

INSPECTION REPORT

THE WILLINK SCHOOL
BURGHFIELD COMMON

LEA area: West Berkshire

Unique Reference Number: 110048

Inspection Number: 208488

Headteacher: Mrs B Wynn

Reporting inspector: Mr M Pavey
17650

Dates of inspection: 13-17 September 1999

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
Type of control:	County
Age range of pupils:	11 to 18
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
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Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr M Wells
Date of previous inspection:	7-11 November 1994

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Brigid Quest-Ritson, Lay Inspector		Attitudes, behaviour and personal development Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development Support, guidance and pupils' welfare Partnership with parents and the community
Malcolm Burley	Science	Learning resources
Anthony Fiddian-Green	Religious education	Special educational needs
Roger Freeman	Mathematics	Assessment
Peter Gilliat	History	The Curriculum
Roger Moyle	Physical education	Accommodation
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Barry Smith	Geography	Staffing
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MAIN FINDINGS

What the school does well

Teaching is of good quality. There is almost no unsatisfactory teaching.

- Teaching and resources in modern foreign languages, and the school's status as a language college, are particular strengths.
- Pupils behave very well and have very good relationships with staff and each other.
- Leadership and management are very good, with particularly good leadership from the headteacher.
- The school has a very good partnership with its parents and the community.
- The school's provision for the cultural development of its pupils is very good.
- Arrangements to meet special educational needs are very good.

Where the school has weaknesses

The coordination and teaching of information and control technology across subjects are unsatisfactory, and the school is not providing the required range of skills at Key Stage 4.

- I. The curriculum at Key Stage 4 does not provide the required design and technology course for all pupils. The allocation of time to some subjects requires review.
- II. Tutorial time is not generally used well, though there is some very good practice.
- III. There is no daily act of collective worship for all pupils or a course in religious education in the sixth form. These are required and though some progress has been made, were key issues for action in the last report.

The school has more strengths than 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 or guardians of pupils at the school.

How the school has improved since the last inspection

The school has developed well since 1994. Performances in tests at the end of Key Stage 3 have at least maintained their previous high levels. Results in GCSE have improved in the three years from 1996 to 1998, and results have also improved at A level. Leadership has further improved from previous good levels, especially in the contribution of the headteacher, governors and senior staff. Teaching has also improved and is now good overall, with almost no unsatisfactory teaching. Most of the key issues given the school in 1994 have been well resolved, especially that of the monitoring of the school's work and setting of targets for academic improvement. However, the school has not provided a daily act of worship and religious education in the sixth form, which were key issues in the last inspection report. The target for GCSE achievement was exactly met this year. There have been significant improvements in the provision of modern foreign languages, and the school has become a language college. The further development of the leisure centre has increased the school's links with the community. Provision for special educational needs has much improved, as has teachers' use of assessment data to help pupils improve their work. Overall, improvement has been good. The school is well placed to maintain and extend its existing high standards.

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 1998:

'similar schools' refer to schools with similar proportions of pupils eligible for free school meals.

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

Compared with all schools, pupils achieved well above average results in 1998 in the tests at the end of Key Stage 3 and in GCSE. Results were no better than in similar schools in the tests, but were higher than in similar schools in GCSE. A level results were below average in 1998, but have been rising in recent years and reached their best level so far in 1999.

In the tests, results in English and science have been close to average, while those in mathematics have been above average. In GCSE, results have been particularly strong in business studies, drama, geography and information systems. Results have generally been less strong in design and technology and have been variable in music. In A level, subjects performing strongly in recent years have been geography, theatre studies, mathematics, history and art, and no subjects have performed notably worse than others. Results in the GNVQ vocational intermediate examinations have been well above average. In 1998, 87% of sixth form leavers went on to higher education, and this figure has risen sharply in recent years.

Quality of teaching

	Overall quality	Most effective in:	Least effective in:
Years 7-9	Good	Among many effective subjects, particularly strong performances were seen in modern foreign languages, mathematics and drama	Information and communication technology across the curriculum
Years 10-11	Good	As above	As above
Sixth form	Good	As above	As above
English	Good		
Mathematics	Good		

Teaching was at least satisfactory in 99 per cent of lessons. In 45 per cent of lessons it was good, and very good in 17 per cent. Teaching was good in all subjects and the only area of weakness was in the teaching of information and communication technology (ICT) across the curriculum; teachers are not all confident in its use and many have limited access to computers.

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, considerate and constructive. Good behaviour helps pupils learn.
Attendance	Good. There is less authorised and unauthorised absence than usual.
Ethos*	Very good. Pupils want to learn and relationships are very good.
Leadership and management	Very good. The headteacher and governors give leadership of high quality, supported by an able and experienced senior team. They work well with heads of department and heads of year, giving very good overall direction to the school.
Curriculum	Good at Key Stage 3 and in the sixth form. Satisfactory at Key Stage 4, with particular issues to be resolved. Vocational subjects give good breadth in the sixth form. Extra-curricular activities and careers provision are good.
Pupils with special educational needs	Very good provision. Teaching is always helpful. The department is well organised and effective.
Spiritual, moral, social & cultural development	Good overall, with particular strengths in cultural development. Spiritual development is satisfactory.
Staffing, resources and accommodation	Good. The school has adequate resources in general. As a language college, the school enjoys very good resources in this area. Staff development is effective. The school has been awarded the Investors in People standard.
Value for money	Good. The school adds value to its pupils' achievements and pupils make good progress at all levels.

* *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
<p>IV. The headteacher gives very good leadership.</p> <p>V. It is easy to approach the school with questions or problems.</p> <p>VI. The standard of work is good.</p> <p>VII. There is plenty to do beyond daily lessons.</p> <p>VIII. The school has positive values and behaviour is good.</p>	<p>IX. A few parents said that individual for information.</p> <p>X. There were some anxieties about the lessons in 1998-99.</p>

Inspectors' judgements support parents' positive views. The school is welcoming, successful and very well managed. Difficulties in replacing one teacher of biology had led to a number of staff changes in the science department. This caused a number of problems, although the matter has now been resolved.

KEY ISSUES FOR ACTION

The governors and senior staff should now:

- XI. Improve provision for information and communication technology (ICT) across the curriculum by:
 - XII. ensuring that all pupils are taught the control and measurement aspects of the subject at Key Stage 4, as required,
 - XIII. providing effective leadership and coordination of ICT across the curriculum, and
 - XIV. further improving resources so that all subjects benefit from ICT in their regular lessons.(See paragraphs 182-189)

- XV. Review the curriculum at Key Stage 4 so that
 - XVI. all pupils are taught design and technology as required, and
 - XVII. all subjects have sufficient time, especially modern foreign languages, physical education (PE) and personal and social education (PSE).(See paragraph 39)

- XVIII. Make more effective use of tutorial time so that standards in all sessions match the very good practice seen in some.
(See paragraph 63)

- XIX. Provide a daily act of collective worship for all pupils and religious education in the sixth form. These were key issues in the last inspection report.
(See paragraph 57, 84)

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

- XX. The refurbishment of laboratories and the home economics area, and the improvement of facilities for drama.
(See paragraph 87)

INTRODUCTION

Characteristics of the school

1. The Willink School is an 11-18 coeducational comprehensive school of 789 pupils including a sixth form of 97. It is in Burghfield Common, a semi-rural area of West Berkshire seven miles from Reading. It achieved specialist status as a language college in 1996.
2. There are 400 boys and 389 girls, with some marked differences in the balance of gender in some years. There are very few pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds. The socio-economic backgrounds of the school's families are generally above the national average. The percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals is below average.
3. On entry to the school, the average attainment of the pupils is around the national level. There are 124 pupils on the register of special educational needs (SEN), above the national average. Of the 39 pupils on the register at levels 3-5, 12 have specific learning difficulties, for two these difficulties are moderate and for 10 severe. 15 have emotional and behavioural difficulties. 18 pupils have statements of SEN, broadly in line with the average.
4. In its mission statement, the school aims to provide a purposeful, caring and disciplined environment which can allow all pupils to reach their full academic and personal potential. It aims to provide a well-balanced education of high quality, in partnership with its parents.
5. The school set itself a target to achieve 48% of GCSE passes at grades A*-C in 1999. This figure was based on an assessment of pupils' potential and was achieved exactly. For 2000, the school has set a target of 57%, reflecting the higher ability of the candidates for that year. There is an extensive target setting process for individual pupils.
6. Since the last inspection, the school has achieved language college status and its population has risen by 71, reflecting the larger numbers now opting for the school. The number of pupils with statements of SEN has doubled. The school's characteristics are otherwise unchanged.

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
1998	58	63	121

National Curriculum Test Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Number of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	Boys	31	38	38
	Girls	49	40	42
	Total	80	78	80
Percentage at NC Level 5 or above	School	67(59)	66(74)	68(58)
	National	65(56)	60(60)	56(60)
Percentage at NC Level 6 or above	School	35(36)	46(31)	32(26)
	National	35(23)	36(37)	27(29)

Teacher Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Number of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	Boys	32	40	35
	Girls	50	48	43
	Total	82	88	78
Percentage at NC Level 5 or above	School	70(59)	75(75)	67(61)
	National	62(59)	64(63)	62(61)
Percentage at NC Level 6 or above	School	32(20)	38(41)	31(28)
	National	31(28)	37(37)	31(29)

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
1998	61	43	104

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	32	60	60
	Girls	23	39	39
	Total	55	99	99
Percentage achieving standard specified	School	53(60.3)	95(92.6)	95(98.4)
	National	44.6(43.1)	89.8(88.5)	95.2(94.1)

Number studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and percentage of *such pupils* who achieved all those they studied:

	Number	% Success rate
School	-	-
National		-

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
1998	15	29	44

Average A/AS points score per candidate	For candidates entered for 2 or more A-levels or equivalent			For candidates entered for fewer than 2 A-levels or equivalent		
	Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
School	16.7	12.9	14.2(14.9)	8	-	8(1)
National	-	-	17.6(17.1)	-	-	2.8(2.7)

Number entered for the IB Diploma, and percentage of *such students* who achieved this qualification:

	Number	% Success rate
School	-	-
National		-

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

	Number	% Success Rate
School	7	100
National		72.5

Attendance

Percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year:

		%
Authorised Absence	School	6.8
	National comparative data	7.9
Unauthorised Absence	School	0.6
	National comparative data	1.1

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

Exclusions

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

	Number
Fixed period	15
Permanent	1

Quality of teaching

Percentage of teaching observed which is:

	%
Very good or better	21
Satisfactory or better	99
Less than satisfactory	1

PART A: ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS AT THE SCHOOL

Attainment and progress

* throughout the report, 'similar schools' refer to schools with similar proportions of pupils eligible for free school meals.

7. When pupils join the school, their average attainment is in line with the national average level. In the national tests at the end of Key Stage 3 in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science taken together, the performance of pupils was well above the national average in 1998. Over the three years 1996-1998 their performance was above the average. Pupils' performance in 1998 was close to the average for similar schools. Over three years, results in English and science have been similar, and close to the national average, while results in mathematics have been above average.

8. In the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) examination, in 1998 and over the last three years, pupils' results have been well above the national average, on the basis of the points scored by all pupils. In 1998, boys' results were well above average and girls' were close to the average. Over three years, boys' results were well above average and girls' above average. In 1998, the proportion of boys and girls obtaining five or more passes at grades A*-C was above average. Over the last three years it was well above average. In 1998 and over the last three years, results for pupils obtaining five or more grades A*-G have been above the national average. Over the last five years, the average points score per pupil showed a rising trend, at a faster rate than the national average. Pupils' results were broadly in line with those achieved in similar schools in 1998, for five or more grades A*-C and A*-G, but were above average for the total points scored. There are no subjects which have performed markedly less well than others, though results have generally been less strong in design and technology, while being variable in music. There have been very strong performances in business studies, drama and geography, while information systems results were very high in 1999, the first year for this subject.

9. At A level in 1998 and over the last three years, the average points score for those taking two or more subjects was below the national average, as was the percentage achieving grades A and B. However, the average points score and pass rate have been rising in recent years. The percentage achieving grades A-E in 1998 was above the national average in 1998 and rose considerably in 1999. In A level, subjects performing strongly in recent years have been geography, theatre studies, mathematics, history and art, and no subjects have performed notably worse than others. Over time, results in terms of points scored have been rising steadily both in GCSE and A level in recent years. In 1999, 99% of candidates passed the A level examination, a very good achievement and well above the national average achievement in 1998 and the school's previous results across the range of grades A-E.

10. All students taking the GNVQ intermediate qualification passed in the last two years, in business and art and design, a considerably higher achievement than the average national pass rate of 72.5% in 1998. Results were good in other vocational tests, for example in the Royal Society of Arts (RSA) NVQ level 1 examination in administration and the RSA communication in business examination.

11. The attainment seen in lessons and in the written work of pupils is generally above nationally expected levels at the end of Key Stages 3 and 4. It is generally in line with the

expected levels for A level courses. Attainment in the key skills of literacy is above national levels, at all stages. Pupils read readily, speak well and write clearly, often with good expression and accuracy. In numeracy, standards are above the expected levels at the end of Key Stage 3, and at least in line with these levels in other stages. Pupils use number well in mathematics and other subjects. Their skills in ICT are not well developed except in the GCSE course, where they achieve high standards. Skills in the control and measurement aspects of the subject are poorly developed at all stages and lack of experience restricts their skills and confidence in other aspects.

12. Standards in English are above average in national tests and GCSE, and around average in A level. By the end of Key Stages 3 and 4, attainment in lessons is above the nationally expected level. It is in line with the expected level at the end of the sixth form course. Pupils' work is varied and well presented. They produce work of good quality for a critical audience, and draft and redraft their work with care. All these factors raise attainment over a period of time and ensure good results, particularly in GCSE. Attainment in the key skills of reading, writing, speaking and listening is high. Pupils produce clear, well written work, speak well with good use of vocabulary and read fluently in a range of literature.

13. In mathematics, results in tests and GCSE are above the average, and well above average at A level. At all stages, pupils' written work shows a good grasp of the use and application of mathematics. Pupils have a good understanding of number and algebra. Their grasp of mental mathematics is strong, particularly at Key Stage 3 where it is well above the expected level. Pupils have a good understanding of space and shape and handle data with confidence.

14. In science, standards in tests at the end of Key Stage 3 are well above average, and are around average in GCSE and A level. Standards towards the end of Key Stage 3 in lessons are above average. Pupils handle apparatus competently and have a good grasp of the different aspects of the subject. Towards the end of Key Stage 4, standards are in line with the nationally expected levels. Pupils have a sound level of understanding of living processes, materials and physical processes. They carry out experiments competently. Standards in the sixth form are in line with the expectations for the courses.

15. The school sets well calculated targets for its attainment in GCSE and A level. This year, its GCSE target of 48% at grades A*-C was reached exactly. For next year, the target is 57%, reflecting the higher level of attainment of the pupils now in Year 11. For A level, the school made an overall prediction of the average points score grade expected, and this was very nearly reached. For both examinations, pupils were given target grades in each of their subjects. Nationally validated comparisons of the attainment of the pupils on entry to the school and their later results confirm that the school adds value to pupils' educational achievement.

16. Pupils make good progress at all key stages. In 52% of the lessons seen at all stages, progress was good, and very good in a further 7%. It was satisfactory in a further 39%, and unsatisfactory in only 2%. These are very positive figures which confirm that pupils are generally making good use of their opportunities in lessons. They learn effectively in all subjects. As teachers give them clear guidance about the content and procedures in lessons, they are clear about what they need to do. For example, a Year 12 class made remarkably good progress in a GNVQ support lesson on typewriting. They had complete confidence in the teacher and surprised themselves at what they could do. Clear teaching engages pupils in relevant tasks. For example, a Year 10 German class made good progress because they could follow the very clear instructions. This lesson was one

with computers available and proved that pupils can make good progress, given access to them. Generally, pupils find their tasks demanding but achievable, and this gives them the confidence to try hard and to keep up their concentration.

17. Pupils who have special needs make good progress towards their targets. The SEN department keeps very good records of each pupil who is on the special needs register. These give a clear picture of the amount of progress made by individual pupils. Higher attaining pupils make good progress also, and boys and girls make equal progress, at all stages.

18. In the last inspection report, overall standards were judged sound. GCSE results were above the national level and A level results below. Since then, the school has at least maintained these standards and made satisfactory progress in advancing its standards of attainment. It has improved its GCSE and A level results overall.

Attitudes, behaviour and personal development

19. Pupils have good attitudes to their studies. They are friendly, amenable and cooperative. A particular characteristic of pupils' good attitudes is the way in which they listen attentively and carefully in lessons. They are well motivated with good levels of concentration which only rarely lapse towards the end of lessons. Pupils are eager to volunteer information. In a Year 8 mathematics lesson they were seen to be quick to justify their reasoning. Pupils enjoy taking part in discussion. In a Year 9 PSE lesson pupils discussed, animatedly, but very seriously, the degrees of risk to health posed by a range of legal and illegal drugs. Similar lively discussion was seen in a Year 10 history lesson and in the sixth form. Pupils enjoy the stimulating teaching of drama and modern foreign languages. They respond by taking an active part in such lessons. Their ability to study independently improves as they progress through the school. They are more willing to take the opportunities to exercise personal responsibility as, for example, in PE and science lessons. However, there are some pupils with more passive attitudes to their work, who are slow to respond or show initiative.

20. In their lessons in the SEN room, pupils are keen to learn and persevere well with their work. There is a good variety of activities, and frequent changes in these help pupils to concentrate on each one successfully. Behaviour is consistently good and pupils respect each other, the adults and the equipment.

21. Standards of behaviour are very high overall. Pupils behave very well in lessons. They are mature and sensible, able to work without distracting others. There is very little unsettled behaviour in lessons. Standards of behaviour are also very high as pupils move around the school. Pupils understand what is expected of them and behave accordingly. They are patient and considerate in crowded areas at lesson changeovers. Pupils are friendly and polite with visitors. There is a marked absence of litter and graffiti around the school and the grounds. Cases of bullying and harassment rarely occur. The level of exclusions has fallen over the past three years and is lower than average for a school of this size.

22. The quality of relationships is very good. Pupils mix easily and sociably among themselves. They work well together in lessons, communicating confidently with each other and with members of staff. For example, pupils can work harmoniously together in drama lessons. They take an enthusiastic part in role-play in modern foreign language lessons, while in role-play in religious education and PSE they show respect for other's feelings. This sensitivity does not inhibit their ability to criticise their own and others' performance

when appropriate, for example in PE lessons. Their good collaboration continues in the sixth form where students and teachers work productively together. The high quality of relationships among pupils, and between pupils and members of staff, contributes significantly to the ethos of the school.

23. Pupils also respond very well to the provision for their personal development. They show respect for school conventions and rules. They are ready to accept posts of responsibility, especially in the sixth form. Pupils respond very well to monitoring procedures and as a result are increasingly able to take greater responsibility for their own work as sixth form students. Pupils do much to help the local community, both in and out of school. The popular house drama productions are directed by pupils. Twice a year some 150 pupils take part in the concert and tea for elderly residents. All sixth form students do some form of community service, within the school, local primary schools or a special school. In addition to such activities pupils raise funds for a range of charities.

24. The last inspection reported favourably about pupils' attitudes, but since then the quality of their response has improved.

Attendance

25. Pupils' attendance is good, as it was at the time of the last inspection. Overall attendance figures for 1997/8 were above the national average. Levels of unauthorised absence for this year were below the national average. Attendance has been above the average in the last three years, the period for which comparative figures are available.

26. The vast majority of pupils arrive at school on time, despite the fact that some travel from some distance. A small minority arrives late because of traffic problems on one bus route. Pupils move efficiently around the school and arrive at lessons on time. This good punctuality is an improvement since the last inspection. Sixth form students are occasionally late to lessons. In general, standards of attendance and punctuality have a very positive effect on pupils' learning and progress.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED

Teaching

27. The quality of teaching is good at all levels and in all subjects. The only area in which teaching is unsatisfactory is in that of ICT across the curriculum, because teachers are not all confident in its use and insufficient is provided. Overall, teaching was satisfactory or better in 99% of lessons seen. This is a very high figure and confirms that teaching is effective in virtually all lessons. Teaching was excellent in 4% of lessons, very good in 17%, good in 45%, satisfactory in 33% and unsatisfactory in only 1%. There are particular strengths in the teaching of modern foreign languages and mathematics at all stages.

28. Good knowledge of the subject is the greatest strength of teaching. It is very good at all stages in mathematics, science, modern languages and PE. It is very good in history at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form, and in music in the sixth form. It is good in all other subjects with the exception of ICT across the curriculum. The teaching of ICT as a specialist subject at Key Stage 4 is very good. There are many examples of lessons where good subject knowledge produces rapid, secure gains in knowledge. In a Year 13 French lesson on a new theme, *Les femmes*, the teacher's very good use of French and her ability to make students think produced a high level of response. Very good knowledge in a Year

8 mathematics lesson on number patterns helped pupils to see the point, concentrate hard and improve their understanding.

29. Teachers' expectations of their pupils are generally high, very high in modern languages at Key Stage 3. They are never less than satisfactory. For example, in a very successful design and technology lesson in Year 9 on electrical and mechanical movements, the teacher had very high expectations of what pupils could do and the progress they would make, and the class responded accordingly. In a Year 11 geography lesson on the building of a reservoir, expectations were appropriate and ensured that pupils made assured progress in their knowledge of hydrology.

30. Planning is good overall, particularly in mathematics, science, modern languages, history, religious education and PE. A Year 7 PE lesson on gymnastics was very clearly planned and presented, so that all pupils were well aware of the goals to be achieved and thus improved their skills. A Year 10 religious education lesson on the effects of a Christian upbringing was well planned and explained so that pupils knew the issues involved and were able to make firm and thoughtful contributions.

31. Teachers' methods and organisation are never less than satisfactory and are good in most subjects. For example, in a Year 11 business studies lesson, the teacher had organised the lesson with great care and employed very good questioning techniques to obtain accurate answers which built up secure knowledge of marketing definitions. The teacher's methods in a Year 7 English class for pupils with special needs were highly organised and successful, with plenty of variety – reading, writing, spelling, testing – which produced a lively response and good progress.

32. Teachers manage pupils well, achieving good cooperation and discipline in all subjects, with particularly good standards in modern languages, history, religious education and PE. Their clearly communicated intentions for the lesson and firm control of the subject lead to the positive use of time and good progress. For example, the teacher of a Year 12 English class managed the introduction of Shakespeare's *King Lear* very well, so that students were challenged and keen to get to grips with thinking at this level. In music, the teacher managed a Year 7 singing lesson well, with a good rapport which encouraged pupils to try hard and make good progress in technique. In a Year 12 drama lesson, the teacher managed an improvisation session very well so that students made sure progress in applying the techniques they had studied.

33. Time and resources are well used in almost all subjects, and very effectively in modern languages at Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4. In a Year 8 art lesson, time was clearly and competently managed, with timings given for the completion of sketches so that pupils made good progress in the steps needed for the competent drawing of people. Good use of resources was seen in a Year 9 science lesson in which pupils rapidly grasped how to plot a curve to represent the cooling of wax, which was plotted on a computer as the process happened.

34. Teachers' assessment of pupils' work is never less than satisfactory. It is good in history, religious education and PE, and very good in mathematics and modern languages. In mathematics, rapid progress is often possible because the teacher has clearly assessed pupils' strengths and weaknesses, seen for example in a successful Year 12 lesson on completing the square when the regular monitoring of attainment had allowed a clear analysis of students' needs.

35. The use of homework is good overall. It is good in mathematics, design and

technology, modern languages, history, geography, and PE at Key Stage 4. It is satisfactory overall in other subjects. Teachers often begin a lesson by reviewing homework tasks and generally integrate these well with the subject matter of the lesson.

36. In SEN withdrawal lessons, teaching is only done by the special educational needs coordinator. It is very good, with a high level of support given to pupils. She has a very clear understanding of pupils' needs and entirely appropriate programmes are devised and given.

37. The quality of teaching has improved considerably since the last inspection. It was then judged sound and is now good. Improvement has been across all subjects and in all aspects of competence. This is because the headteacher and senior staff have made effective teaching a priority and have provided training and monitoring to ensure that it improves. Teaching is now at least satisfactory in virtually all lessons. In only two of the 182 seen was it unsatisfactory. The senior staff have been very successful in raising its quality.

The curriculum and assessment

38. At Key Stage 3 the school provides a broad and well balanced curriculum which includes all the subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education. ICT is taught to all pupils as a separate subject. The curriculum is enhanced through the provision of drama, PSE and a second foreign language.

39. At Key Stage 4 the school curriculum is undergoing change. At the moment it contains some features which make its overall breadth and balance unsatisfactory. All pupils follow GCSE courses in English, mathematics, science, modern foreign languages and religious education; in addition pupils also choose three further GCSE courses. Statutory requirements are not met in respect of design and technology because the school offers it as a choice rather than a subject to be taken by all pupils. Pupils' experience of ICT across the curriculum at Key Stage 4 is uneven and overall unsatisfactory. The entitlement to an education in the control and measurement aspects of ICT is not provided for all pupils. Entitlement in this subject cannot be guaranteed, except for those who choose it as GCSE option. For the first time, all Year 10 pupils are continuing with a second foreign language to be examined as a GCSE short course at the end of the year. All pupils will complete the long course in their first language in Year 11. To accommodate this arrangement the time allocation for PE has been reduced to one period a week in Year 10, which is insufficient to cover the national programme of study. The allocation of time to modern languages at Key Stage 4 is not generous overall, but the effect of the new arrangements cannot yet be assessed.

40. In the sixth form the school offers a good range of courses, which includes 15 A level courses and vocational courses in art and design, and in business. All Year 12 students also follow a broad general studies programme which requires them to take courses in PE or games, and in a modern foreign language. The choice here extends to Italian and Japanese. The school does not meet the statutory requirement to provide religious education in the sixth form.

41. The curriculum includes a good range of vocational subjects. There is a well established course in GCSE business studies at Key Stage 4, in which the schemes of work exploit the subject's potential very well. The sixth form curriculum contains intermediate and advanced GNVQ courses in art and design, and there is an intermediate level course in business. There is a range of courses for other tests and certificates, including bookkeeping, communication in business and typing examinations, and

certificates in personal finance and ICT. GNVQ courses are supported by lessons in key skills. Together, these courses make a valuable contribution to the curriculum, particularly in Year 12 which offers a wide choice of both academic and vocational subjects.

42. The quality of curriculum planning by departments is good. Schemes of work are generally well prepared, covering the National Curriculum programmes of study well, with the exception of the subjects at Key Stage 4 discussed above. The school has worked hard to develop close links with its partner primary schools, and effective liaison arrangements help to ensure good continuity and progression of study for pupils when they join. The curriculum is effectively planned to give good progression from Key Stage 3 to Key Stage 4 in all areas except design and technology and ICT. The good provision of vocational subjects at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form helps pupils of all abilities to progress to the next stage, while good links with further and higher education institutions help to promote a smooth transition from school to college.

43. All pupils have equal access to the school's curriculum, with exceptions at Key Stage 4, discussed above. In Year 7 all pupils are taught in mixed attainment groups, except in mathematics where pupils are placed in sets after the first term. Setting in some other subjects is introduced in Year 8. These arrangements for grouping pupils are effective and in most subjects work is well planned to take account of the different levels of attainment within a class. Schemes of work in GCSE business studies and GNVQ intermediate business are particularly well planned for pupils of differing levels of attainment.

44. All pupils on the special needs register have full access to the whole of the school's curriculum. Withdrawal lessons and support in classes are provided to enable all pupils to make progress in their work and have as much help as possible. Withdrawal lessons do not prevent pupils from their entitlement to the full curriculum.

45. An appropriate personal and social education course, which includes provision for sex, drugs and careers education, is taught in Years 7, 9, and 11, and also in the sixth form. The school has amended the course to take account of the absence of a taught lesson in Years 8 and 10, but the effects of the revised allocation of time on the overall provision of the subject cannot yet be assessed.

46. The quality of careers guidance is good. All pupils undertake one week's work experience in Year 11, and the school has a very good careers library to help pupils with individual planning. They also have access to careers guidance through the school's careers officer and through attendance at careers conventions.

47. The curriculum is enhanced by a good programme of extra-curricular activities. Strengths in sport and drama mean that pupils have particularly good opportunities in these areas. There is an extensive sports programme, with a wide variety of teams and activities. Several staff outside the PE department help with this programme, for example with the after school swimming clubs, and a high proportion of pupils takes part in one or more activities. Pupils are offered a good range of residential activities, and educational visits are arranged by many departments. The school's international ethos is extended by a very good programme of visits abroad and foreign exchanges.

48. Since the last inspection, progress in the maintenance and improvement of the curriculum has been satisfactory overall. The most significant development has been the school's new status as a language college. This has led to enhanced provision for modern foreign languages, including the recent introduction of a second language for all pupils at

Key Stage 4. The school plans to monitor the effectiveness and impact of this new provision very carefully. The school has met some but not all the specific issues raised in the last inspection report. More time has been allocated to art and music at Key Stage 3, and religious education at Key Stage 4 now meets statutory requirements. However, the school has not yet provided a course for all in design and technology at Key Stage 4 or religious education in the sixth form. Provision of sixth form religious education was part of a key issue for action in the last report.

49. The school has a clear statement of its general principles for assessment. From this, most heads of department have developed good procedures which form an integral part of their schemes of work, and many teachers have developed purposeful schemes based on these. For example, one teacher has devised an effective colour-coded system to help provide support material for the lower attaining pupils and extension material for the higher attainers. Most departments have written end of unit tests, assessed in accordance with National Curriculum and examination board criteria. This evidence enables teachers to make accurate assessments when reporting end of the key stage levels or predicting examination results. Modern foreign languages and mathematics are examples of very good practice. Both subject areas keep very thorough records. Assessment in ICT has some shortcomings as end of Key Stage 3 teacher assessments are decided on work done within individual ICT lessons and do not take into account measuring and control work done across the curriculum. The school does not comply with the statutory requirement to report on ICT at the end of the Key Stage 4.

50. The school has assembled a valuable collection of data on the attainment of pupils when they join the school. It has made detailed analyses of external examination results and has used the information gained to help provide targets for departments and pupils. Departments benefit from the comparison of their pupils' examination performance with results attained in other subjects. Good knowledge of how pupils have performed in GCSE in relation to predictions helps guide new sixth form students onto A level or GNVQ courses and has resulted in a low student drop out-rate.

51. The assessment and testing for pupils who have special needs are very good. Pupils are given a variety of tests upon arrival in the school, including the testing of handwriting, and dictation skills. They are re-tested at least twice each year. Very full records are kept of these assessments, and they are used to inform planning about future support.

52. The marking policy is effective. Pupils' books are marked regularly and pupils understand the meaning of the grades they have received. In many subjects, for example history and Key Stage 4 design and technology, marking often helps pupils to see how they could improve. In some subjects these pointers are used as targets which pupils record in their exercise books. However, target setting has not been adopted by all subjects. The termly monitoring sheets and annual reports provide useful information for form tutors and heads of year.

53. Most departments use the assessment information they have acquired to make adjustments to their curriculum planning. For example, pupils in music complete a termly review of their work and these comments, together with the teachers' notes made within their schemes of work, enable informed curriculum changes to take place. Teachers in art, religious education and mathematics also write notes on their schemes of work or within their record books ensuring curriculum planning is continually revised. Assessment is particularly careful in modern languages, though good practice is not evident in all subjects.

54. Monitoring procedures are effective. The headteacher, deputies and heads of department scrutinise exercise books to measure the quality of assessment. Supportive in-service training is given to heads of department when the need arises.

55. Since the last inspection the school has made good progress in improving its assessment procedures. It has successfully addressed all the issues raised in the previous report as a result of a radical overhaul in its procedures. By building upon good practice, the experience gained in the interpretation of data and developing monitoring procedures, senior management has ensured consistency across and within departments, particularly for recording attainment grades. Assessment procedures have become an effective way to raise attainment and have improved the information given to parents.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

56. The school's mission and service commitment statements underline its purposeful approach to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of its pupils. The school seeks to provide a purposeful, caring and disciplined environment with an international ethos and to recognise the worth of all members of the school community. It succeeds in realising these aims.

57. The provision for pupils' spiritual development is satisfactory. A thoughtfully compiled programme of assembly topics includes a spiritual dimension. In practice, however, this dimension is not put to best use. Pupils are not always allowed time to reflect, however briefly, and this affects the quality of the act of collective worship. The thought for the week is on display in all classrooms. Not all tutors refer to it, or use it as the basis for an act of worship. Within some subjects there is appropriate, often good, provision for pupils' spiritual development. These subjects include religious education, for example in a Year 9 lesson on baptism, where pupils engaged in very effective role play, really entering into the spirit of the occasion, and PSE which gives pupils the chance to reflect on the value of the lives of others, for example in a Year 9 lesson on drugs and their effects. There is good provision too in English and drama where texts selected for study help raise pupils' spiritual awareness. The level of provision in music and art is disappointing. Many opportunities to increase pupils' self-knowledge and spiritual awareness are not taken.

58. Provision for pupils' moral development is good. A moral perspective, ensuring pupils are taught to distinguish right from wrong, is developed effectively in subjects across the curriculum. In PE lessons, for example, right and wrong attitudes and behaviour are highlighted; pupils are given opportunities to demonstrate the virtues of honesty and fair play. In Year 7 geography lessons pupils discuss the conflicting needs of a growing population. Lead by the headteacher, members of staff, both teaching and non-teaching, set good examples for pupils to follow. They are fair and consistent.

59. The quality of the provision for pupils' social development is also good. The PSE programme makes an important contribution to this by focusing on communication skills, teaching pupils how to relate to others and communicate with them. Other curriculum subjects, such as modern foreign languages, with frequent use of role-play, pair and group work in lessons, provide opportunities for pupils to learn to work together. Drama lessons do so too. The extensive programme of extra-curricular activities provides other means for pupils to develop social skills. Pupils, especially sixth form students, are encouraged to be responsible by taking those posts of responsibility offered and by learning to manage their programmes of study. The routine insistence on good social habits, on showing consideration for others and on pointing out the effect of behaviour on others all contribute to the good quality of social provision.

60. Cultural provision is very good. As part of the bid for language college status and subsequent progress reports on this, the school produced an international ethos audit in which departments were asked to list the international elements in their curriculum. Departments are now more aware of the potential for pupils' cultural development within their subjects. All the modern foreign language courses have a background of cultural information, supported by an extensive programme of visits and exchanges, which thus provide a strong lead for the whole school. There is also very good provision in English and drama, both cultural and multi-cultural, through the careful choice of texts and materials which pupils study. Visits to theatres, visits by theatre groups to the school, in-house productions and concerts, visits to outside concerts, galleries and museums add breadth to the school's provision.

61. The quality of provision is similar to that reported in the last inspection. There is still a problem with acts of collective worship in tutor groups. The range and quality of cultural provision have improved.

Support, guidance and pupils' welfare

62. The school provides good academic support for its pupils. Much work has been done to establish and refine a system of academic monitoring throughout the school. This starts with selected pupils at Key Stage 3. At Key Stage 4 the programme is extended to all pupils. They have a series of interviews with their tutors, both individually and as part of a group throughout the GCSE years. A similar programme is followed in the sixth form. In the interviews, tutors and pupils discuss progress and set targets for improvement. Target setting is not yet as effective as it could be, since many targets are too general: the system of setting targets is not always fully understood or applied. The procedures established for academic monitoring have nonetheless helped to raise standards of attainment at GCSE level. A comparison of monitoring records and predicted grades with actual results showed that in many cases the results achieved exceeded forecasts. Forecasts were based on good evidence, and the process of setting target grades has helped to raise achievement. Results at A level do not reflect so clear a pattern.

63. The quality of the personal support and guidance which the school provides varies. Much is good. Tutors know their pupils well. They start with them in Year 7 where they make an impressive effort to develop good relations and gain their confidence. These good relations continue throughout the school. In addition to registration, there are two tutor periods weekly. There is considerable variation in how effectively this time is used. Some sessions are purposeful and inspiring, but others achieve little. The PSE programme, which includes careers, provides good guidance for pupils on a range of social issues. The advice provided for pupils at times of transition is good, and appreciated by them.

64. The procedures to promote discipline and good behaviour are very effective. Members of staff insist on establishing good routines at all levels of the school. The standards expected are made very clear to pupils, particularly at the start of the school year. All members of staff have a consistent approach to behaviour issues. The school takes a firm line on bullying and handles any cases promptly. The general emphasis, however, is on praise and reward, which culminates in an annual prize-giving which is greatly appreciated by parents and pupils.

65. The school's procedures to record and monitor attendance are highly effective. Day-

to-day routines are efficient. Regular monitoring includes frequent checks on lateness and spot checks for truancy. Certificates are given for good levels of attendance. Parents are sent details of their children's attendance with the full annual report. Procedures for child protection are satisfactory. The head is the designated teacher and she and a deputy headteacher have received training. Staff are aware whom to contact, but have not yet received formal training. Health and safety procedures are satisfactory overall. Good practice within departments ensures pupils' welfare within the school and on visits outside.

66. The support and guidance given to pupils who have special needs are good. Teachers and support assistants meet frequently to discuss how they can best support pupils. Extra help is offered both before morning school, and during some lunchtimes. This is welcomed by the pupils and is effective in helping them to raise their standards in key skills.

67. The good standards noted in the last inspection report have been maintained with improvements in the developing area of academic monitoring.

Partnership with parents and the community

68. The school provides an extensive range of very good information for parents. The prospectus gives a general impression, while the many extra pages provide detailed information for prospective and new parents. There is a separate prospectus for the sixth form. Year 7 parents already receive information about the curriculum their children will study. This practice is now being extended to cover Year 8. Year 9 will follow. The school also provides very good information for parents about their children's progress. They receive monitoring cards twice a year, which give a brief indication of how pupils are doing, and a full report once a year. The full report is very thorough. It gives parents a great deal of information on their children's individual attainment and progress, in a way which is clear and easy to understand.

69. Parents are actively involved in their children's work, both at school and at home. All parents of new pupils starting in Year 7 go with the pupils to meet the tutor in the summer term. The home/school contract makes mutual undertakings clear. The day diary, which is used well, is the normal means of comment about work. Parents' consultation evenings and other school functions are very well attended. Parents strongly support the work of the school and appreciate what it provides for their children. The only two significant concerns raised in the questionnaires returned are discussed at the end of this report.

70. Communication with the parents of pupils who have special needs is very good. Meticulous records are kept of all contacts, and parents are kept fully informed about all the details of the school's provision for special needs.

71. Links with the community are very good. Their extent and quality make them a strength of the school. This is partly due to the school's language college status, which emphasises the desirability of such links and helps to provide the means of achieving them. They take such forms as evening classes in languages for parents and the local community - one in Modern Greek has just been offered - language lessons at some feeder primary schools and even foreign songs and nursery rhymes at a nursery school. The good links are not restricted to language connections; there are many other ways in which the school and its pupils contribute to the life of the community. The bi-annual concerts for local clubs for the elderly involve many pupils and give great pleasure, as letters received from these organisations made clear. Sixth form students help others of their own age from Brookfields Special School each week. This is a considerable commitment. They show these pupils

round the school, help them use such facilities as the language laboratory, take them swimming, shopping for food, shopping for clothes and on excursions. These activities make a notable contribution to pupils' personal development. Links with the community also support the curriculum. All pupils have a period of work experience, sometimes abroad. Departmental links such as those between the physical education department and local sports clubs and the science department with a major research organisation enrich the curriculum for pupils.

72. The last inspection reported favourably on links with the community. These have been improved and extended, particularly since the school gained language college status.

THE MANAGEMENT AND EFFICIENCY OF THE SCHOOL

Leadership and management

73. The headteacher, senior staff and governors provide very good leadership. They have created a very effective school with high standards of attainment.

74. The headteacher gives clear educational direction to the school, making the improvement of attainment her clear priority and leading the staff purposefully to achieve this. Senior staff are experienced and effective, working well together, with targets clearly linked to the strategic development plan. Heads of department lead their areas well, with detailed planning of good quality. The leadership of the modern languages, mathematics, business education and SEN departments is particularly effective. The only area where leadership is ineffective is that of cross-curricular ICT; while the teaching of ICT as a separate subject is good, it lacks adequate coordination across all subjects and years. The heads of year lead their teams well in terms of the coordination of target setting and the management of school policy. However, they do not monitor the use of tutorial time effectively, with the result that standards vary considerably between tutors, and pupils receive very differing levels of personal leadership and guidance.

75. The SEN department is very well led. Careful attention is paid to all documents and records. Classroom assistants are deployed well, and provide good support. The co-ordinator for special needs has developed very efficient and effective provision, both for withdrawal lessons and for in-class support. Statutory requirements are met for annual reviews, and the views of parents and pupils are sought and recorded.

76. Governors give very strong leadership, notably in their role in development planning. There are well led committees for the curriculum, personnel, premises, and for development and marketing. The finance committee is also responsible for strategy, and has an extensive list of future projects to advance the work of the school, for example in the development of the sixth form, ICT and the enhancement of music and drama. All committees review the work of the school and are very clearly informed of its progress. For example, the governors' development group invites teachers to address it about their work in particular areas, while the curriculum committee considers the detailed reports made each term on an individual department.

77. The monitoring of teaching is very effective and has produced teaching which is almost entirely satisfactory or better, while most teaching is of good quality. Each department is linked to the headteacher or a deputy who holds two meetings a term with each head of department. The agenda includes a report on the monitoring of teaching undertaken by the head of department. It also includes the regular review of the curriculum in each area. The headteacher monitors the exercise books of three pupils each week for

evidence of the quality of the curriculum and teaching, and communicates her views to the head of department concerned. The link advisor from the local education authority undertakes joint lesson observations with heads of department and compares judgements reached. This is an effective way of training teachers in lesson observation, but despite this some monitoring is relatively informal, for example in geography, and it is not always clear what aspects of performance have been identified for improvement. Teaching is also well monitored through the appraisal programme.

78. Teaching and the curriculum are further monitored through a well managed process of setting targets for individual pupils' GCSE performance. These are reviewed regularly and later compared closely with GCSE results. There is a similar process for sixth form A level students. Departmental performance is reviewed in detail when results are discussed with heads of department and governors.

79. The school has a mission statement which is mostly well reflected in its development plan. In the statement, the school aims to provide a purposeful, caring and disciplined environment and a high quality of education leading to the full achievement of potential. It also aims to develop an international ethos. It succeeds well in realising these aims. The statement also aims to equip pupils with the necessary ICT skills, but the school has only partly succeeded in achieving this. The statement is further expressed in a set of commitments given to pupils, parents and the community, which the school succeeds in providing to a large extent.

80. There are policies for all aspects of the school's life. Most are prefaced by the school's mission statement and set out clear principles to govern the policy in question. Each has a date for its review by the senior staff and governors. Policies reflect the school's aims well and are integrated in its regular practice.

81. The strategic development plan is clear, concise and well constructed. It is a very good reflection of the school's aims. It has five main intentions – to continue to raise achievement, to recognise the worth and achievement of each member of the school community, further to develop the sixth form, to develop as a language college and to develop opportunities for pupils in cooperation with the local community. Each intention is very well divided into practical goals, times are set for their completion and the resources needed are stated. The plan is prepared by the governors, who consult with staff, parents and pupils about it, and monitor its implementation carefully. Department and year plans reflect the main plan and are monitored by senior staff in their regular meetings with heads of department and heads of year. The main plan is designed over a five year period, the life of the governing body, with an extra year while the new board formulates its own plan. Overall, the plan is relevant, effective and well monitored. It has succeeded in concentrating attention on important priorities and in raising standards.

82. As the result of purposeful and sensitive leadership, the school has a very positive ethos. It intends to concentrate on academic success and personal development, and achieves both by cultivating positive relationships among all members of the school community. It achieves a high level of equality of opportunity for all pupils, in a number of ways. Its mission statement and development plan aim to recognise the worth of all. The school has promoted programmes to raise the achievement of boys and to improve literacy for all pupils, across the curriculum. It has improved the attendance of Travellers' children and has given very good support to pupils with SEN. However, the lack of equal opportunity to experience ICT and design and technology courses at Key Stage 4 is an unsatisfactory aspect of the school's present provision.

83. The school is well run on a daily basis. Communication with staff, pupils and parents is effective, with regular meetings at all levels, including the student council and the presence of the head boy and girl at the full meeting of the governing body. Publications are informative. Administration by office staff is competent and effective.

84. Statutory requirements are met, with the exception of the need to provide the required programme of ICT at Key Stage 4, the lack of design and technology for all at Key Stage 4, the failure to provide a daily act of collective worship for all pupils and to provide a course of religious education for all in the sixth form.

85. The school has maintained and extended the good standards of leadership described in the last report and has generally made a good response to the key issues for development given in 1994. It has been particularly successful in responding to the issues on monitoring its work and in evaluating the effect of spending decisions on its provision. It has made some progress in meeting the key issue to provide an act of worship, but insufficient to meet requirements. It has provided religious education at Key Stage 4 but not in the sixth form.

86. The very good leadership by governors, headteacher and senior staff confirms that the school has good capacity to maintain existing high standards and to extend them in the future.

Staffing, accommodation and learning resources

87. Overall the standard of accommodation is satisfactory and meets the needs of all key stages and most subject areas. The school has an adequate number of rooms, but rapidly increasing pupil numbers will soon create pressure on space. Most department rooms are close to each other and benefit from the positive effect this has on departmental organisation. The standard of accommodation varies from satisfactory to good. The best features include the language laboratories, recreation centre and a spacious SEN area. The size of classrooms in mathematics restricts the possible range of work. Inadequacy of accommodation in three areas is having a negative effect on standards of work. Some science laboratories are in urgent need of modernisation, the home economics area is in need of total refurbishment and drama is taught in non-specialist accommodation without appropriate lighting or sound provision. The good quality of display materials in classrooms and corridors encourages interest and achievement.

88. The school enjoys spacious and well-maintained sports grounds. Indoor sports facilities are very good except for showering areas which are inadequate for large groups. The cleaning of the school's premises is good. Maintenance and improvements are well managed and there is a programme for the refurbishment of teaching areas. Graffiti and litter were not seen. There is some evening and weekend use of school facilities by the community.

89. Since the last inspection, the school has made satisfactory progress in improving its accommodation, particularly in the modern foreign languages area which has been renovated to language college standards. Very welcome additions have been made to the community facilities, especially the very good swimming pool. This is a valuable extra resource and the school makes good use of it.

90. The school has adequate resources for learning for all key stages and almost all subject areas. Resources are good in some, notably mathematics and modern foreign languages. Pupils have good access to available resources in all subjects but there is a

lack of suitable provision for ICT. The school's designation as a language college has attracted additional funding and the languages department is extremely well equipped, not only with books but with audio visual material including computers with Internet and satellite links. These resources make a major contribution to the quality of teaching and learning. The mathematics department is well equipped with notebook computers and calculators which, along with excellent textbook provision, enhance pupils' learning. Resources for special needs are good, with six multi-media computers and a good supply of other equipment. Resources in the music department are unsatisfactory. The number of keyboards is adequate but the low provision of other resources, such as pianos and computers, has a negative effect on the way pupils view the subject. The drama department has insufficient lighting and sound equipment to allow the effective teaching of all aspects of the curriculum. Good use is made of resources outside the school such as galleries, theatre and leisure facilities.

91. The library and resources area has an adequate supply of books in good condition. It is well used by pupils during break and lunchtime and by sixth formers during the day. Multi-media and other computers, one linked to the Internet, as well as audio tapes, supplement the book resources. There is a small but well stocked careers library. A librarian and assistant librarian provide valuable supervision and help throughout the day. There is no policy to purchase books which present gender or cultural diversity in a positive way and the number of books representing minority cultures is limited.

92. The school has already invested a considerable part of its budget in information technology and intends to invest more. A ratio of seven pupils to one computer is in line with the national average but most of the computers are old and outdated. This prevents many departments from exploiting the benefits of ICT and inhibits the teaching of the National Curriculum.

93. The school has made a satisfactory response to the issues in the previous inspection report. Though the provision of resources in science is now satisfactory, provision in music remains unsatisfactory. The library now makes a valuable contribution to teaching and learning. Though much has been done, there remains a lack of suitable computers.

94. The school has a good match of staff to the needs of the curriculum, at all key stages. Teachers are well qualified and appropriately deployed. Non-teaching staff make a valuable contribution to the work of departments and provide adequate cover in all areas except ICT and design and technology, where more time is needed to provide the support which these areas require. The school is well supported by the work of the administrative and clerical staff. A relatively large turnover of staff in the last two years is mainly the result of promotions, retirements and a succession of staff in one post. Within departments there is a good balance of experienced teachers and those newer to the profession. The school has been awarded the Investors in People standard. This has helped to draw all sections of the school staff together.

95. The SEN department is well provided with effective staff. The coordinator is well trained and experienced, and support staff are either trained or in the process of training. They are well deployed. The department makes good use of professional help from outside the school.

96. Staff appraisal, based on the Berkshire scheme, continues to be a strength. The process identifies individual training needs and personal targets and makes a good contribution to the review and monitoring of teaching. Many teachers are in their third cycle

of appraisal. Programmes for appraisal, induction, in-service training and the training of new teachers are well prepared and include good documentation and record keeping. Governors provide good support. Their policies are regularly updated and cover most aspects of employment procedure and staff development.

97. Staff training serves the requirements of the development plan. Teachers undertaking training are required to evaluate the course, relate it to potential improvements in teaching and learning and, if required, inform others of what they have learnt. The requirements of the school's Investors in People status ensure that the training needs of all staff are considered.

98. The school has developed an effective induction scheme which includes regular instructional meetings, observation, monitoring and continuing support. Newly qualified teachers and others new to the school are well supported by the scheme. The school is actively involved in Initial Teacher Training and many departments accept students, mainly from Reading University.

99. Since the last inspection the school has maintained its good quality of staffing and continued to improve staff support procedures. Good practice in staff management has a positive effect on the success of the school.

The efficiency of the school

100. The school's financial planning is thorough and effective. The governors' finance committee and senior staff have made careful budgets for the current year, which they monitor at regular intervals. They have carefully controlled the use of reserves to ensure that expenditure has not exceeded income in the last two years, when numbers at Key Stage 4 have been relatively small. They have prepared useful analyses of future expenditure to cope with the expected rise in numbers which is now beginning. The strategic development plan is well costed for each item. Departmental plans are well prepared, and expenditure by departments is frequently reviewed by a member of the senior management team.

101. Financial control is efficient. The school's finance officer produces clear statements of expenditure for staff and governors. The most recent audit report of July 1997 confirmed that procedures were good and resulted in a satisfactory control over the budget. School administration is efficient. It produces a well run school with a calm, friendly and professional atmosphere.

102. The school makes good use of its resources. Funds are allocated to departments on a clear formula, though this formula has not achieved sufficient funding for the design and technology and religious education departments. Most departments, though, are adequately provided with resources. They are also well staffed, with teaching and support staff well deployed. The mathematics and modern languages departments are particularly well run, with very effective allocation of staff and financial control. The allocation of resources to the SEN department is effective also and the department is well staffed at all key stages. Funds for staff development are closely monitored and well used.

103. Accommodation is efficiently arranged, with well presented specialist rooms which make a good contribution to the quality of teaching and learning. The food technology room is relatively poorly equipped and sited, in comparison with standards in other departments. The lack or age of ICT equipment in some departments means that it is difficult for staff to exploit its benefits in daily teaching.

104. The headteacher and staff have been particularly successful in attracting new funding to the school through its status as a language college. This has allowed the school to equip the modern languages department very well for its extended role in the curriculum, to the great benefit of the pupils' learning. They have also succeeded in attracting a leisure centre to the school premises and so enhancing the district's recreational provision. The centre includes an attractive new swimming pool which can be used at times by the pupils.

105. The school provides good value for money. It makes effective use of its resources and achieves good results and very good standards of personal development.

106. Since the last inspection, the school has maintained its good standards of efficiency. It has met the key issue in the last report to evaluate the impact of spending decisions. There have been many improvements in the school's provision for SEN. It now offers a very efficient and effective service in this area.

PART B: CURRICULUM AREAS AND SUBJECTS

ENGLISH, MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCE

English

107. In the three years from 1996 to 1998, pupils' achievement at level 5 or above in the National Curriculum tests has risen from below to above the national average. Over the last three years taken together, results have been close to the national average. Results in 1998 were close to the average for pupils in similar schools. In the GCSE examinations in English and English literature from 1996 to 1998, the percentage of A*-C grades has risen, and has always been above the national average. At A level, the percentage of students obtaining A and B grades has fluctuated above and below the national average in recent years, but the pass rate was 100 per cent in 1999. Overall, standards are at least as high as might be expected and results have improved at the end of Key Stage 3 and in GCSE. A level results are appropriate for the attainment levels of the students.

108. By the end of Key Stages 3 and 4, attainment in lessons is above the nationally expected level. It is in line with the expected level at the end of the sixth form course. Pupils' work contains a wide variety of genre and inspiration, with good assessment of their performances by the pupils themselves. Pupils are often well aware of the need to produce work of good quality for a critical audience, and draft and redraft their work with care. All these factors raise attainment over a period of time and ensure good results, particularly in GCSE. Attainment in lessons at this early time in the school year is in line with nationally expected levels at all stages, and is not therefore as high as that shown in the tests at the end of Key Stage 3 and in GCSE. For example, pupils in a Year 7 lesson on *The Journey of my Life* attained average levels in writing and speaking. Pupils in a Year 11 lesson comparing *Animal Farm* and *Gulliver's Travels* had attained average competence in writing and critical knowledge of the texts. Standards are sometimes above average, for example in a Year 11 media studies lesson when pupils had a good knowledge of technical terms and applied them well. Pupils with special needs sometimes attain standards in line with those of all other pupils, as for example in a Year 8 lesson in which one such pupil read with clarity and expression. Standards in sixth form lessons are in line with those seen in examinations. At all stages, good teaching and positive challenge have the capacity to lift attainment above the average, and this is seen in the results achieved at the end of Key Stages 3 and 4.

109. Pupils' speaking and listening skills are strengths. At all levels, they speak clearly and make often well informed comments, backed with clear reasons. A good example of this was seen in a Year 12 lesson on *King Lear*, when students talked cogently about a production they had seen, with high standards of critical thinking and speaking for only the second lesson in the course. Both boys and girls make regular verbal contributions. Some pupils of above-average attainment reveal a wide and precise vocabulary, well pronounced, while those of average attainment speak clearly and often with confidence.

110. Reading skills are at least at the expected level. When pupils read aloud, they do so at least competently and sometimes well, with good intonation and clear enunciation. Pupils at Key Stage 3 generally read with confidence and fluency. Their written notes and answers in work seen from last year reveal a good range of reading, including plays, poetry, novels and short stories, confirms a good understanding of them. Reading is at or above expected levels in most classes at Key Stage 4. Pupils read accurately in lessons and give well informed answers and opinions, for example in their work on the GCSE anthology. Sixth formers read fluently and with pleasure in the A level course and GNVQ

students read competently, for example in gaining information when investigating different styles of communication.

111. Written work is generally carefully presented, at all levels, and many pupils take great care over the presentation of finished pieces, often word-processing and producing bound booklets which reveal a strong sense of what makes a good publication and a concern for accuracy. Some above average Year 9 booklets on *Romeo and Juliet* and stories written for local infant schools were produced. Most pupils spell and punctuate with accuracy. Across differing levels of attainment, pupils have a firm grasp of writing skills and are able to recognise errors when proof-reading their work. Pupils' accuracy in writing was greatest when they undertook written tasks in short periods of silence. The literacy programme succeeds in helping pupils to improve their levels of attainment and, when close attention is paid to vocabulary extension, they improve their range of expression.

112. Pupils' progress is always at least satisfactory and is good in around half the lessons seen at Key Stages 3 and 4. At these levels, pupils make good progress when they can respond to clear and challenging direction, and when the teacher gives work well designed for the different abilities in the class. Such a lesson was seen in Year 11, in which pupils closely analysed a series of advertisements and made very good progress, especially boys with learning difficulties, because the work was accessible to all abilities and the teacher made the lesson relevant and good fun. Pupils with special educational needs made good progress in a Year 8 lesson in which they read and listened to *Why the Whales Came*, because the teacher read and explained the story and background in an interesting way. In lessons when progress is satisfactory rather than good, pupils do not always know what they are expected to do and sometimes fail to stay on the task. Progress in sixth form lessons is generally satisfactory, though it was early in the term for students to demonstrate clear progress in new texts. Over their time at Key Stages 3 and 4, pupils make good progress in gaining skills and knowledge, as is shown in their examination results. Pupils with special needs also make good progress, especially because they are helped by the literacy programme to develop their basic skills. Sixth form students make satisfactory progress over the course to achieve results around the national average.

113. Almost without exception, pupils reveal interest in and enthusiasm for work in English. A far higher than average percentage of pupils take GCSE literature as well as English, and English is a popular subject at A level. Pupils generally concentrate well, and most teachers display an awareness of and swift response to inattention, which ensures good concentration. Relations between pupils and staff and amongst pupils are friendly and mutually supportive. Pupils collaborate well, even in unfamiliar groupings. The texts and themes studied ensure that pupils understand and show respect for the feelings, values and beliefs of others.

114. Teaching was satisfactory in half of the lessons seen and good or very good in the other half. Teachers' knowledge of English language and literature is generally very good and well imparted. For example, the teacher made good use of a close knowledge of Julian Barnes' *A History of the World*^{1/4} to pose sharp questions which helped students increase their understanding of the work. Teachers' expectations of pupils are often high and most lessons are conducted at a good pace, with well chosen resources. For example, because expectations were high and explanations clear, Year 7 pupils made rapid progress in learning how the library is organised. Most teachers use a variety of methods and some ensure that pupils read, write, speak and listen in every lesson, so keeping pupils engaged and motivated. Standards of discipline are high in most classes, and time is well spent. There are a few occasions, however, when the subject matter is too undemanding, for example in a Year 8 lesson on metaphors, when a minority of pupils reacted by laughing

and chatting.

115. The quality of teaching has improved since its already high level in the last inspection, with a higher number of lessons at Key Stages 3 and 4 being well or outstandingly well taught. Strategies to support improvement in spelling have resulted in greater accuracy in well-taught classes. ICT is now more frequently and effectively used. Writing skills are broader, and collaborative work is well established at all three key stages. Pupils of low prior attainment show confidence in discussion now. There still remains a need for teachers to plan differentiated tasks to enable more able pupils to make good progress.

Drama

116. Attainment of A*-C grades in drama at GCSE in the three years from 1996 to 1998 was above the national average. At A level in the three years to 1998, attainment has been in line with the national average, but the small numbers of students entered each year make such comparisons unreliable. In 1999, all seven candidates obtained a pass grade.

117. Attainment at the end of Key Stages 3 and 4 is above the national average level. Pupils use a range of techniques and approaches to give worthwhile and interesting interpretations of the ideas explored. Pupils who have special educational needs take the many opportunities given to attain high levels of achievement, both individually and as members of a group. Both boys and girls at Key Stage 3 achieve high standards in lessons, whether working in single sex or mixed groups. For example, standards were well above average in a Year 7 drama lesson when groups of pupils produced good tableaux, based on identifying different animals. At Key Stage 4, a group containing a number of pupils with special needs exceeded national standards in movement and the expression of emotion when they presented animated nursery rhymes, and pupils of average attainment achieved well above this level. In the sixth form, attainment is in line with the expectations for the course, including that of some students who have special needs. For example, all students in a lesson on dramatic irony responded well to good teaching and achieved the expected level.

118. Progress is always at least good. In the case of pupils in the Year 7 class experiencing their first lesson, progress was very good in working collaboratively to create and present tableaux. Pupils acquire, practise and improve upon their directing and evaluating skills, often by working through a series of stages that build systematically upon knowledge and understanding gained at an earlier point. They find the tasks challenging but realistic and therefore make good progress. As teachers are aware of the specific learning and behavioural differences and difficulties of pupils with special educational needs, they subtly adjust their teaching, grouping pupils skilfully, so that all pupils make at least good progress.

119. Pupils have very positive attitudes to learning in drama. Their response in lessons is very good, and take-up rates have increased in recent years for GCSE and A level. Pupils concentrate very well (well-monitored by teachers) because they are genuinely interested in the individual and collaborative work set, and the pace of lessons ensures full attention throughout the fifty minutes. Behaviour is almost invariably very good. Through the topics on which pupils focus in drama, they develop a sympathy and respect for others' feelings, values and beliefs. They form constructive relationships in a variety of groupings and readily take the initiative in directing, performing and assessing.

120. Teaching is invariably very good or excellent. Teachers' knowledge of their subject

is profound and very well imparted to pupils, of whom they have high expectations. The courses are well planned. A great variety of methods and organisational strategies is used, to address the intellectual and emotional needs of individual pupils and groups. Standards of discipline are very high, and lesson time is used very efficiently. Assessment by both teachers and pupils is well used to inform future performances. School productions, undertaken in collaboration with other expressive arts departments, are a successful aspect of school life, and the work of the department makes a strong contribution to pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development. Since the last inspection, standards have improved overall.

Literacy

121. Standards are above the nationally expected levels, at all stages.

122. Pupils listen well and respond readily to questions posed by teachers. They are sometimes more reticent to speak spontaneously about their learning or engage in genuine dialogue. Especially when encouraged by their teachers, pupils use relevant technical terms in their answers. In modern foreign languages, teachers provide good models of language use, and pupils who achieve the highest levels of attainment use opportunities to give presentations, visit local schools and make use of role play. Generally, pupils are articulate and confident when speaking and, especially in the sixth form, are willing to extend the range of their vocabulary. When given opportunities, pupils readily participate in group discussion. In PSE lessons, pupils listen to each other's points of view and take them into account when putting forward their own arguments as part of reasoned discussion.

123. Pupils who volunteer to read do so with understanding, and can answer questions on content, making relevant notes. They are encouraged to read aloud in English, history and modern foreign languages lessons, in which boys are unusually confident. When reading history textbooks, for example, pupils are able to select, summarise and synthesise information.

124. Higher attaining pupils write extensively, for example in producing design specifications, whilst lower attainers produce more limited pieces. Girls generally take more care over presentation of writing. Time restrictions in modern foreign languages limit pupils' opportunities to write extended pieces, but pupils are able to write well structured, extended essays in history. The variety of writing styles used in English, history and geography increases steadily as pupils progress through the key stages. Generally, pupils' presentation, expression, punctuation and spelling are at least average and sometimes above average. A successful example of the creative use of writing was seen in a Year 7 PSE lesson on the subject of living with disability, when pupils were encouraged to write in verse.

Mathematics

125. Pupils' attainment on entry is broadly in line with the national average. Their overall performance in the national tests at the end of Key Stage 3 is above the national average for level 5 and above, and well above for level 6 and above. Attainment is close to the average for schools with pupils from similar backgrounds.

126. GCSE results, in recent years, have always been above national averages. In 1997 66% attained grades A*-C, a very high performance compared to other years. The overall

percentage attaining A*-C grades in 1998 was 51%, still above the national average. Girls have attained a higher proportion of A*-C grades than boys in recent years, and as there were many more boys than girls taking mathematics in 1998, the relative decline is due to this factor. Results in 1999 were broadly in line with those of 1998.

127. Since 1995, all but one of 56 students entered for A level have been successful. The proportion attaining grades A and B has continued to rise to 55.6% in 1998, well above national averages. Provisional figures for 1999 show that all students have been successful in gaining pass grades. At all levels, standards in examinations and at the end of key stages are higher than those expected nationally.

128. Pupils' attainment towards the end of Key Stage 3 is above national expectations. Pupils' written work shows a good grasp of the use and application of mathematics, though such work was not seen during the inspection, at a very early stage of the school year. Pupils have a good understanding of number and algebra. For example, higher attaining Year 9 pupils rapidly devised the structure of a knockout football competition, while lower attaining pupils successfully recognised the number patterns generated. Almost all pupils show the working to their solutions. Their grasp of mental mathematics is strong at this stage, well above the expected level, and reinforced by constant practice in lessons. Pupils have a good understanding of space and shape. For example, they could readily find methods for finding the area of a circle. They handle data with confidence, for example when constructing frequency charts to establish expected probabilities when throwing coins.

129. Towards the end of Key Stage 4, attainment remains above the national expected levels. Their use and application of mathematics are clear and logical, for example in investigations of the measurements of a trapezium. Pupils use number and algebra well, though the benefit of the mental mathematics course has not yet extended to Key Stage 4. Higher attaining Year 11 pupils made accurate calculations to derive the relationship between heights and volumes of similar prisms. Lower attaining Year 11 pupils, most of whom will achieve a GCSE grade, demonstrate a good understanding of number, space and shape whilst calculating the areas of triangles. Standards of presentation are usually good but some pupils do not include sufficient working and do not explain their thought processes in words.

130. Attainment towards the end of the sixth form exceeds course expectations. The choice of an A level modular course is appropriate as it provides students with a wide range of opportunities to apply their knowledge and skills to real life situations. Year 13 students are enthusiastic about their mathematics, as illustrated by their A level modular coursework. Students following the statistics course successfully devised experiments and mathematical models to test the validity of telepathy. Their reports showed a good application of mathematical skills and expertise in ICT, often of high quality.

131. Most pupils in Key Stage 3 classes make good progress. The introduction of a programme in mental mathematics contributes strongly to their progress in number work, data handling and problems in space and shape. At Key Stage 4, classes make good and satisfactory progress in equal proportions. Particularly noticeable are gains in algebraic manipulation for higher attaining pupils. Sixth form students make good progress due to the mutual enthusiasm for mathematics which students share with their teachers. Careful setting arrangements, coupled with good assessment and monitoring procedures, together with teachers' knowledge of pupils are further factors that make a strong contribution to their progress at all levels. Pupils with special educational needs benefit from being taught in smaller groups and the support they receive from classroom assistants working in

partnership with teachers.

132. Pupils' behaviour is usually good and often very good. The majority are keen to learn and participate in the development of lessons. Pupils are able to sustain their concentration throughout the lesson, during which they listen well to both the teacher and their peers. They are also prepared to ask questions to gain further understanding.

133. Over half of the teaching seen was good and in a further small number it was very good. In only one lesson was teaching unsatisfactory. Teachers have good subject knowledge and a strong commitment to their pupils. For example, students in a Year 13 statistics lesson profited from the teacher's clear knowledge, which resulted in helpful, probing questions and rapid progress in knowledge. Teachers have created attractive, purposeful displays which aid pupils' learning and provide points of interest. They use their voices effectively conveying their enthusiasm and setting a good pace in lessons. Most lessons have a careful structure and teachers are good at anticipating the difficulties that pupils may encounter. For example, a Year 8 lesson on number patterns had a clearly planned sequence of events, with plenty of activities which led to a good pace, a sense of fun and clear gains in knowledge. However, one unsatisfactory lesson in Year 9 lacked this in-depth planning, so that pupils made little progress in their investigation of sequences. Teachers almost always make the lesson an effective partnership by starting each lesson by sharing objectives and ending with a review of what has been learnt. Good use is made of question and answer technique to establish levels of understanding and to develop the lesson, particularly during the mental mathematics sessions at Key Stage 3. Teachers usually listen very carefully to pupils' answers and build upon them. Supportive individual attention is given to pupils. This has positive effects, getting to know pupils' strengths and weaknesses as well as fostering good relationships. Teachers' control of pupils is usually very good and the use of humour and praise is effective.

134. The department's strength is due to clear and purposeful leadership, with much attention to detailed organisation. All teachers know precisely what is to be taught and how to take advantage of the good range of resources. Assessment is a real strength. Assessment of each unit is informative to both pupils and teachers and regular adjustments are made to the curriculum in the light of experience.

135. Since the last inspection, the department has kept up well with the considerable changes in the curriculum. Assessment procedures have improved. Examination results have improved, particularly at A level. Detailed bids to enhance mathematics teaching have resulted in the acquisition of 34 pocket book computers and classroom sets of graphic calculators.

Numeracy

136. The mathematics department has developed a mental mathematics strategy, partly as a result of attending the national numeracy training for primary schools, and began the scheme with the new entrants last year. As a result, numeracy is strong at Key Stage 3 and is at least at expected levels at other stages. Year 8 pupils, in particular, demonstrate a good understanding and fluency for number within their mathematics lessons. Pupils are successful in the application of understanding and skill to a wide range of numerical situations in all their subjects. In science, pupils are comfortable with fractions and decimals and write estimated answers before attempting more difficult calculations using a calculator. Collection and grouping of data is good in science and geography. In geography, pupils successfully choose methods of displaying this information in charts to augment essays and project work. However, in science pupils experience difficulty in

drawing predictions from graphs. Year 13 students teach successfully the skills they have learnt whilst using graphical calculators to new A level students.

Science

137. In the 1998 national tests at the end of Key Stage 3 the number of pupils reaching level 5 and above and level 6 and above is higher than in the previous two years and is well above the national average. It is above average in comparison with schools with pupils from similar backgrounds. The performance of boys is better than that of girls. The provisional results for 1999 are a little lower than those of 1998, but in line with those of previous years.

138. In the 1998 GCSE examination in science (double award) results at grades A*-C were close to the national average. Similar results to those of 1998 were obtained in 1999. This result was lower than that of the two previous years. No clear reason for this can be found, except that results have returned to the level reported in 1994. The performance of boys is a little better than that of girls. All pupils entering the examination in 1998 were awarded grade G or above, a better performance than the national average.

139. In the past two years all candidates taking A level science obtained grade E or better. In physics and chemistry numbers are too small to provide significant comparisons, but the number of candidates attaining the higher grades is low. In the 1998 examination in biology 30% of the candidates obtained grades A or B. This is close to the national average and similar to the previous three years. The provisional results for 1999 indicate a complete range of grades with all candidates obtaining a grade E or better.

140. Standards towards the end of Key Stage 3 are above average. Year 7 pupils are already handling apparatus competently and safely. Pupils in Year 8 are, for example, familiar with the way in which sound travels and have a simple understanding of frequency and wavelength. A Year 9 group was observed conducting an experiment on cooling whilst observing a similar experiment being carried out using a heat sensor and a computer. They were thereby able to improve their skills in science as well as learning how a computer can be used to capture data. Boys achieve a rather higher standard than girls, particularly in the recording of practical experiments.

141. Towards the end of Key Stage 4, standards are in line with the nationally expected levels. Pupils achieve a similar level in all attainment targets. For example, they demonstrate a sound level of understanding of living processes, seen in a Year 11 lesson on sensitivity and touch. In a Year 10 lesson, pupils had a sound knowledge of the structure of the earth and the way in which seismic surveys are used to detect oil. Attainment can sometimes be above average, for example in a study of homeostasis, Year 11 pupils reached a high level of competence when they carried out an experiment to show how acidity is controlled in the human body. Again, boys attain rather more highly than girls in their practical work.

142. Standards in the sixth form are in line with the expectations for the courses and match the range of grades obtained recently in public examinations. For example, Year 13 chemistry students have a sound grasp of chemical reactions, seen in a lesson revising the essential facts learned in Year 12. Year 12 students starting their course in biology have average skill and knowledge in food tests, while Year 12 physics students use their sound grasp of mathematics to estimate and measure mass, length and volume.

143. The quality of written work is sound for most pupils at Key Stages 3 and 4. It is good

for those with higher levels of attainment at Key Stage 3. Pupils' competence in handling number gives them good access to the National Curriculum, and pupils are particularly helped at Key Stage 3 by the mental mathematics programme. Sixth formers present their work well and some have very good number skills.

144. Pupils' progress is good at Key Stage 3 and satisfactory at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. Pupils enter the school with a level of attainment close to the national average, but good teaching results in levels moving to above average by the end of Key Stage 3. For example, a Year 7 class entered the laboratory with no previous experience of using laboratory apparatus. Through good teaching and a desire to meet the challenge of the task set them they were, by the end of the lesson, able to heat water safely in a beaker and use a thermometer to record changes in temperature.

145. There is continued, satisfactory progress at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. Progress is at its best when pupils are clear what they are doing and are presented with a variety of challenging activities. In some instances questioning reveals only a rudimentary knowledge at the beginning of the lesson but with good teaching and a positive attitude they can, at the end of the lesson, state with confidence what they have learned. Where expectations are high pupils often rise to meet the challenge. Pupils make similar progress in all four aspects of the subject – experimental science, life processes, materials and physical processes - but there is often a marked improvement in pupils' practical skills during lessons, and it is in this respect that boys' attainment is generally higher than that of girls at Key Stages 3 and 4. Pupils with special needs make progress equal with that of their peers.

146. In most classes pupils' response is sound and the standard of behaviour is very good. They have a responsible attitude to the use of apparatus and work well together. They are generally courteous both to adults and to one another. In some lessons, pupils do not have the chance to share enough in the activity and learning is passive. Sixth form students respond in a mature way and enjoy their work.

147. The quality of teaching was never less than satisfactory and in over two thirds of the lessons observed was good or very good. Teachers have very good knowledge of their subject and prepare their lessons well. Rapport with pupils is always good and humour is often used to good effect. For example, in the Year 7 lesson introducing pupils to the laboratory, the teacher's good knowledge of the equipment and its purposes enabled pupils to make good progress in a lesson which combined clear instruction with practical activity and enjoyment. In the best lessons, teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve and use a variety of activities to maintain interest. Resources, especially time, are used effectively allowing teachers to fit all of the appropriate activities into fifty minute lessons. However, in some lessons, even in those where teaching is otherwise good, pupils are given insufficient opportunity to join in. Such lessons are at times too highly structured. Notes are often copied from the blackboard rather than offering other ways of consolidating and recording information. In some of the lessons observed pupils responded positively to innovative teaching. For example, Year 9 pupils responded very well to the demonstration of the cooling of wax, plotted on a computer as this happened. Teachers have a good understanding of the requirements of low attaining pupils and those with special needs. Schemes of work are very comprehensive, indicating an alternative approach for higher and lower attainers. There is good liaison with support assistants. Teachers establish excellent relationships with sixth form students and share with them an enthusiasm for the subject. Practical work is always well organised. This is however often presented in a formal way and teachers do not always take the opportunity to introduce investigative skills such as predicting, analysing and considering variables. The frequency and quality of

marking are generally sound and used to set targets for groups and individuals. The use of ICT is limited due partly to the lack of suitable hardware.

148. The department has many strengths. Good leadership ensures that staff work with a sense of common purpose in the interests of the pupils. Teaching staff are ably supported by three laboratory technicians. Documentation is of a high standard and sets out clearly the department's policies and procedures. Although some laboratories have recently been refurbished with new benches and services, the remainder are barely adequate and one laboratory is very poor. Staff have tried hard through attractive wall displays to create a welcoming environment but the condition of some of the accommodation detracts from the quality of teaching and learning.

149. The department has responded well to the last inspection report and investigation skills are now good. Standards of attainment have improved at Key Stage 3 and in the sixth form and have been maintained at Key Stage 4. There is now no unsatisfactory teaching. Some of the accommodation is still inadequate and access to ICT resources remains limited.

OTHER SUBJECTS OR COURSES

Art

150. In recent years, GCSE results at grades A*-C have been below the national average. However, the proportion achieving grades A*-C has risen from 40 to 54 per cent over the last four years. The small numbers at A level preclude useful comparison with national data, but results in 1999 are an improvement on the previous year. Overall, standards are not yet as high as they should be in examinations, but are appropriate in lessons.

151. Standards are close to the expected levels towards the end of Key Stages 3 and 4, and above expectations in the sixth form. Throughout the school there is a good balance of two and three-dimensional work. At Key Stage 3 there is satisfactory work in the initial designs for the 'Lost' theme. Good work is evident in observational drawing and sketching, showing a good understanding of perspective, proportion and tonal range. At Key Stage 4, pupils show at least satisfactory work in their interpretation of the topic 'House & Home' and in creating a pub sign design. There are many examples of good research, and a clear sense of design, colour and style. The highest attainment is in the sixth form where students pursue individual interests and extend their range of strengths and skills. Much work is characterised by skilled drawing, painting and modelling, and a personal expression of the set theme. Generally, standards are higher in the work seen during inspection than those achieved in GCSE. This is because the school has put great effort into improving the quality of teaching in the department. Work seen in lessons also reflects good relationships and a common sense of purpose.

152. Pupils make satisfactory progress at Key Stages 3 and 4, and good progress in the sixth form. Over time, pupils make satisfactory progress at Key Stages 3 and 4 in the development of skills and imagination, making an increasingly personal response to the task. For example, Year 10 pupils made sure progress in the skills of lettering and some made original and personal responses in the styles they chose. In these stages, pupils increasingly learn the habit of sensitive and constructive criticism. They learn about the life of an artist, and are encouraged to link school art to experiences much further afield. During lessons, pupils improve their observational skills, using sketches as a research tool, learning to look more intently and developing their study skills. Just occasionally, some

pupils have difficulty developing ideas, concentrating, and in trying out sketches in rough. Pupils with special needs often make good progress, profiting from the practical nature of the subject and the setting of clear but obtainable goals by teachers. Students make good progress in the sixth form. For example, they made rapid progress in a still life class, drawing a collection of hats, profiting from the teacher's good knowledge and rapport with the students.

153. There are many examples of good behaviour and positive attitudes. Most pupils are good listeners, well motivated and committed to trying their best. Many pupils spend extra time on art projects at home and in the department. They work with care and pride, and clear away efficiently once the routines are known. Pupils are prepared to discuss their work, and are responsive to advice and new ideas. Older students show a good awareness of course and examination requirements. Many of them respond very well to the opportunities given to work in their own time in the department.

154. The quality of teaching is always satisfactory and usually good. Teachers are confident in their subject and very aware of the art world beyond school. They have strict rules, set appropriate challenges, and make sure pupils know what is expected in each lesson. There is usually a clear focus on a particular objective, for example layout, research, design or sketching. The importance of looking is frequently stressed. Teachers demonstrate and teach specific skills well, for example in planning the proportions of the face when drawing portraits. They provide a good example of respect for others' work and ideas. Pupils with special needs are very well supported. The best teaching includes carefully set homework, clear marking and target setting with the pupils, and careful record keeping. There was little evidence of the use of ICT during the inspection week, and the variety of activities planned for a lesson was not always carried out.

155. The well-balanced curriculum is considerably enriched by an impressive array of clubs, workshops, outings and foreign visits. Art makes a good contribution to pupils' personal development.

156. Progress since the last inspection includes better teaching in terms of planning, pace, variety and objectives. There are also improvements in observational work, drawing skills, ideas development and in the use of other artists. Standards of attainment have risen. Considerable effort has gone into improving teaching and curriculum development. Assessment procedures, evaluation of action plans and long-term planning are all insufficiently rigorous.

Design and technology

157. Attainment in design and technology is in line with nationally expected levels at the end of Key Stage 3 and just below national average at the end of Key Stage 4. Sixth form students attain broadly in line with expected levels. National Curriculum assessments at the end of Key Stage 3 in 1998 were in line with the national average and an improvement on the end of Key Stage levels in 1997. Standards are high enough at the end of Key Stage 3 and the sixth form, but not overall at the end of Key Stage 4.

158. Not all pupils take design and technology at Key Stage 4. GCSE results in 1998 for the pupils who did were just below national average overall, but well above national average in graphic products. Results in 1998 were an improvement over those in 1997, but performance in 1999 was below that of the last two years. Comparisons with national results in GCSE are complicated by the fact that not all pupils take the subject and by differing levels of attainment in the various subjects. In 1999, results in food technology

were lower than in graphics or resistant materials, but these differences reflect the different levels of attainment of the pupils in particular subjects. Girls attain higher results than boys overall. Individual results were in line with those in other subjects.

159. There are not enough results in A level examinations to make a valid comparison with national averages, but all nine students passed during the last three years and the number of grade A-B passes was just below average. Overall, results are high enough at the end of all stages and in GCSE and A level examinations.

160. In lessons towards the end of Key Stage 3, attainment is in line with expected levels overall, but pupils develop better analytical and research skills in resistant materials and graphic products than in food and textiles. In a Year 9 lesson pupils were seen analysing a design brief for a Novelty Appeal Project and were very competent in deciding on the criteria and specification for a product with either an electrical or mechanical movement. These pupils were able to talk about their work articulately and use technical terms appropriately. Standards of written work are in line with pupils' differing levels of attainment.

161. By the end of Key Stage 4, standards vary between subjects, but are overall just below the expected national level. Pupils achieve higher standards in graphic products than in resistant materials and food, but this difference is mainly due to the different levels of attainment of those taking particular courses. Pupils who take food technology have developed a good knowledge of nutrition and also achieve the Basic Food Hygiene Certificate. By the end of the sixth form course, students attain sound standards, develop good analytical skills as, for example, when they define an area for their coursework projects, develop specifications and then evaluate their work. A very good example seen was work by a student who decided to change a garden, design and model it and then evaluate it against his own criteria.

162. Progress is satisfactory overall for all pupils, including those with special educational needs, at Key Stages 3 and 4 and good in graphic products in the sixth form. Pupils learn to work with a range of materials and use tools and equipment competently as they progress across the key stages. Pupils make good progress in learning to develop design briefs, particularly in resistant materials and graphic products at Key Stage 3. Higher attaining pupils at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form consolidate this knowledge and understanding from Key Stage 3 and use information from outside their immediate experience in their project work.

163. At both key stages and in the sixth form pupils show enjoyment of their work and concentrate well in class. Behaviour is good and pupils work well alongside other pupils in practical rooms and show regard for health and safety. All pupils listen well both to the teacher and other pupils and show respect for other pupils' feelings and points of view.

164. Teaching is mostly satisfactory at Key Stage 3 and good at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. However, some very good and excellent teaching was seen during the inspection. Teachers have good subject knowledge, understanding and skills. For example, Year 13 students profited from the teacher's clear knowledge of phonometric drawing and made good progress in understanding and accuracy. Lessons are well planned and teachers share expected achievements with pupils. Most lessons have a range of activities including opportunities for pupils to read aloud. A Year 9 lesson on dietary goals was well planned, with relevant activities, so that pupils gained a sound knowledge of healthy eating. There is good use of questioning, often specifically targeted to make pupils think for themselves. Teachers have very good relationships with pupils. Marking of pupils' work is good and there are constructive comments and targets for further improvement.

165. The department is well led with a good ethos and a commitment to further development, particularly in improving design and the use of ICT in food and textiles. Accommodation is not very conducive to learning, particularly for food and textiles and there are some health and safety risks in the food room. At present the school is not meeting statutory requirements for all pupils to study design and technology at Key Stage 4.

166. Since the last inspection design standards have improved in resistant materials and graphic products and are improving in food and textiles. Work is becoming more demanding. The use of ICT is being developed in resistant materials and graphic products, but is still limited by lack of up-to-date resources. Electronics and control are covered at Key Stage 3, but not for all pupils at Key Stage 4. Pupils' work is displayed around the department, but there is still a lack of a good display area. Motivation in lessons is now good.

Geography

167. Each year since the last inspection GCSE results have been over 70% at grades A*-C, well above the national average. Girls in particular have improved from 67% A*-C grades in 1995 to 83% in 1998. Boys' results have been more varied, but always well above the national average. A*-G grades are also above average and initial analysis of 1999 results shows pupils performing better in geography than in the other subjects they take. A level grades have been in line with or just below the national average and reflect the positive entry policy and hard work of the department. Attainment is at least as high as expected in this subject overall, and higher in GCSE results.

168. During lessons at Key Stage 3, attainment is in line with expected levels. Thanks to good teaching, it is high by the end of the key stage. In Year 7, basic mapping skills are quickly put in place and throughout the key stage pupils learn to make good use of number. By the end of the key stage they can measure line and angle, use coordinates and construct a variety of graphs. Good examples of careful, thoughtful work abound in each year, from well illustrated work on reasons for choosing settlement sites in Year 7 to imaginatively written work on the skyscrapers and slums of Sao Paulo.

169. During Key Stage 4 attainment in lessons is also in line with expected levels and is high by the end of the key stage. Pupils have good general knowledge and have developed good spatial awareness. They perform well orally and in written work, but they need to extend their geographical vocabulary. In class, the difference between girls' and boys' performance is not so marked. Boys are better at verbal contributions and so benefit from the exchange of views, but girls work has sounder content and is better presented. Sixth form students are attaining in line with the nationally expected levels. They have sound skills in investigation and a good spatial knowledge.

170. At all stages, the lack of ICT provision is a weakness. There is little opportunity to develop skills in the department and ICT is not included in schemes of work. There are insufficient computers in the department.

171. Across the key stages and in the sixth form, progress is satisfactory in half the lessons seen and good in the remainder. Pupils of average attainment make good progress throughout the key stages. Written styles develop and by the end of Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form students are producing good essays and projects. They build on the basic skills learned at Key Stage 3 and hypothesise, gather data, analyse and reach logical

conclusions well. Understanding of more complex processes increases and can be seen, for example, in work in Year 10 on aspects of water supply and in sixth form work on confronting the problems of modelling urban development. Higher attaining pupils make satisfactory or good progress also. They make good progress when targets for achievement are specific and teachers' expectations demand high standards from these pupils. Lower attaining pupils and those with special needs make satisfactory progress, especially when receiving extra support. Boys and girls make equal progress in their work during lessons.

172. Geography continues to be a popular subject, and take-up at Key Stage 4 is good, although the number of girls choosing geography is falling. Pupils' behaviour is good in most lessons and never less than satisfactory. They are attentive, enthusiastic and good humoured. Pupils work well together and handle work with confidence. Conversations with individuals confirm their good understanding of the work.

173. All teaching is at least satisfactory and much is good. Teachers are well qualified, knowledgeable and very committed. These qualities make a positive difference to pupils' progress, for example in a Year 13 lesson on urban growth, when the teacher's command of the subject led to clear objectives, good questions from students and good gains in knowledge. Lessons are carefully planned, but some lack variety of approach and many would benefit from greater use of audio-visual resources to stimulate and maintain high levels of interest. For example, a Year 10 lesson on measuring the quality of life lacked a variety of activities and teaching techniques, so that pupils were engaged on the same activity for a long time. Teachers are friendly but insist on high standards of behaviour. They make lessons enjoyable experiences. For example, Year 7 pupils made good progress in learning about latitude and longitude because the teacher was positive, friendly and encouraging.

174. The levels of attainment and progress reported at the last inspection have been maintained over the last four years. This is a successful department.

• **History**

175. In recent years GCSE results at grades A* to C have been above or well above national averages. Results at grades A* to G have also been above national averages. At A level it is more difficult to identify trends because of the fairly small numbers taking the subject. However, in recent years results at grades A and B have usually been above national averages, and, except in one year, all students have attained a pass grade in the subject. Standards in history are high in general, and at least as high as could be expected.

176. Pupils' attainment towards the end of Key Stage 3 is slightly above the nationally expected level. Most pupils acquire a basic historical framework which enables them to place new topics in context and make effective links with previous work in history. They use a good range of sources to address historical questions; for example, work by Year 8 pupils on Elizabeth I includes study and discussion of some of the portraits of the Queen. The quality of oral work is often good and written work is usually well presented; higher attaining pupils in Year 9 produce some persuasive extended writing on aspects of 20th century history.

177. Attainment is above the expected level towards the end of Key Stage 4. Most pupils master the content of the GCSE course effectively and understand many of the underlying issues, such as the struggle for power in Russia after Lenin's death in 1924. They can extract and use information from historical sources successfully, and many pupils produce well structured, analytical writing. At this stage in the year, attainment in the sixth form is in

line with national averages. Most Year 13 students are developing a sound knowledge of the periods they are studying, and can analyse relevant historical issues and questions, such as the factors that led to Mussolini's rise to power in Italy after the First World War.

178. Most pupils, including those with special educational needs, make good progress at Key Stage 3. They extend their historical knowledge and develop relevant skills, especially in the use of sources. Pupils at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form also make good progress. They are usually well motivated, and prepared to work hard and seek help when needed. Most pupils enjoy history and are interested in the subject. Behaviour in class is good. Levels of concentration are high and pupils work well together in pairs.

179. The quality of teaching is never less than satisfactory; it is usually good and sometimes very good. Teachers know their subject very well, and have high but realistic expectations of what pupils can achieve. For example, in a Year 10 lesson on the peace treaties following the First World War, the teacher's good knowledge gave pupils clear tasks and goals and an excellent summary at the end of the lesson. As a result, pupils made rapid, secure progress. Tasks and activities are always well fitted to the purpose of the lesson, and effective provision is made for pupils of all attainment levels. In a Year 7 lesson on the Roman Empire, the teacher worked positively with the support teacher to provide very effective help to a pupil with special needs. Planning is well based, although sometimes the purpose of a lesson is not clearly identified for pupils. Teachers manage pupils very well, and work is carefully marked with constructive, helpful comments.

180. Good leadership and close collaborative working by staff help to make history a strong department in the school. The subject scheme of work is a useful document and forthcoming changes to the National Curriculum at Key Stage 3 will provide a good opportunity to revise it so that it is more clearly referenced to the national programme of study.

181. The good standards identified at the last inspection have been maintained. Assessment practice has continued to develop and the use of ICT has increased, particularly for researching information in history and for presenting pupils' work in a variety of ways. Greater access to IT equipment would encourage and promote development still further.

Information and communications technology

182. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 across the school in general is below the nationally expected level. In the separate ICT lessons seen during the key stage, attainment is sound for communicating and handling information. Pupils use word processing, desktop publishing, databases, spreadsheets and graphics packages well. In these lessons, many pupils can combine information from several sources within one document. Their attainment is lower in measuring and control as they are not given many opportunities to improve their competence. In these separate lessons, all pupils have good generic skills and can log on and off, load programs, save and print.

183. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 is below the nationally expected level, across the school overall. However, in the first year of GCSE information studies in 1999 results were very high compared with those in other subjects and attainment is very high during the present course also. The pupils who take GCSE produce work of a very high standard in communicating and handling information and modelling, with good evidence of drafting and redrafting. Pupils annotate their work well for future reference. For all other pupils at Key Stage 4, attainment is below nationally expected levels, as opportunities from cross-

curricular ICT are limited and pupils' entitlement to the range of required experiences is not ensured. There are limited opportunities for pupils to develop skills in measuring. Control is not covered during the key stage for any pupils.

184. There is no separate course in the sixth form and not enough activity involving ICT was seen in lessons at this stage to enable a judgement to be made about standards. However, students in vocational subjects handled basic word processing tasks competently in lessons, supported by good teaching and ready access to machines and good advice. Those starting their course in key skills for vocational subjects had very differing levels of competence. Some students had high levels of knowledge and confidence, having achieved high grades in the GCSE examination; others were without the basic knowledge they needed to carry out simple word processing tasks.

185. Progress for all pupils, including those with special educational needs, at Key Stage 3 is satisfactory during the separate ICT lessons, but unsatisfactory across the curriculum, as pupils are not given sufficient opportunities to develop their skills. Within the special needs department pupils are well supported by specific programs and make good progress. Pupils taking the GCSE information studies option make very good progress in word processing, desktop publishing, databases and spreadsheets and in their knowledge and understanding of the use of ICT in the outside world, including use of the Internet. They are very clear about what to do, get good help when they need it and are well motivated by good teaching. All other pupils at Key Stage 4 make very limited progress in their knowledge, understanding and skills in ICT as few opportunities are provided across the curriculum for them to improve their competence and make progress.

186. Pupils show very positive attitudes to using ICT and work well during the separate ICT lessons. Behaviour is always good and pupils work well when they are sharing computers or working in close proximity to other pupils. Most are confident in their use of ICT. They respond well and have a good rapport with their teachers. Many pupils choose to spend their lunchtimes using the computers or Internet either for research or to develop their own interests. A number of pupils use computers at home to develop their personal knowledge.

187. Teaching of ICT lessons varies from poor to very good, but is predominantly satisfactory. Not all teachers in subject departments have secure knowledge, confidence and skills in using ICT. It is best in GCSE lessons at Key Stage 4. In these, teachers have high expectations and are keen for pupils to produce high quality work, particularly in the GCSE course. GCSE lessons are well planned, have a good pace and their aims are well shared with the pupils. A range of activities is usually planned which includes pupils reading aloud as well as 'hands on' experience of computers. Marking of pupils' work is very good. Pupils are given constructive comments and targets to help them improve.

188. The role of the ICT coordinator has not been defined clearly enough to ensure good coordination of ICT across the curriculum. At present there is no whole school planning, monitoring or tracking of pupils' ICT experiences and capability across the whole curriculum. Equal opportunities and entitlement for all pupils are not ensured. Not all curriculum subjects include opportunities for pupils to use ICT in their schemes of work. Modern foreign languages, and business education at Key Stage 4 make good use of ICT and offer pupils sound opportunities to develop knowledge and skills.

189. Since the last inspection the school has replaced some of the old computers, but there are still a number of ageing computers in the school and these are limiting the work which could take place in subjects such as mathematics, science and design and

technology. There is a strategic development plan which should address some of the issues when the National Grid for Learning money is received later this year. Curriculum subjects are still not giving breadth and depth to pupils' ICT capability.

Modern languages

190. GCSE examination results have risen considerably since the last inspection when they were below the national averages for all maintained and similar schools. In 1998, results in French and Spanish were well above the national average and for German were above. Results were lower than previously in the school in 1999 as a consequence of changes in the ability levels of pupils entered. Pupils' performance was broadly in line with their achievements in other subjects. The gap between boys' and girls' attainment has generally been narrower than is the case nationally, reflecting teachers' awareness of possible underachievement among boys in languages. Over the last few years, A level results have fluctuated, but candidate numbers have been too low for valid comparisons with national averages. In 1998, however, out of 17 candidates taking French or German, eight gained an A or B grade. In 1999, provisional A level results showed a spread of grades from A to E; these results matched closely students' ability levels and their performance in other subjects. Overall, attainment is high enough at Key Stage 3 and in the sixth form, and higher than might be expected at Key Stage 4.

191. At Key Stage 3, observation of pupils in lessons and scrutiny of their exercise books show that attainment is in line with nationally expected levels. This performance relates closely to the 1999 teacher assessments of pupils at the end of Year 9. Throughout the key stage pupils listen very attentively to the teacher and to tapes in the classroom and in the language laboratory. Many develop good pronunciation by copying the good models teachers provide consistently. In Year 7, for example, pupils could already say numbers in French very enthusiastically and in Year 8, beginners in Spanish were already exchanging greetings with each other. The majority of pupils can pick out the main points in reading passages appropriately chosen for their complexity, and the higher attainers in Year 9 show good recall of words they have come across previously. By Year 9 the higher attainers and some middle attainers can use the past and future tenses accurately, although in French they do not write at enough length, because all are learning two languages.

192. At Key Stage 4 pupils perform in lessons at above nationally expected levels. By this time pupils have caught up on their writing skills and the best work seen in exercise books shows both flair and accuracy in descriptions of homes and families. Some diaries kept by pupils on their visits to Spain are of excellent quality. Pupils extend their listening and speaking skills well with the added incentive of working at their own speed in the language laboratory. In one German lesson, pupils of varying attainment levels using the same listening passage undertook different tasks very effectively. Lower attainers and pupils with special educational needs generally perform well in the small groups created for them and make good progress.

193. Attainment in the sixth form is in line with expectations for the A level courses in French, German and Spanish. There is, however, a relatively wide range of attainment in all classes. The higher attainers express their opinions in written and spoken form well and have a wide vocabulary over a range of topics, but less talented students are more hesitant in speaking and are less sure of correct grammar and expressions. None of the languages in the Year 12 general studies programme was seen, because the inspection took place before the programme had begun.

194. At both key stages, pupils at all levels of attainment make good progress in lessons.

This is because pupils are attentive, listen well to the teachers and are kept busy throughout each lesson. In Years 8 and 9, however, pupils make less progress over time in French than in Year 7. They have one lesson fewer in French in Year 8, because all are required to study a second language. The lack of time is made up to some extent at Key Stage 4, since all pupils continue with two languages in Year 10. Current arrangements in Year 10 and 11 have been planned carefully, but pupils' progress, particularly that of the middle and lower attainers, needs close monitoring throughout the key stage to ensure that earlier good progress is maintained. Students in the sixth form make good progress. They have ample opportunity to practise the language with the teacher and language assistants and, in the monitored listening and reading private study programme, use excellent materials including the Internet. They also have very good opportunities to spend time abroad.

195. Pupils are interested in the languages they study and the great majority are pleased to be doing two languages. They behave very well in lessons. The wide range of visits and exchanges for all pupils is taken up enthusiastically. In the sixth form, many students appreciate the opportunity either to continue with a language they have already begun or begin a new one, Japanese or Italian. This course includes a work experience placement in Italy.

196. The teaching is mostly of good or very good quality. Nearly half the lessons seen were good and nearly half were very good. The remaining lessons were either excellent or satisfactory. Virtually all teachers use the foreign language consistently well and make sure pupils follow. Teachers' expectations of behaviour and of what pupils can achieve are nearly always very high. Lessons are well planned with a wide range of language activities, including games, songs, video and computer work. Lesson time is never wasted and teachers encourage much purposeful learning by setting clear objectives and keeping up a good pace. Teachers have good arrangements to assess their pupils and work closely with them to set realistic short-term targets. There is, however, little evidence of the re-drafting of corrected work, particularly at Key Stage 4. Students in the sixth form receive very good guidance on study skills.

197. The head of department has managed expertly the raising of standards in languages since the last inspection, when GCSE results were below the national average and teachers did not use the foreign language sufficiently in the classroom. Together with a strong and committed team of teachers, the head of department has created a very good language-learning environment and encouraged other departments to develop an international dimension to their work. The excellent resources and accommodation have contributed to the improvement in standards. The community coordinator in the department continues to develop valuable links with the local community in primary, secondary and special schools.

Music

198. In recent years, GCSE results at grades A*-C have been variable compared with the national average, but have been below in 1997 and 1998. Results for 1999 are also below the school's performance in music for previous years. The very small numbers at A level preclude useful comparison with national data. Since the last inspection, six candidates have taken and passed the examination. Standards are as high as they should be in lessons, but not in GCSE results.

199. Overall standards seen in lessons are in line with expected levels. By the end of Key Stage 3, pupils reach expected levels in singing, inventing Indian music, and in their

understanding of contrast in pace and dynamics. They can make their own arrangement of a simple piece. Standards are high in lessons seen during Key Stage 4, where classes now contain many pupils of high attainment in music whose current performance is higher than that reflected in previous results. There are good standards in ensemble and composition, and very good standards in the analysis of set works. Competence in notation is more variable. Some pupils have an assured grasp while others cannot apply their knowledge accurately. Students at A level readily identify features in musical extracts, improvise on a set theme, and notate simple rhythms and melodies. Standards at A level are in line with expected levels for the course.

200. Pupils make at least satisfactory progress at all stages in the school, and progress is generally good at Key Stages 3 and 4. Over time, they learn new technical terms, develop historical understanding, and practise from past test papers. During lessons, pupils make good use of time because they understand the task, listen carefully, and are receptive to advice. Pupils make a good start on new topics, for example in a Year 7 lesson in which pupils made good progress in singing technique. In a Year 10 lesson on Haydn's *Trumpet Concerto*, pupils made good progress in knowledge of the concerto form by listening hard, taking detailed notes and benefiting from the teacher's good knowledge of the subject. Progress is satisfactory in the sixth form, where students were seen learning technical terms and performance techniques for guitar and piano. Pupils with special needs make progress in line with that of others, at each stage. For example, in a Year 8 lesson on Indian music, two such pupils made good progress; they were attentive and followed the development of the lesson well.

201. Pupils are nearly always well behaved and attentive. They work well together on keyboards and can share ideas for a group composition. Older pupils ask more questions, and there is much evidence of enjoyment in composition and performance practice. There is always an individual response to an inventive task. Take-up rates for examination courses are fairly low and variable, but there is very good involvement in regular music and drama productions.

202. The quality of teaching is satisfactory and often good. Teachers provide good role models of musicianship. In one Year 10 lesson on renaissance music, the teacher's good knowledge and willingness to play and simplify pieces for pupils having difficulty helped them greatly to make progress. There is an emphasis on all the practical aspects of music, and many lessons include practical activities, as in a Year 11 lesson on arranging group ensembles. The best teaching includes planned support for literacy, so that pupils are not prevented from making progress by any lack in basic skills. Teachers make the lesson's objectives clear to pupils, who are also well primed as to the requirements of examination courses and assessments. Relationships are good and praise is frequently given, as much for effort as for achievement. Year 7 pupils were much encouraged in their first music lesson by the teacher's pleasure in their performance. Pupils' understanding and progress are frequently checked during lessons, but there is insufficient attention to more detailed assessment procedures and reports. A few lessons do not allow pupils sufficient time for productive practical work.

203. Although extra-curricular music and peripatetic provision are low for the size of the school, there is always good participation in regular productions and very strong links with the community. The department is already benefiting from having a second member of staff. Music contributes to some assemblies, drama and modern language teaching. The chance to join in activities outside the classroom makes a positive contribution to the attainment of those who do so.

204. Many improvements have been made since the last inspection, though GCSE results have not improved. There is a wider range of teaching styles, and there is now sufficient time for music at Key Stage 3. The balance of activities in the curriculum has improved, with singing, playing, listening and composing now provided at all key stages. There are still no computers, but the new electronic keyboards are put to good use. The main teaching room is now attractive and stimulating. The quality of teaching has also improved and pupils have more chance to explore music for themselves.

Physical education

205. Pupils were entered for GCSE sports studies for the first time in 1998. The proportion of A* - C grades achieved was slightly below the national average. Results achieved this year are higher and compare well with those in other subjects in the school.

206. Attainment at the end of each key stage is above expected levels. At Key Stage 3, pupils understand the basic elements of fitness. Most pupils show sound individual skills; they can communicate effectively in games and perform well linked sequences in gymnastics. Pupils of higher attainment use a variety of skills and tactics to outmanoeuvre opponents in games. Their performance in gymnastics is characterised by continuity, good shape and effective use of space. Lower attaining pupils in volleyball and badminton lack the range of shots to make returns consistently. At Key Stage 4 most pupils understand the physiological effects of exercise on the body and plan effective tactics to beat opponents in games. Carefully planned and managed tasks are set by teachers further to develop pupils' individual learning. In a Year 11 orienteering lesson pupils successfully designed a course, organised a search for clues and accurately analysed their partner's performance. GCSE written work is generally well presented but lacks the enhancement of ICT. The attainment levels of boys and girls are similar.

207. Pupils' progress across the attainment range during both key stages is at least satisfactory and in most lessons is good. As pupils move through the school their understanding of health related fitness factors increases; they develop better tactical awareness and improve their ability to evaluate performance. Improvement is aided by a well planned and challenging teaching programme. Pupils with special needs are often given work adapted to their ability. They make progress in line with other pupils and a fair proportion develop into school team members. In a Year 11 GCSE practical lesson, the teacher's effective use of modified tasks and instructions, with the good support of an assistant, resulted in less able pupils making progress beyond expectations. Pupils' attitudes to learning are good at both key stages. They listen to instructions; communicate well in group work and confidently try new skills. Pupils' relationships with teachers are very good. The pace of lessons is brisk and pupils concentrate well. They act responsibly and safely.

208. The quality of teaching is good in all lessons. Teachers have a very secure knowledge of the subject. Their expectations are high, particularly in regard to performance, behaviour, kit and safety. The methods used are sufficiently varied and interesting to maintain good levels of concentration. For example, in a Year 11 fitness lesson the well planned use of very good equipment, supported by useful work sheets, resulted in pupils considerably improving both their knowledge of target training zones and their ability to measure and analyse test data. GCSE homework is set and marked regularly, but teachers do not make enough use of ICT. Extension work for high attainers is readily available through extra-curricular sport but is not so apparent in lessons.

209. Statutory requirements for planning the National Curriculum are met and a broad

and balanced programme is offered at both key stages. However, curriculum time in Year 10 is not enough to cover adequately each area of activity. Provision for sixth form sport is poor. The sixth form timetable allows few opportunities for participation; there is no games afternoon and sports-related examinations are not available. Throughout the school, around half of all pupils participate in a wide range of extra-curricular sport. Staff and club coaches give valuable assistance. Individuals and teams perform successfully at district, county and, sometimes, national levels. The subject makes a considerable contribution to pupils' social development.

210. Progress has been satisfactory since the last inspection. GCSE sports studies have been successfully introduced.

Religious education

211. By the end of Key Stage 3, pupils' attainment is in line with the expectations of the locally Agreed Syllabus, although in some instances it is above average. Pupils know stories from the Bible, such as the Creation and Fall, and they can apply their own opinions to debates. For example, Year 9 discussed whether infant baptism makes a child a Christian. Year 7 studied some difficult questions, for example that of capital punishment and whether there is life after death.

212. All pupils study a GCSE short course over the two years of Key Stage 4. Attainment overall, by the end of the key stage, is at the nationally expected level. Pupils are involved in studying gender issues and the role of women in religions. For example, in Year 11 they were comparing the old and the new marriage services, the equality of vows, and the Church's attitude towards women priests. In Year 10 pupils understand the various forms of prayer such as praise, thanks and petition, as part of their work on worship. There have been no GCSE results since 1997 for a full course. Since 1998, pupils have taken a short course, achieving 49% of entries at grades A*-C, above the national average. Results were somewhat lower in 1999, at 44%. There is no course or examination in religious education in the sixth form.

213. Pupils at both Key Stages 3 and 4 make good progress, helped by good teaching and motivation. They study a topic over a series of lessons and make good progress in building up their knowledge and understanding. For example, pupils in Year 10 have considerably increased their understanding of what a Christian upbringing involves, and of the nature of worship, belief and values. Pupils work at a good pace and are learning the key concepts of the topics, such as the idea of commitment in the ceremonies of coming of age, for example confirmation or bar mitzvah.

214. Pupils behave very well and work conscientiously. At times they can be passive and the teacher does most of the work, but this can change markedly when a new challenge is presented. For example, in Year 9, pupils responded very well to giving an oral presentation in the form of a television chat show. They displayed a high level of involvement and enjoyment. In general, they concentrate well and work hard. They are positive and willing to learn. They work well together, sharing research and ideas. They respect one another's contributions towards a discussion, and follow the teacher's instructions well.

215. The quality of teaching is good, and has a good effect on pupils' progress. Teachers display a good understanding of the subject and often provide extra depth and cross references for the topic. For example, in discussing baptism, pupils were told about symbolism, Biblical references, and the use of blest oil in some churches. There is a range

of levels in teachers' expectations. Sometimes the challenge is low, but at times this increases to a very good level and pupils' enthusiasm is heightened. For example, the chat show role-play lesson in Year 9 was very well led by the teacher, in character, and with close attention to detail. Planning is good, and securely based upon the Agreed Syllabus for Key Stage 3. The methods used have sufficient variation and are greatly enhanced by involvement from pupils in the discussions, debates and role-play lessons.

216. Teachers manage and organise pupils very well, and there were no discipline problems during lessons seen. Time and resources are well used and assessment is efficient and helps teachers plan for the future. They meet frequently to discuss their work. The subject makes a good contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils, who have time to consider prayer and worship, moral issues such as abortion and euthanasia, and to study social customs such as commitment in marriage.

217. Resources are adequate but there are insufficient artefacts for world religions, and too few books for pupils to use, especially at Key Stage 3.

218. There has been improvement since the last inspection, especially in setting the schemes of work securely within the Agreed Syllabus, and offering the GCSE short course to all pupils at Key Stage 4.

PART C: INSPECTION DATA

SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE

219. The team of 12 inspectors spent the equivalent of 47 days in the school. The team observed 182 lessons, in whole or in part. They spent a total of 179 hours observing lessons, tutor time and registration periods, assemblies and talking with pupils about their work in classrooms and informal situations. Of that time, about 24 hours were spent reviewing pupils' written work.

220. Daily assemblies were attended as well as registration periods, break times, lunchtimes and a range of extra-curricular activities. Observations were made of pupils' behaviour outside lesson times. The provision for pupils with SEN was also observed. Discussions were held with members of the governing body, the headteacher, teaching and support staff, parents and helpers in the school. The team scrutinised a large range of papers including minutes of governors' and staff meetings, financial statements, policy documents, teachers' records, reports and attendance registers. Before the inspection, the registered inspector held a meeting attended by 33 parents. An analysis was made of 86 parents' questionnaires (12% of those sent out), the results of which were shared with the school.

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	789	18	124	50

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers (Y7 – Y13)

Total number of qualified teachers (full-time equivalent)	48
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	16.5

Education support staff (Y7 – Y13)

Total number of education support staff	20
Total aggregate hours worked each week	400

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes:	78.5
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Average teaching group size:	KS3	25
	KS4	22

Financial data

Financial year:	1998-1999
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	£
Total Income	1819837
Total Expenditure	1824658
Expenditure per pupil	2517
Balance brought forward from previous year	32540
Balance carried forward to next year	27719

PARENTAL SURVEY

Number of questionnaires sent out:
Number of questionnaires returned:

729
86

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	30	56	13	1	0
I would find it easy to approach the school with questions or problems to do with my child(ren)	51	46	2	1	0
The school handles complaints from parents well	31	46	21	2	0
The school gives me a clear understanding of what is taught	21	58	16	5	0
The school keeps me well informed about my child(ren)'s progress	29	51	14	4	2
The school enables my child(ren) to achieve a good standard of work	29	57	9	4	1
The school encourages children to get involved in more than just their daily lessons	29	59	8	2	2
I am satisfied with the work that my child(ren) is/are expected to do at home	24	61	5	9	1
The school's values and attitudes have a positive effect on my child(ren)	29	59	9	2	1
The school achieves high standards of good behaviour	27	59	12	2	0
My child(ren) like(s) school	41	48	7	4	0

Other issues raised by parents

Several parents commented in their questionnaires on the good quality of leadership given by the headteacher. They found the school welcoming and appreciated the standard of work and the range of activities.

The parents' meeting was attended by 33. Opinion was very positive on all matters. A few parents said that the school had not responded to their requests for information. There was some anxiety about the number of teachers in science, caused by the illness of one teacher whom it had been very difficult to replace.

Attendance at the meeting and the number of questionnaires returned were modest, perhaps due to the need to send invitations to parents at the end of the previous school year. However, the positive opinions of parents are supported by the findings of this report.