a very limited amount of well-planned work through history, overall pupils are not suitably encouraged to use their skills and knowledge across the curriculum in any

effective or systematic manner. In addition, pupils' attainment and capability with using computers to sense, measure and control is unsatisfactory.

182. By the end of Key Stage 4, overall attainment is below the national expectation, due to the fact that sensing, measuring and control are not taught and there is inconsistent use of information technology throughout all subjects. All pupils follow a course in communication aspects of information technology and by the end of the key stage they can use software to develop and present information with good awareness of the eventual user. They interrogate information which they have stored on the computer and are able to interpret their findings. The use of the very good range of CD-ROMs in the library by many pupils is very successful. However, attainment across the different aspects of the taught course is uneven and experiences are intermittent. By the end of the key stage most pupils have not successfully developed their independent use of information technology, especially with reference to using computers for sensing, measurement and control. In this respect the school does not meet the requirements of the National Curriculum. The attainment of sixth form students in the use of IT is average and their progress is satisfactory.
183. The quality of pupils' response is good and often very good. The pupils show evident enthusiasm for information technology and enjoy using computers. They can sustain a high level of concentration and collaborate well in groups. A particularly good example of this is the variety of very expressive Year 8 pupils' 'let's celebrate' posters. During the very popular lunch-time and after-school clubs, pupils help other pupils to use programmes and do so in a helpful and constructive way. The way in which pupils co-operate with each other and share the school's computers is a strength of the school. The Internet access in many of the information technology rooms is creating much excitement amongst pupils with regular exchanges of E-mail messages to pen friends in America, Canada and Holland.
184. The quality of teaching in the information technology 'core' lessons is very good. However, across the curriculum, many staff lack confidence and expertise in developing pupils' capability in information technology. This is particularly the case at Key Stage 4. Although information technology activities are being built into some teachers' termly plans the exact nature of tasks and what pupils are intended to learn are not always clear. Staff need support in identifying how pupils might progress in their use of key applications and in seeking ways of setting information technology in the context of other subjects. Where information technology was used it was effectively planned and the teachers had appropriately high expectations of the pupils. Attainment and progress in Key Stage 4 are adversely affected by the lack of access to a suitable range of computers and related equipment in the science and technology areas. For instance, equipment to undertake control and measurement or computer-aided manufacture work is not available. Also, in some subjects, staff experience and competence at this level is limited and needs further training opportunities. The school does not have adequate monitoring and evaluation systems to ensure that the planned provision is delivered.
185. The quality of subject management and leadership is very good, with much hard work and enthusiasm devoted to the task by the co-ordinator. The co-ordinator is very well supported by a very effective team of teachers and a technician. An excellent working partnership has been established with the governing body which has enabled a significant increase in high quality computers to be available during recent years. However, the knowledge of the governors involved and the skills of the 'core' teachers needs to be put to much greater use throughout the school.
186. The quality of education within information technology, particularly in the consolidation of Key Stage 3 work, represents an improvement since the last inspection. However, overall by the end of Key Stage 4 there has been a decline in the standards indicated in the previous Ofsted report. The school does not meet the requirements of the National Curriculum in both key stages and pupils have inadequate opportunity to use their experience and capability in all subjects throughout the school. In order to improve the quality of the provision for information technology, attention should be given to the following: auditing the teaching staff's training needs; implementing a new strategy to teach all the information technology requirements of the National Curriculum; and training staff to deliver the programme and developing a monitoring and evaluation system which ensures that requirements are met with the assistance and support of the whole school.

Modern foreign languages

187. Pupils take either French or Spanish at Key Stage 3, continuing the subject up to GCSE. At the end of Key Stage 3, their results are well below the national average but, by the end of the course, the gap has closed considerably for French but not for Spanish. In both languages, attainment is higher than for similar schools.
188. With both languages taught as a beginners' course in Year 8 until two years ago, reported teacher assessment at the end of Year 9, after two years, has been well below national norms. This is largely because the same pace has been set in the course as for Year 7 beginners. However, across the key stage and by Year 9 progress is satisfactory. Progress is faster and good overall in Key Stage 4, particularly between Year 10 and Year 11. GCSE results in French were above the national average in 1998 and just below last summer. Results for Spanish have been well below national expectations but are improving. Pupils with special educational needs or who speak a language other than English at home make sound progress and achieve standards that are appropriate to their abilities. However, boys achieve much less well than girls, the gap being greater than at national level and greater than for other subjects in the school.
189. Pupils' attitude towards their work is good overall and very good in some respects. They listen, read and write carefully and co-operate very well with each other and their teachers. Their main weakness is in not appreciating that language is a means of communication and that they must therefore attempt to use it for incidental classroom matters such as requesting materials or asking for explanations. Another weakness is that they are not confident to attempt much oral work unless they have access to a script or vocabulary list. Some exceptions were seen. A Year 7 class were formally taught some communicative language they will need to understand and they already had some familiarity with the foreign alphabet. A Year 10 group spoke fluently about their favourite food and drink and their confidence was not disturbed when they performed the same task without any supporting text. Pupils benefit from splendid new accommodation and resources but do not have any opportunities for foreign visits or exchanges.
190. Teaching is almost always sound, with nearly a third of lessons good or very good. Teachers are mostly appropriately qualified and, where they are not, have received suitable extra training. All are very good classroom managers. They keep their side of lessons mainly in the foreign language but accept much unnecessary English from pupils. The plans of some lessons unnecessarily restrict progress by giving pupils little opportunity to move beyond levels they have already reached. There is some contribution to general literacy but not enough to numeracy.
191. The leadership and management of modern languages is sound. Departmental documentation is mainly adequate. It sets out good general aims and supports the wider school aims with good statements about making work appropriate to different abilities, multicultural education and equal opportunities. Assessment, marking and lesson planning are conscientiously carried out but are not guided enough by National Curriculum levels. Moreover, there is no specific development plan for languages and there are a number of matters over which the department needs to take action.
192. The position is more positive than at the time of the last inspection. There has been considerable all-round progress in Spanish and results are improving. Pupils' attitudes to the subject are much better. In both languages the proportion of pupils achieving at least grade G in GCSE is above school and national averages. The provision of textbooks for both languages is now better than in many maintained schools. Oral work is still not confident enough and classroom events are little used as the context for spontaneous speech.
193. To improve the quality of education in French and Spanish, more attention should be given to: everyday communication in the classroom and pupils' ability to speak independently of prompt material; lesson plans and pupil progress should be planned with more reference to National Curriculum levels; and there should be a greater focus on the attainment of boys.

Music

194. Pupils' attainment in music at the end of Key Stage 3 is in line with the national expectation and they make

clear progress through the key stage. GCSE results for those pupils who continue the subject into Key Stage 4 are above average. Pupils make good progress during Key Stage 4. At post 16, standards reached in coursework indicate attainment which is in line with expectations for A level but, as yet, remains unproven by public examination results. Progress post 16 is satisfactory.

195. At the end of Key Stage 4, pupils' attainment is above average for this age group. In 1998, 75 per cent of the 12 entries gained A*-C grades in GCSE music and the figure for 1999 has risen to 87 per cent of candidates, although entry numbers remain comparatively low. The number of pupils joining the A level music technology course reflects well on the recent introduction of the subject at GCSE and enables pupils to focus on the type of music which most interests them. The emphasis on electronic music-making at both GCSE and A level may lead to a slower development of aural perception for some pupils than would normally be expected.
196. At Key Stage 3 pupils improvise, compose and perform music but their progress is restricted by access to a very limited range of musical resources, many of which are in a poor state of repair. Pupils use music technology confidently when composing, arranging and performing and at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form speak confidently showing an understanding of both musical terminology and computer software terminology. Opportunities to integrate instrumental teaching with classroom work are not always maximised. There are no discernible differences in the progress made by pupils for whom English is an additional language and pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress as they develop increasing control when working with instruments
197. The quality of pupils' response in both Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 is good. Most pupils have a positive attitude to their work. They are keen and confident to answer and ask questions. They work well together, in pairs, when sharing access to keyboards, and are mutually supportive and good humoured. In Key Stage 3, a minority of pupils display poor behaviour and this is always linked to weaker teaching where lesson activities are insufficiently musical. Pupils have good relationships with one another and with adults in the music department, including visiting instrumental teachers.
198. The quality of teaching is predominantly satisfactory or better but there are shortcomings in some lessons. When teaching is at its best, the strengths include clear objectives for lessons which are effectively shared with pupils, an emphasis on practical work, and enthusiastic and confident teaching styles used by teachers with a secure subject knowledge and musical expertise. In one lesson pupils in Key Stage 3 used keyboards to prepare a piece for performance with some adding a simple chordal accompaniment. Activities centred on musical outcomes help to raise standards through increasing pupils' aural perception.
199. Teaching is much less effective when, for example, in some lessons in Key Stage 3, it is poorly planned, lacking clear musical objectives and all pupils in mixed ability groups are given the same task. Much more use could be made of the singing voice, particularly in Key Stage 3 lessons, and there were occasions when lessons focused exclusively on musical notation but failed to link this with music-making.
200. The music department has satisfactory accommodation and there are some good displays including some of pupils' work. The practice rooms provide limited space for small group composition and performance work and are well supplied with pianos of satisfactory quality. The main teaching room is of good size. There is a satisfactory range of keyboards but only sufficient for one class at a time to work with them. Classroom instruments are in very poor condition with almost all of them in need of repair. Access to appropriate information technology is limited and the equipment is dated. Both text and sheet music materials are in short supply given the number of pupils in Key Stage 3 and the increasing popularity of the subject in Key Stage 4 and post 16
201. Some 70 pupils have instrumental tuition, predominantly provided by the local education authority Music Service. The instrumental teaching is of high quality but there is limited monitoring of its effectiveness within the school. The number of pupils learning is in line with the national average. There is a range of regular extra-curricular musical activities involving a relatively small number of pupils, currently about 7 per cent of the population.

202. The music department is at an interesting stage of development following the recent appointment of the teacher in charge. The leadership of the subject is satisfactory. It is necessary now to determine the way forward for music at the school, to reflect the needs of all pupils, and to ensure that the management of the performance curriculum is effectively handled, alongside the delivery of classroom curriculum requirements.
203. Since the previous inspection progress has been satisfactory and the subject is now planned to provide a broader curriculum. In order to improve further the quality of the provision, attention should be given to: planning, assessment and schemes of work; resources for classroom composition and performance work, information technology and vocal activity; and the use of teaching materials in Key Stage 3 which meet the needs of all pupils and increasing participation in extra curricular activities.

Physical education (PE)

204. All pupils take National Curriculum PE from Year 7 to Year 11. At Key Stage 4 there is also an optional GCSE course. Pupils make good progress as they move through the school and by the time they reach the end of Year 11 attainment is in line with expectation for National Curriculum PE. For GCSE PE attainment is in line with the average for schools nationally and above when compared with similar schools. In July 1999 statutory teacher assessments at the end of Key Stage 3 showed the majority of pupils achieved the expectation as set out in the end of key stage descriptions for Year 9 pupils. There is no significant difference in the attainment of boys and girls, those pupils with English as a second language or ethnic minority pupils. The overall progress made by pupils with special educational needs, including those with physical disabilities, is good.
205. At the end of Key Stage 3 pupils' attainment is in line with the expectations for this age group; in some groups a small number of pupils are working towards and beyond the expectation. Performance is a strength. Pupils use space well, understand the importance of warming up and can link movements together with increasing control. Those working beyond the expectation refine existing skills and can describe how rules and skills link together. A good example was seen in the Year 7 girls netball where pupils carefully described how and why a particular skill had to be performed. Where attainment is below expectation it is generally due to a lack of concentration on the task. Planning for improvement and target-setting is not a feature and the pupils find assessing themselves quite difficult as they are not always aware of what they are learning. At the end of Key Stage 4 pupils' attainment is in line with the National Curriculum expectation. Pupils can apply relevant skills to specific situations. They understand rules well and apply them both as a performer or when undertaking a different role.
206. In GCSE PE attainment is in line with expectations, with the practical element being slightly above. Pupils show good understanding of how to perform and can analyse their own performance and that of others. A strong feature of the practical work is the ability of pupils to transfer skill and understanding from other areas of the work to a new situation. When describing judgements about performance pupils do not always use the correct terminology. The more able need to extend the depth of their answers especially in written work.
207. At Key Stage 3 satisfactory progress is made by all pupils in performing. The amount of work done is good and prior learning is applied by some pupils to new situations. Where progress is good, pupils are able to transfer skills learned across activities. Lower attaining pupils progress well. Pupils work in a safe manner and generally organise the working environment safely. Further challenges need to be provided for the more able and pupils need to make progress on planning for improvement both to their skills and understanding. At Key Stage 4 progress is good. Pupils are able to perform well and explain how to perform. They show that they can apply skills to game situations with increasing accuracy. The less able are progressing well. Where progress is very good, especially seen in practical GCSE work, pupils analyse and then use the information to improve their technique. In the GCSE theory work, although progress is satisfactory, pupils do not make enough progress on developing their understanding of the work in depth.
208. The quality of pupils' response is good overall and sometimes very good. Pupils come to the lessons ready to learn. Attitudes are positive towards other pupils and the teacher. A feature is the co-operation between pupils when learning. At Key Stage 4 pupils are very motivated and respect each other's need to learn. There are a few pupils who struggle with sustaining a task when lengthy concentration is expected.

209. The quality of teaching is good overall but is better at Key Stage 4 than Key Stage 3. Teachers have good subject knowledge, are motivated and work hard to provide a positive work environment for all pupils. Where teaching is very good, clear learning outcomes are identified and referred to during and at the end of the lessons, pupils are given opportunities to evaluate their work and the pace of the lesson is matched to how well the pupils are learning. Praise is often used well. When it is less well used, pupils do not know why they have done well. A range of teaching styles is used and questioning is open-ended.
210. Although none of the teaching seen was unsatisfactory there are some shortcomings and teaching is capable of improvement. More able pupils are not always fully challenged. The work is not matched to the ability of the pupil, as seen in the Year 10 GCSE work where all pupils were set the same task. The pace of the lesson is matched to getting through the activities and not focussed on whether the pupils are learning effectively. Planning and evaluating opportunities need to be increased together with pupils setting targets for themselves. Pupils who are not participating need to be provided with more challenging and appropriate learning opportunities in both key stages.
211. The post 16 recreational course offers wide opportunities both on and off-site and is highly appreciated by the students. The range of extra-curricular and enrichment provision is very good.
212. There is good, developing subject leadership; the head of department has a vision of where the department needs to be. Departmental documentation provides a good base to work from. The staff in the department are highly motivated and create a positive ethos - their relationships with the pupils are very good. Development planning is linked to the needs of the pupils. The provision for pupils with special needs is good, especially for those with physical disabilities. The department has integrated these pupils successfully into the curriculum by providing learning opportunities within the lesson or by offering alternative activities with adapted equipment. There is planned training for the learning support assistants. Most pupils are not given enough opportunities to plan and evaluate their work, especially at Key Stage 3, which inhibits their ability to set personal targets. Learning outcomes are not always clearly identified so that pupils know exactly what they will learn and assessment is not always linked into learning short-term. There is no use of information technology within the curriculum. A formal system for monitoring and evaluating teaching and learning needs to be developed. The planning for progression from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3 is inadequate. Whilst the range of accommodation is good, the state of the changing areas is unsatisfactory and at times not large enough for the size of the group. The department makes best use of the available storage areas but there is no space for large equipment which makes space in the sports hall unsafe for some activities. Smaller equipment is stored in an electric cupboard which the pupils have access to.
213. The quality of education represents an improvement on the standard indicated in the previous Ofsted report. Allocation of time for gymnastics and dance is improving; department policies and information are now more relevant; planning and evaluating is developing in some lessons; pupils are beginning to take more responsibility and there is an improvement in GCSE results.
214. In order to improve the quality of provision, attention should be given to the following: continuing to develop more opportunities for the pupils to plan and evaluate their work and use target setting based on self-assessment, especially short term; developing structured liaison with feeder primary schools so that planning for Key Stage 3 is based on what the pupils already know, understand and can do; providing a greater range of learning opportunities to challenge the more able; and formalising systems for the monitoring and evaluating of teaching and learning and putting into practice a policy to involve pupils who are unable to take part actively in more appropriate learning opportunities.

Religious education

215. The school has made excellent progress since the last inspection, particularly in relation to the provision of courses at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. Attainment overall is in line with national expectations. It is best at Key Stage 4. Pupils make good progress as they move through the school, mainly due to the successful introduction of the short course for which all pupils are entered.

216. By the end of Key Stage 3, pupils' attainment is in line with national expectations. There is some variation across the groups, but for the majority of pupils attainment is best in relation to their understanding of religious ideas such as symbolism. Most pupils across the key stage show insights into the general nature of religious belief and can often link these ideas to their own experience. Pupils in Year 8, particularly, can recognise the value of religion in the life of the believer as a result of their lessons with members of the local Youth for Christ team. Generally, when given the opportunity, pupils express their own ideas and opinions in relation to the topic covered. In some groups, pupils are able to outline religious activity, such as pilgrimage in Islam, but are unable to explain its spiritual significance.
217. Overall, pupils make satisfactory progress at Key Stage 3. They all develop impressive levels of skill in empathy and sensitivity. Literacy skills are improved through the focus on key words and the opportunities for speaking and listening. The progress of ethnic minority pupils and those for whom English is an additional language is good. The lower attaining pupils, including those with special educational needs, make satisfactory progress. This progress could be better with the setting of more appropriate tasks. Higher attaining pupils make satisfactory progress but their evaluative skills are not adequately developed and they have insufficient opportunities for extended writing in the subject.
218. Progress at Key Stage 4 is good. There has been a very marked upward trend in examination results since the short course GCSE was introduced. Results are now in line with national averages and substantially above those for secondary modern schools. The number of pupils gaining A* and A grades is well above the national average for all schools. Standards at Key Stage 4 have improved significantly as a result of the introduction of the course and the policy of entering the whole cohort of pupils. Strengths in pupils' attainment are in their knowledge and understanding of religious responses to moral and social issues. Their skills of evaluation are weaker. They are better at giving their own opinion on a moral or social issue than at evaluating the opinion of others and, particularly, the teaching of religions on that issue. Girls' attainment is higher than boys' but the difference is smaller than the national difference.
219. Attainment and progress post 16 is appropriate in relation to pupils' ability. The non-examination course, Moral and Ethical studies, develops pupils' thinking and reasoning skills and makes a good contribution to their overall development. Boys and girls participate equally well in the lessons. The school has improved standards in the subject since the last inspection and now meets statutory requirements.
220. Pupils' response in lessons across the key stages is very good. They take an interest in their work and concentrate well. In the majority of lessons, pupils are keen to participate orally and they listen well to each other. They show impressive levels of respect for the beliefs and values of others. For example, when discussing religious attitudes to marriage and divorce, a Muslim boy talked confidently about his faith and others listened and learned from him. Some Year 8 pupils question and express doubts about statements made by the Youth for Christ team, but they do so in a way that recognises their commitment. Pupils' capacity for personal research and the taking of initiative is evident in some homework tasks. Year 9 pupils show an impressive enthusiasm for the making of prayer mats with exceptional results in some cases. However, this is an area that could be strengthened and become more focussed on the achievement of religious education aims.
221. Teaching in all lessons is satisfactory or good with the majority of lessons being satisfactory. Teaching overall is somewhat better at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form than at Key Stage 3. In all lessons, relationships with pupils are very good as is the management of groups and individuals. This positive ethos in the classroom creates a good working environment and plays a significant part in the raising of standards. In the best practice, teachers have a good knowledge and understanding of the subject and can help pupils relate religious ideas to everyday life. For example, in Year 7, the teaching of the concepts of good and evil in relation to personal behaviour was well illustrated with cuttings from newspapers. Teachers explain ideas well to pupils and are good at identifying occasions when further help is needed, for the group and for the individual. In the best practice, teachers' questioning of pupils encourages them to think in greater depth and to become more sensitive to the feelings of believers. Some interesting homework tasks are set. Overall, there has been an improvement in the range of teaching and learning styles since the last inspection. The quality of marking varies across the department but in the best practice, pupils are given helpful feedback on what they need to do to improve. Weaknesses in teaching occur when staff are not specialist in the subject and

focus more on the factual elements of the subject than on enabling pupils to understand the meaning and significance of religious practice. Lessons do not always have a clear learning outcome which is shared with the pupils and reinforced at the end of the session. This leads to some loss of direction and ineffective use of time. Whilst introductions to lessons are interesting to all abilities, the tasks set are not adequately matched to the learning needs of all pupils. This is particularly true of the lowest and highest attaining pupils.

222. With improvements in curriculum provision across the key stages the school now fully meets statutory requirements. The curriculum is well planned and based on the local Agreed Syllabus. Learning in each year builds on earlier work in the school. Subject links with main feeder schools are not yet established. The Wycombe Youth for Christ team make a range of very useful and appropriate contributions to the curriculum. The school rightly plans to incorporate visits and visitors from other faith and Christian groups to give balance to the curriculum. The department does make good use of video material, but information technology is not incorporated into curriculum planning. The quality of assessment is best at Key Stage 4, where it is based on clearly defined examination criteria and appropriate tasks are set. Procedures for the assessment of pupils' progress at Key Stage 3 are unsatisfactory. There are no clear criteria to show the range of attainment possible and no link to the non-statutory levels of attainment in the Agreed Syllabus, which give indication of standards in the subject. Whilst there are some interesting tasks set, these do not relate to the learning outcomes for the units of work in any structured way. This means that teachers do not use the assessment information to measure the effectiveness of their teaching and to plan the next stages of learning for their pupils.
223. The teacher in charge of religious education has a clear vision for the subject and gives very good support to other members of the team. Much curriculum development has taken place since the last inspection, particularly in relation to teaching and learning styles and the Key Stage 4 and post 16 provision. The improvement in standards, particularly in Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form, is the result of much work by the teacher in charge of the subject, despite her additional responsibilities for the library. The support of her colleagues is evident in the way they work together in the Key Stage 4 lessons, for example, in the role play which introduces the issue of euthanasia.
224. Development planning is in line with the whole school development plan, but religious education priorities are too broad and unmanageable and do not always have precise outcomes that can be measured and monitored. Teaching is monitored by the headteacher on a regular basis, and feedback given. There is no similar process of monitoring by the teacher in charge.
225. To improve the quality of religious education further, attention should be given to: lesson planning at Key Stage 3 to ensure that lesson objectives are clearly identified and that the learning needs of the lower and higher attaining students are met; identifying assessment tasks at Key Stage 3 that have clear criteria and are matched to the learning outcomes of the units of work and the range of pupil responses; incorporating IT opportunities into the programmes of work across the school and planning for more formal and systematic monitoring of the department's work.

PART C: INSPECTION DATA

SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE

226. A team of fourteen inspectors spent a total of fifty three inspector days in the school during the course of the inspection week. Inspectors observed 173 lessons or parts of lessons. The available work of six pupils from each year group was scrutinised and discussions were held with these pupils about their experience of the school. Many informal discussions with pupils took place during lessons, extra-curricular activities and around the school. Inspectors also visited morning registration and tutor group sessions, attended assemblies and observed extra-curricular activities. Forty six scheduled discussions were held with key members of staff and informal discussions with many others. Inspectors met with a representative group of governors to discuss their role and perceptions of the school. Before the inspection a meeting was held with twelve parents to hear their views of the school. 256 questionnaires returned by parents and thirty six written comments from parents were analysed. A large amount of documentation provided by the school was read by inspectors before the inspection began.

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
Y7 - Y13	860	47	96	163

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers (Y7 - Y13)

Total number of qualified teachers (full-time equivalent)	52.60
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	16.35:1

Education support staff (Y7 - Y13)

Total number of education support staff	13
Total aggregate hours worked each week	264

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes:	81.6
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Average teaching group size:	Key Stage 3	20
	Key Stage 4	20
	Post 16	14

Financial data

Financial year:

1998/9

	£
Total Income	1836859
Total Expenditure	1846772
Expenditure per pupil	2103.39
Balance brought forward from previous year	-11048
Balance carried forward to next year	-20961

PARENTAL SURVEY

Number of questionnaires sent out:	860
Number of questionnaires returned:	257

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	16	66	12	5	1
I would find it easy to approach the school with questions or problems to do with my child(ren)	34	56	6	3	1
The school handles complaints from parents well	22	51	20	5	2
The school gives me a clear understanding of what is taught	19	60	10	10	1
The school keeps me well informed about my child(ren)'s progress	26	59	12	3	0
The school enables my child(ren) to achieve a good standard of work	32	61	4	2	1
The school encourages children to get involved in more than just their daily lessons	26	65	6	3	0
I am satisfied with the work that my child(ren) is/are expected to do at home	22	63	9	4	1
The school's values and attitudes have a positive effect on my child(ren)	27	60	9	4	0
The school achieves high standards of good behaviour	25	61	10	3	1
My child(ren) like(s) school	35	55	6	3	1

Other issues raised by parents

There were 36 written comments. Parents are supportive of the school, the many opportunities it offers and the standards it achieves. There is particular praise for the way it supports and nurtures pupils including those with special needs. Responses indicate that parents have a range of individual concerns based on their own experience.