

INSPECTION REPORT

THE GARTH HILL SCHOOL

Bracknell, Berkshire

LEA area: Bracknell Forest

Unique reference number: 110069

Headteacher: Mr S. Turner

Reporting inspector: Mrs Val Lynch

Dates of inspection: 26th – 29th March 2001

Inspection number: 209196

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 11 to 19

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Sandy Lane
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Berkshire

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Appropriate authority: The Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Dr J. Baildam

Date of previous inspection: December 1998

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19874	Joseph Fitzpatrick	Team inspector	Religious Education	How well are pupils taught? (Teaching and Learning)
6044	Roger Perkins	Team inspector	Mathematics	
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30433	Christopher Corp	Team inspector	Science	
2866	Robert Battey	Team inspector	Special Educational Needs Art and Design	
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12721	David Riddle	Team inspector	Information and Technology	How good are curricular and other opportunities?
3755	Trevor Hulbert	Team inspector	History	How well is the school led and managed?
22501	Sue Jones	Team inspector	Music	
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14446	Barry Simmons	Team inspector	Physical Education	
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Garth Hill is a mixed 11-18 comprehensive community school on the north side of Bracknell town centre. Most pupils come from two estates where there is a mix of small private and council houses. The remaining pupils come from villages on the northern outskirts of the town. A number of pupils who could attend the school from more advantaged areas attend other state or private schools. The school, with 1243 pupils on roll, is larger than other secondary schools, but numbers have fallen this year with fewer pupils than usual joining the school in Year 7.

The school has a small percentage of minority ethnic pupils and the percentage of pupils with English as an additional language is low. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is 6.3 per cent, which is below the national average and reflects the high levels of employment in Bracknell.

Pupils' attainment overall when they join the school at age 11 is below the national average. However, the attainment of the pupils who are currently in Years 9, 10 and 11 was well below the national average when they joined the school. Three per cent of pupils have a statement of special educational needs. This is slightly higher than most schools. The percentage of pupils on the special educational needs register is 20.9 per cent, slightly above the national average.

The school was inspected in December 1998 and was found to have some important weaknesses. The LEA and governors asked HMI to visit the school and in 1999 HMI reported that, although some progress had been made, the school still had a lot of work to do. The school has gone through a very unsettled period with many changes in staffing and four headteachers or acting headteachers in as many years.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Pupils make good progress in Years 7 to 9 from sometimes well below average attainment when they join the school, but this progress is not maintained in Years 10 and 11. Many pupils underachieve in their GCSE examinations, mainly because they do not attend school regularly. Teaching is satisfactory overall. A new headteacher is vigorously tackling the issues still outstanding from the inspection in 1998. The school provides satisfactory value for money. The school is currently not achieving as well as it might and much work still needs to be done.

What the school does well

- Pupils' test results at age 14 are better than expected.
- Examination results, opportunities and teaching in the sixth form are good.
- Teaching is good in drama, history, physical education and music.
- Many teachers are willing to give their own time to help pupils and students.
- Pupils' progress in Years 10 and 11 is regularly checked to make sure that those who attend school do their best in their GCSEs.
- The new headteacher has a clear vision for the school and has the support of the governing body, staff and the LEA.
- Pupils and students receive good help and advice about their future career plans.

What could be improved

- Attainment by the age of 16.
- The behaviour of a small, but significant, number of pupils.
- Pupils' attendance and punctuality.
- The curriculum in Years 10 and 11.
- Arrangements to support pupils with special educational needs.
- The way senior staff take responsibility for making sure that agreed policies and procedures are followed.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made some progress on the key issues from the previous inspection, but the uncertainty caused by changes in the leadership of the school and the problems with recruiting high calibre permanent teachers have limited this progress. More recently the new headteacher has addressed the issues related to senior management.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 16 and 18 year olds based on average point scores in GCSE and A-level/AS-level examinations.

Performance in:	Compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1998	1999	2000	2000
Key Stage 3	C	B	D	
GCSE examinations	D	D	D	
A-levels/AS-levels	D	D	C	

Key

well above average A

above average B

average C

below average D

well below average E

When pupils join the school their attainment is below and sometimes well below the national average. Pupils make satisfactory and sometimes good progress in Years 7 to 9, but do not sustain it through to their GCSE examinations. Attainment in the sixth form is close to the national average and pupils make good progress in the sixth form, particularly on vocational courses.

In 2000, National Curriculum test results were better in mathematics than in English and science. Test results vary too much from year to year and have not improved. The standards of work seen in English are unsatisfactory, but in science they are better than the test results indicate. Not enough pupils achieve the nationally expected standard in art, modern foreign languages, religious education, music and information and communication technology. The work seen during the inspection confirms these below average standards. In 2000, GCSE results in food technology were above the national average. Results in all other subjects were below the national average and in English, science, geography, French, German, art and drama they were very low. This is largely due to pupils' poor or erratic attendance. In the sixth form, students' results in business studies are above the national average. In 2000, all pupils studying for a GNVQ intermediate award in leisure and tourism successfully completed the course. Overall, results are lower now than they were in 1996, but have improved on what was achieved in 1999.

National data compare the school with similar schools that also have between 5 and 9 per cent free school meals. Such schools are likely to be found in areas with favourable social circumstances and would have a number of higher attaining pupils. Because there is high employment in Bracknell the free school meals figure is low, but the school does not have the higher attaining pupils to enable such a comparison with similar schools to be fair. The inspection team believes that to include these figures would be unfair to the school and its pupils.

The school set ambitious targets for GCSE results in 2000 and did not achieve them. Governors have set ambitious targets for 2001 and 2002 based on the information they now have on individual pupils.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Satisfactory: most pupils come to school and want to learn. A small number of pupils in each year do not want to work and either disrupt lessons or do not come to school.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Unsatisfactory: although it is satisfactory and often good outside lessons there are too many pupils, particularly but not only boys, who take advantage of temporary staff to prevent themselves and others learning.
Personal development and relationships	Satisfactory: although limited because pupils have too few organised opportunities to take on responsibility and to show initiative in lessons and around school.
Attendance	Unsatisfactory: attendance in many lessons during the inspection was below 90 per cent in Years 7 to 11. Punctuality is also unsatisfactory.

The school successfully promotes positive attitudes in the majority of pupils. Relationships between most adults, pupils and students, and amongst their peers are satisfactory. Behaviour around the school is satisfactory, particularly during break and lunchtime when pupils have access to parts of the building with minimum supervision. However, behaviour overall is unsatisfactory because of a small number of pupils who disrupt lessons when teaching is only just satisfactory. The high proportion of temporary staff is having an unsettling effect on the attitudes and behaviour of pupils.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged 11-14 years	aged 14-16 years	aged over 16 years
Lessons seen overall	Unsatisfactory	Satisfactory	Good

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

Teaching is satisfactory or better in 90 per cent of lessons; it is good or better in 56 per cent of lessons and is very good or excellent in 16 per cent of lessons. Teaching is unsatisfactory in Years 7 and 8 because the school has chosen to make sure that permanent specialist teachers teach examination classes in Years 10 and 11 and the sixth form. The teaching of English in Years 7 to 11 is unsatisfactory. Not enough of the work is focused on pupils' needs or closely matched to the ability levels of both higher and lower attaining pupils. Although pupils have many problems reading and writing, they are not always given the help necessary to improve these basic skills. Similarly, the needs of pupils on the register of special educational needs are not being tackled in a sufficiently thorough and reliable manner and these pupils are not making sufficient progress. The teaching of mathematics is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9, good or very good in Years 10 and 11 and good in the sixth form. The teaching of basic skills in mathematics is satisfactory. The teaching in science is satisfactory and often good. The quality of teaching in the sixth form is generally good. Teaching is a strength in drama, history, physical education and music. Teaching is too often unsatisfactory in geography, religious education and information technology lessons.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory: a wide range of subjects are taught in Years 7 to 9, but there are not enough vocational courses in Years 10 and 11. The opportunities provided in the sixth form are good.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Unsatisfactory: although pupils have opportunities to take all subjects, the arrangements for giving them help means that they miss some lessons. Not enough time is given to planning how their needs will be met.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Unsatisfactory: pupils follow a similar curriculum to their peers, but where there is a pupil at the early stage of learning English no additional help is provided.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Satisfactory overall: whilst provision for spiritual, moral and cultural development is satisfactory not enough time is given to developing pupils' social skills so that they can help and learn from each other.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Satisfactory: teachers are very caring for pupils and students, but there is not enough time for tutors to help pupils on matters to do with their personal and academic development.

The school is very committed to working closely with parents, but has not yet got the confidence and support of all parents. There are not enough opportunities for pupils to use information and communication technology, particularly in other subjects. In Years 10 and 11 statutory requirements are not met in this subject. There are too few vocational courses in Years 10 and 11 to meet the needs of all pupils. The school is very diligent in checking that pupils in Years 10 and 11 make progress, but can only do this for pupils who attend school regularly. The provision for careers education and guidance is good. Major weaknesses are in the monitoring of pupils' attendance and implementing the behaviour policy. The large number of temporary staff in the school does not help.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Satisfactory: the new headteacher is working closely with governors and the LEA to tackle the root causes of the school's difficulties. The leadership and management skills of other senior and middle managers are there, but are underdeveloped
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Satisfactory: governors know the strengths of the school and where it needs to improve, but there are some areas where governors have not been sufficiently rigorous in fulfilling their responsibilities.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Unsatisfactory: the school thoroughly analyses GCSE results, but does not systematically evaluate teaching and learning and use this information to identify where and how improvements can be made.
The strategic use of resources	Satisfactory: resources are used to support the school's priorities in its development plan.

The school does not have enough specialist and permanent teachers and, despite every effort, finds it difficult to recruit new staff. Accommodation is satisfactory, but there are problems with electrical capacity and drainage, associated with years of neglect by the previous LEA. Resources for learning are satisfactory, but there are still not enough computers for all pupils to use them regularly to help their learning. Although the headteacher and governors have a clear vision for the school, senior and middle managers do not make sure that day-to-day systems and procedures work effectively. Governors have not fulfilled their responsibilities in relation to special educational needs and information and communication technology. The school applies the principles of best value to its work. The school cannot address the main issues of staffing, attendance and behaviour alone and needs the help and support of all parents and the community to ensure that its plans and aspirations are fulfilled.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The expectations that the school has. The range of activities outside lessons. The school is comfortable with questions or problems. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pupils' behaviour. The amount and frequency of homework. The information they receive on their children's progress. The way the school works with parents. The leadership and management of the school. The way the school helps pupils to become mature and responsible.

Twenty-two parents attended the parents meeting, similar to the numbers in other schools. Only 103 responses to the questionnaire were received which is very low. Both the questionnaire and the meeting had a number of negative responses that were not totally supported by the pupils or other parents that inspectors spoke to during the inspection. Many older pupils were incensed that the school's reputation in the community was low and felt that this did not reflect their experiences.

The school is working hard to improve links with parents, but has had limited success. Inspectors share parents' concerns about pupils' behaviour and the quality of information they receive from the school. Although the information is satisfactory, inspectors agree that this could be better. The annual reports are too brief to give parents all the information they need to assess their children's progress. Parents are justifiably concerned about the inconsistent use of homework diaries and the fact that some homework set is not marked, and on some days none is set.

Inspectors share some of the parents' concerns about the leadership and management of the school. Their concerns are more to do with day-to-day management, which results in procedures not always being followed. Inspectors agree that more could be done to help pupils become mature and responsible, but also found that not all parents play their part and support the school in helping their children to become responsible for their own behaviour and for getting to school.

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. When pupils join the school the results of tests taken when they are 11 indicate that attainment overall is below average. This is because there are fewer higher attaining pupils in the groups that transfer. The attainment of pupils at ages 14 and 16 is also below average. Attainment in the sixth form is close to the national average, and is better than would be expected on the basis of below average GCSE results two years previously. Test results at age 14 are lower than they were four years ago; GCSE examination results have improved very slightly. GCE A-level results have remained close to the national average.
2. National data also provide a comparison with similar schools on the basis of free school meals. The school is compared with schools that have between 5 and 9 per cent free school meals. Such schools are likely to be found in areas with favourable social circumstances and would have a number of higher attaining pupils. The expectation would be that these schools would do better than schools nationally. Because there is high employment in Bracknell the free school meals figure is low, but the school does not have the higher attaining pupils to enable such a comparison with similar schools to be fair. The inspection team believes that to include these figures would be unfair to the school and its pupils.
3. In 2000, pupils' National Curriculum test results taken at the age of 14 in English and science were below the national average. However, in mathematics results were close to the national average. Test results in mathematics vary greatly from year to year, but are similar to what they were four years ago. Results in English and science have been declining over the last two years. The standards of work seen in English are unsatisfactory, but in science they are better than the test results indicate. The attainment of these pupils was well below the national average when they joined the school. They have made good progress to achieve results just below the national average, largely because they achieved well in mathematics and science.
4. Teacher assessments show that a high proportion of pupils achieve the nationally expected standard in design and technology and history. Not enough pupils achieve the nationally expected standard in art, modern foreign languages, religious education and information and communication technology. The percentage of pupils attaining the nationally expected standard in music is low, but teacher assessments were inaccurate and the percentage is not as low as the assessments suggest. The work seen during the inspection confirms the below average standards in all these subjects with the exception of music and modern foreign languages, which indicates that pupils should do slightly better in assessments in 2001. There are not enough permanent specialist teachers in art and religious education, which is having a negative impact on standards.
5. Girls do better than boys in the national tests in English, and boys do better than girls in mathematics and science. In lessons in Years 7 to 9, boys do better than girls in science and history whereas girls do better than boys in art and geography. Although the school has looked at girls' underachievement, strategies to tackle it have not been followed through. Hence the variation across subjects.
6. In 2000, the results in the GCSE examinations taken when pupils are aged 16 are below the national average. Although the percentage of pupils gaining five or more

GCSE grades A*-C is below the national average, the percentage of pupils gaining five or more GCSE grades A*-G is very close to the national average. Results in food technology are above the national average. Results in all other subjects were below the national average and in English, science, geography, French, German, art and drama they were very low. The percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more GCSE grades A*-G was better than the national average in business studies, geography and history. GCSE results have not improved over the last four years. In 2000, girls' results improved whereas boys' results declined. The school is aware of the differences between the achievements of boys and girls in different subjects and years through analysis carried out in departments. Over the last three years pupils have made unsatisfactory progress in Years 10 and 11 on the basis of what they achieved in tests at the end of Year 9. The most significant factor that contributes to this is pupils' poor or erratic attendance.

7. Standards of work seen in English continue to be below the nationally expected standard. In mathematics, the standard of work seen is satisfactory. In science, the standard of work is satisfactory and is better than last year's examination results indicate. The school is predicting a 10 per cent improvement in science results, which on the evidence of work seen is possible. The standard of work seen in physical education is good. Work seen in geography and information and communication technology is unsatisfactory and in art standards of work seen are poor.
8. In the sixth form, students' results are close to the national average for GCE A-level courses. The results for students on the advanced GNVQ in business studies are above the national average. In 2000, all pupils studying for a GNVQ intermediate award in leisure and tourism successfully completed the course. Results are lower now than they were in 1996, but have improved on what was achieved in 1999. The standard of written work seen in A-level physical education is good. The work seen on the information technology course was below the standard that should be expected because students have little previous experience on which to build.
9. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in design and technology and physical education. This is because teachers in these subjects plan their lessons to meet these pupils' needs. Their progress is unsatisfactory in English, science, art, history, information and communication technology and religious education. There are a number of reasons for this. When pupils are withdrawn from lessons for specialist help they make good progress in their basic literacy skills, but miss work in other subjects. The school has pupils on Stage 1 of the special educational needs register, which is the stage when individual teachers make their own arrangements to help. Not enough teachers are taking account of these pupils' needs when planning their lessons. Most importantly, the special educational needs co-ordinator spends a lot of her time teaching small groups and, therefore, is not able to support other teachers or check that pupils are being helped as much as they should be.
10. Many pupils enter the school with low levels of literacy and this affects the standards they attain across all their subjects. More capable pupils can read the materials they are presented with in lessons, identifying the main features and recognising different layers of meaning. Other pupils read accurately, but do not always fully understand what they read or are able to look below the surface at what the author is trying to tell them. Writing skills are weaker than reading skills. Many pupils have difficulty with spelling and punctuating their writing and do not develop their work with detail to ensure that it is interesting to the intended reader. Most pupils try to write in an appropriate style, but only higher attaining pupils do this with flair.
11. The contribution of numeracy to work in subjects across the curriculum is largely

positive. Pupils use number and measurement well in science, geography, history, design and technology and information and communication technology. Their overall numeracy skills are satisfactory. They interpret information from tables, statistics, graphs and diagrams and draw appropriate graphs to display data effectively. In geography, pupils draw plans and maps to scale and compare features of different climates graphically. They interpret information displayed in bar charts and pie charts.

12. Only a small proportion of pupils have English as an additional language, and only one is at the earliest stages of language acquisition. Whilst most pupils achieve in line with their peers, there are no specific arrangements to support the one pupil who needs additional help and, consequently, progress is unsatisfactory.
13. The school does not identify pupils who are gifted and talented. Higher attaining pupils achieve in line with their prior attainment, but do not benefit from a wider range of more challenging opportunities.
14. The school set ambitious targets for GCSE results in 2000 but did not achieve them. Challenging targets have been set for 2001 and 2002 based on the information the school now has on individual pupils. They are particularly ambitious for 2002 as that year's test results at age 14 in 2000 were lower than the results in 1999.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

15. The school successfully promotes positive attitudes and values in the majority of pupils. However, behaviour overall is unsatisfactory because of a small, but significant, number of pupils who disrupt lessons by their immature attitudes, disrespect and at times insolence to teachers. Some improvement has been made since the previous inspection when the behaviour of a significant number of boys was identified as a problem. The high proportion of temporary staff is having an unsettling effect on the attitudes and behaviour of pupils, particularly in Year 7.
16. Most sixth form students provide good role models for younger pupils, but they are concerned about the behaviour and attitudes of some of these pupils. Pupils' and students' personal development is satisfactory, although it is limited because pupils have too few organised opportunities to take on responsibility and to show initiative. Relationships between most adults, pupils and students, and amongst their peers are satisfactory. Younger pupils report that there is some bullying, but that they have found the school's procedures to deal with this effective,
17. Although pupils' attendance according to statistics is over 90 per cent, overall it is unsatisfactory. Statistics analysed during the inspection show attendance is below 90 per cent in all years. In Years 7 to 9, too many pupils arrive late or are absent and internal truancy is becoming a real problem. In Years 10 and 11, attendance further deteriorates and in addition some pupils do not turn up to lessons, although they are officially on site. Sixth form students are more committed to their education and though some arrive late for registration the majority attend all of their lessons and work hard.
18. Most pupils are enthusiastic about school and work well together, benefiting when lessons are well planned and teaching is stimulating. However a few, most of whom are boys and already disaffected, find it amusing to ignore teachers and to disrupt lessons. When teachers' expectations are too low and the immature behaviour of these pupils is allowed to dominate a class, progress for all is limited. In Years 10 and 11, this inappropriate behaviour continues and achievement is dependent upon the teacher's ability to control and interest pupils in the subject. When teachers

provide stimulating lessons and control the class well, the results are very different. In a Year 10 drama class, for example, pupils appreciated a well-designed and interesting task. They worked very hard because the task made them enthusiastic and because the teacher appreciated their efforts and the quality of their performance.

19. Behaviour around the school, despite narrow corridors and sometimes crowded staircases, is satisfactory, as it is also in the dining hall. Nearly all pupils behave sensibly during break and lunchtime when they have access to parts of the building with minimum supervision.
20. The satisfactory attitudes and behaviour of pupils who have special educational or other needs are largely dependent on whether teachers have planned specifically for their needs. Their personal development is also satisfactory. The one pupil who is at an early stage of learning English relies largely on friends for help and support in lessons.
21. Pupils like the rewards for attendance and achievement. Sanctions are known and most accept these as fair. However, for a minority the acclaim from some of their peers for having their names on the board, being sent to the *Time Out* room or being excluded for a fixed period outweighs the punishment. This attitude devalues discipline procedures, particularly when teachers implement them inconsistently. This culture amongst the few is unbalancing the importance that most pupils attach to rewards and sanctions. Fixed term exclusions are increasing, although the number of permanent exclusions has reduced since September.
22. When pupils and students are trusted to carry out tasks they do these well. Year 7 pupils act as door monitors at lunchtime and those in Year 8 are keen to assist staff in the office on their designated day. Year 9 pupils who help in the library over lunchtimes do so conscientiously. All can empathise with the misfortune of others. The 'slave auction' organised by sixth form students in order to raise money to entertain old age pensioners realised over £1,000 and was much enjoyed by all.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

23. A general characteristic of the good teaching seen was a brisk and effective start to the lesson, with pupils getting down to work straightaway with no time wasted. In these lessons, pupils were often challenged to show good understanding of previous learning and to recapitulate points made in recent lessons. Teachers managed pupils well, keeping on top of the class, monitoring their learning and their behaviour closely and constantly reminding them of where they should be if they were to meet the agreed objectives. Instructions were clear, were repeated and pupils' understanding was checked to ensure that they were clear about what they had to do and why they had to do it. Teachers made clear to pupils the kind of behaviour that would not be tolerated and, without losing time, indicated the boundaries of acceptable behaviour. They planned work with the pupils' specific needs in mind, matching tasks to pupils' abilities. Pupils were suitably challenged and the lesson often ended with a plenary session where pupils were required to demonstrate what they had learned and learning points were skilfully reinforced.
24. In Years 7 and 8, close to half the teaching was no better than satisfactory; a further 14 per cent, a higher than usual amount, was unsatisfactory. Although there was good teaching in these years, and some that was very good, the general quality of teaching suffers because of the high percentage of lessons taken by supply teachers, who in many cases are not specialists in the subjects they teach. The sharing of classes by two or more teachers also adversely affects the continuity of pupils'

learning and, in some cases, reduces the quality of homework since no single teacher has responsibility for this and standards are allowed to fall. In some cases when teachers teach a class only once a fortnight, the gap between lessons impairs the quality of learning and teachers are not able to form a close relationship with the pupils, and in some cases do not know their names. This, in turn, makes it harder for them to manage pupils' behaviour effectively. The proportion of unsatisfactory teaching is greatest in Year 7 where the amount of supply teaching is also greatest.

25. For example, in one Year 7 lesson where teaching was unsatisfactory, the teacher and the pupils arrived late and it took the teacher some time to settle the class. The lesson was interrupted by the need for some pupils to leave the class and by other teachers looking for particular pupils. The learning objectives were not clear and the lesson lacked appropriate direction and purpose. Pupils became bored because they were not involved enough in their learning and some began to call out and became disruptive. By contrast, an excellent drama lesson involving Year 8 pupils began with pupils briskly and without fuss clearing away tables and chairs and sitting in a circle. The learning objective was shared with the pupils and discussed so that they knew exactly what was expected of them and how to set about their tasks. Building on previous learning, the teacher led the class in discussion by means of skilful questioning and through the provision of clear assessment feedback in a sensitive manner after each pupil's solo performance, identifying strengths and areas for improvement, helped them to make progress. Pupils were involved in their tasks, felt reinforced by the teacher's praise for their efforts and clearly enjoyed the lesson and the challenge they experienced in thinking things through and expressing their ideas. The teacher used the arrival of a pupil very late in the lesson as an opportunity rather than an occasion for disruption, by asking the pupil a question, drawing him into the lesson and getting him to demonstrate before the rest of the class.
26. The quality of teaching and learning in Years 10 and 11 is generally better than in earlier years, assisted to some extent by the structure and demands provided by the GCSE examination syllabuses. Teachers generally show good subject knowledge and combine this with clear learning objectives and good knowledge of the pupils' previous learning to match tasks to the pupils' needs. Pupils usually respect their teachers' expertise and are prepared to learn. At times when the teachers take on too much of the work of the lesson, pupils are inclined to sit back and adopt a passive role. Teachers sometimes underestimate what pupils know, understand and can do and do not challenge them sufficiently to solve problems, think things through or draw conclusions on their own. In one excellent mathematics lesson in Year 11, the teacher challenged the high ability pupils to solve certain problems using graphs. Knowing individual pupils well and quick to pick up any lapses of concentration, the teacher prompted the class throughout by hinting at procedures they might attempt and stressing the importance of accuracy. Extension work was provided for the most able. The lesson ended with an excellent whole-class session in which the teacher pulled together the pupils' discoveries and entered them on the board. The pupils recorded the outcomes for use in future work on graphs.
27. Too much of the teaching seen in Years 7 to 11 requires too little creative effort from the pupils. On some occasions, teachers are inclined to 'spoon-feed' the pupils in order to contain the potentially disruptive behaviour of a small number. In some lessons, pupils have little to do other than fill in the missing words on a worksheet. Not only does such teaching fail to develop pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding, it also usually proves to be counterproductive as bored pupils, recognising a habitual teaching format, become restless, noisy and disruptive; the pace of work slackens and some pupils cease working altogether. Yet in interviews pupils said they preferred teachers who were strict and kept good discipline; most

pupils want to work and resent the disruptive behaviour of a vocal minority. They do not like teachers who accept inaccurate work or fail to insist on written work being completed or corrections being done. But they also appreciate teachers who know them, know their names and show them respect. They like homework that is set regularly, provided it is taken in and marked speedily. Those pupils who receive early and accurate feedback indicating their strengths and weaknesses and showing how they might improve make the best progress.

28. The teaching of English in Years 7 to 11 is unsatisfactory overall. There is not enough emphasis on planning to meet pupils' needs nor to matching work to the ability levels of pupils, particularly the higher and lower attaining pupils alike. The provision made to meet pupils' needs in the basic skills of reading and writing does not always reflect the problems the pupils experience in these areas. In a similar way, the needs of pupils on the register of special educational needs are not being tackled in a sufficiently thorough and reliable manner and these pupils are not making sufficient progress. For the most part they are withdrawn from lessons, including English lessons, to work in small groups with the designated special educational needs teacher; but they do not make up for the work they are missing and fail to make sufficient progress in overcoming their learning difficulties. Teachers of pupils with special educational needs in mainstream lessons can usually identify them and provide their individual education plans on request; but these plans tend to be general and are not sufficiently specific to individual pupils. They do not indicate the steps that have to be taken by the pupils in the subjects concerned. There is virtually no teaching aimed at pupils who are gifted or talented and no special provision is made for the one pupil in the school who is at an early stage of language acquisition in English. Support staff in lessons usually target pupils on the register of special educational needs and help them keep abreast of their work; but too often the work of support staff lacks direction because they have not been involved sufficiently in planning the sequence of work being undertaken.
29. The teaching of mathematics is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9, good or very good in Years 10 and 11 and good in the sixth form. The teaching of basic skills in mathematics is satisfactory overall. Mental exercises are included at the start of many lessons and attention is given to key words and their meaning. However, key words are not displayed with sufficient prominence in classrooms and not enough time is devoted to work on numeracy. The teaching of key skills in information and communication technology is satisfactory. In Years 10 and 11 it is good, because most of the teaching is carried out by specialists.
30. The quality of teaching in the sixth form is generally good; only one lesson was seen at this stage where teaching was less than satisfactory. Lessons are well planned to help pupils make the transition from Year 11 to the more independent learning expected in the sixth form. Teachers are adept at adjusting content and methods to suit the ability of individual pupils and the structured approach taken in the GNVQ courses helps the pupils taking these courses. In some cases, in small A-level groups with large variations in attainment between students the most able pupils are not fully stretched. There is a lack of peer competition and challenge to enable them to make the progress they are capable of making. In most cases, both GNVQ pupils and those following A- and AS-level courses make good progress because of well taught lessons supported by the teachers' good subject knowledge. Some pupils show a weakness in handling extended writing, a legacy carried over from their work in Years 10 and 11, particularly in organising their writing and structuring their analyses and arguments for maximum effect. Pupils are helped to improve by means of good feedback based on accurate and penetrating assessment. In mathematics, for example, weaknesses are fully diagnosed and highlighted and pupils are given ample

directions on how to improve.

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

31. There is a wide range of subjects taught in Years 7 to 9, including religious education, drama, a second modern foreign language and personal, social and health education.
32. In Key Stage 4, a wide range of GCSE courses is available. However, this curriculum is not relevant to the needs of all pupils. The school is currently reviewing provision, with the possible intention of increasing vocationally based courses with different forms of accreditation. A small number of Years 10 and 11 pupils are following an alternative curriculum, which includes motor vehicle studies off-site. This element is popular with these pupils, but they do not currently have a full programme of activities. Pupils are able to study information and communication technology to GCSE level, but there is inadequate provision for pupils not following an examination course and statutory requirements are not met for this subject. The lack of sufficient resources and the insufficient co-ordination of information and communication technology in other departments restrict pupils' opportunities to use computers as they should do in all subjects.
33. Pupils have a broad choice from a good range of courses available in the sixth form. This includes A-level, AS-level and vocational courses. The increase in range is an improvement since the previous inspection and good links with Bracknell College contribute to the variety of opportunities. All pupils take part in a general studies course. There is no programme for physical education in the sixth form, although pupils can opt for such an activity in their recreation time.
34. The two-week timetable means that in some subjects that are only taught once a week the time between one week's lesson and the next is too long. This presents difficulties, for example, with the issue and collection of homework. Pupils find the system confusing. The lower than average teaching time in all years is to be increased in September 2001.
35. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is unsatisfactory. Pupils take all subjects, but when they are withdrawn for literacy support they miss some of their work in other subjects. Insufficient attention is given to help pupils to catch up with what they miss. The content of the curriculum in many subjects, such as English and science, is not always relevant or matched to their needs. The organisation of the work in some departments into mixed ability classes often leads to pupils with special educational needs being overlooked. There is too little support for pupils at Stages 2 to 4¹ of the Code of Practice². Many of the examination courses in Years 10 and 11 have little relevance to these pupils. There is no specific provision for the one pupil who is at an early stage in learning English.
36. Given that pupils' literacy levels are low when they join the school in Year 7, the school has been slow to react to recent developments in the teaching of literacy. The

¹ Stages of special educational needs range from Stage 1, when limited additional help is provided from within the school, to Stage 5, which ensures that a pupil has a statement that outlines his or her needs and shows what additional support that pupil will receive. Stages 3,4 and 5 involve external specialists as well as staff in the school.

² Code of Practice – this gives practical advice to schools and LEAs about their responsibilities and tasks to ensure that pupils that pupils who have a special educational need receive the most appropriate help.

newly appointed literacy co-ordinator has been on training courses and has plans to spread this training to all members of staff. However, some positive work on literacy already takes place, for instance, in drama and mathematics where pupils are expected to use the specific language of the subject. Many classrooms have displays of key words and in a few lessons these are used effectively. These examples of good practice have not yet spread to all subjects.

37. The provision for the teaching of numeracy is part of the mathematics curriculum and is satisfactory. There is some good usage in other departments, for example history. In information and communication technology in Year 8, pupils utilise the measurement of angles when controlling the movement of an on-screen image.
38. A satisfactory range of additional activities supplements the curriculum. In physical education, drama and design and technology the choice is good. There is good provision of revision clubs in Years 10 and 11, for instance, in science and information and communication technology. Regular outside visits support the teaching of history. There is limited use of fieldwork and no residential trips to support geography. There are no foreign exchange trips linked to modern foreign languages at present, but one is planned.
39. Improvements have been made to the personal, social and health education programme and this is now satisfactory. It includes citizenship, careers, sex education and drugs education. Through this programme pupils learn about relationships, racism, family life, healthy living and money management. It helps them to prepare for life after school.
40. There is an effective system in place for careers education, which led to an award for excellence last year. This starts in Year 9 as part of the personal, social and health education programme, where pupils are given guidance on choosing examination options. A good induction programme prepares pupils for entry into the sixth form. In the sixth form, there are very effective links with universities. Pupils also have the opportunity to visit institutions such as a Civil Service training centre. Pupils temporarily excluded from school also have access to careers advice.
41. There are appropriate links with the community, some of which lead to work placements for pupils on vocational courses. All Year 10 pupils have work experience placements. Visiting speakers enrich the curriculum, for example, when taking part in assemblies. Pupils in Year 7 have had the opportunity to take part in a Mathematics Marathon run by a local business partnership. Pupils in Year 12 carry out community service. There are appropriate links with feeder primary schools and prospective pupils have the opportunity to take part in 'taster' lessons. However, not enough emphasis is placed though on the social needs of pupils in planning the Year 7 curriculum. They move from a primary school where they work largely with one teacher and one group to a situation where they encounter many teachers and different groupings. This year the number of temporary teachers in the school makes this situation worse. The school also has strong links with teacher training establishments.
42. The school's provision for the spiritual development of pupils is satisfactory. Assemblies contribute to this by providing a reflection on a theme such as 'giving and receiving', the theme of the week at the time of the inspection. Religious education provides opportunities for pupils to gain insights into the values and beliefs of Christians and of the proponents of other world faiths, and into the role of beliefs in shaping the lives of people who have made a powerful and positive contribution to society. Spiritual themes are also pursued in several subjects, such as drama, where

pupils through their study of *Macbeth* learned of nemesis and complicity in evil. Prayers are sometimes included in assemblies, but the school does not fully meet its statutory obligation to provide a daily act of collective worship.

43. The well planned personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme enables pupils in Years 7 to 11 and in the sixth form to discuss moral issues as well as to weigh and compare the responses of the various religions to the complex ethical issues of our time. Moral issues are also discussed in several subjects, such as English, drama, geography and religious education, where pupils are expected to support their views with evidence and arguments. During the inspection, some Year 8 pupils acted out scenes in assemblies depicting the evil of bullying, conveying a strong moral message. They were assisted by members of the Youth Fellowship group who visit the school regularly and whose contributions to assemblies, religious education lessons and to after school clubs contribute positively to the pupils' spiritual, moral and social development.
44. Subjects like physical education, drama and music make valuable contributions to the social development of the pupils. They teach pupils to work co-operatively and to show respect for each other and for school property. Pupils develop good social skills by taking part in the annual productions put on by the drama and music departments working in partnership. Sixth formers contribute to the life of the school by helping with pupil support in the special educational needs room and in organising and running, for example, an annual party for senior citizens as well as taking responsibility for their own social functions. There are, however, relatively few opportunities provided through the curriculum for pupils to exercise initiative or to show qualities of leadership. Few schemes of work highlight these qualities and the dominant teaching styles tend not to encourage or nurture them. The school needs to think further about developing the social skills of pupils, many of whom behave in immature and socially gauche ways and betray a lack of a true sense of responsibility for others.
45. Subjects like music and drama introduce pupils to some of the outstanding contributions from their native British culture as well as those from other cultures. In music, for example, pupils in Year 8 learn about Indian music and those in Year 10 study Latin American music. Pupils in Years 7 to 11 learn about the customs and practices of other cultures through their study of non-Christian religions by means of video films and the scrutiny of religious artefacts. Visits contribute to the cultural enrichment of pupils. Recently, Year 9 pupils paid a visit to the Imperial War Museum as part of their work in history and sixth formers visited Russia last year. While the school's contribution to the cultural development of pupils is not a strength, it is satisfactory overall.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

46. The school has satisfactory procedures to promote the health and welfare of pupils and students. The revised health and safety policy came into effect in October last year and the health and safety committee meets every other month. Risk assessments have been carried out in all departments. Staff on the pupils' reception deal effectively with most problems that arise, including first aid. At least five first aiders are on site at all times and physical education teachers know what to do in emergencies. Child protection guidelines are followed, although the school recognises the need to give training to the many new members of staff. Security is always under review and staff who look after the site try to keep the site free from litter and to give the same service as when there were three in place. Toilets are causing problems for all concerned and most pupils are angry that vandalism by a few means

that toilets are often locked and are in an unsatisfactory condition.

47. The school has a new and well-written attendance policy, but procedures for monitoring attendance are limited by teachers' inconsistent use of the electronic system. This is in part due to the inexperience of the many temporary and supply staff. As a result, these procedures are unsatisfactory because they are providing inaccurate information. Certificates are given for good attendance and the educational welfare officer works closely with the school on initiatives to improve attendance levels. Parents, pupils and students are regularly reminded of the importance of good attendance and punctuality.
48. During the inspection an impromptu fire drill occurred and evacuation was swift. Whilst this demonstrated the school's good systems for evacuation, pupils admitted that they 'text' their friends who are not in lessons to ensure they present themselves in time for the roll call on these occasions. Internal truancy is the next problem to be tackled, although some teachers, tutors and heads of year are already quick to contact parents if pupils do not turn up to their lessons. The headteacher has asked for a more detailed analysis of attendance.
49. Pupil absence, much of it parentally condoned, is a major influence on the below average figures for pupils gaining GCSE grades A*-C. The present management systems are failing to make inroads into the problem of persistently poor attendance. Late arrival, with some pupils taking advantage of the two-week timetable to excuse their lateness, is further reducing the effectiveness of teaching. The system for registration is not providing accurate data and the data is not acted upon quickly enough. During the inspection attendance figures in some lessons were too low, but the school does not know for sure whether pupils are registering and then missing some lessons.
50. Satisfactory procedures are in place to support pupils who have individual education plans, but these are less good for those at Stages 2 to 4 of the special educational needs register. No pupils are formally assessed and identified as being at Stage 1. This means that teachers do not know when they need to provide additional help and support other than through their own assessments of these pupils' progress. It also means that there is not a coherent support plan to meet these pupils' needs in all subjects.
51. Procedures for promoting good behaviour are not yet effective. In September 2000, the school introduced a detailed behaviour policy, but not all staff consistently implement it. Some staff use the sanctions too quickly while others put up with poor behaviour for too long to the detriment of the rest of their class. Because of this inconsistency the credibility of the policy is diminished. One senior teacher is always on duty to go to classes if behaviour is getting out of control or to find those who are not at lessons. The school has a good system for recording the improvements in the behaviour of pupils experiencing difficulties. Teachers record their comments on a form after each lesson so that heads of year and tutors can see if progress is being made. Pupils, who find the help that they receive there valuable, appreciate the pupil support base used for lessons in basic literacy.
52. All permanent teachers have a wealth of data available on the results of tests taken by pupils when they are 11, scores in other nationally recognised tests and test results aged 14. These are used to set targets for individual pupils in their GCSE examinations. During Years 10 and 11 there are three performance review days when the timetable is suspended to allow tutors to meet with parents and pupils to review work in all subjects. This includes information on predicted grades against

potential grades and overall attendance against attendance in lessons. This has proved a very positive and motivating experience for pupils, their parents and teachers.

53. In Year 11, two groups of pupils are mentored in order to help them achieve better examination results. There are twice as many boys in these groups. One group is mentored by staff in school and this is well structured and supported by a work diary where pupils record their difficulties to raise at the meeting. The rationale for the other group is not so clear and pupils spoke about having general conversations about whatever they wanted to talk about. Student progress is well monitored in the sixth form with regular progress reviews based on potential grades and students' own assessment of their progress. No matter how good these processes are they do not work if pupils do not come to school. Mentoring only starts in Year 11, but attendance problems start early in Year 10 so mentoring is not used to support older pupils in attending school.
54. Assessment procedures are good in mathematics and design and technology and in these subjects and in geography there is good monitoring of pupils' and students' academic progress. Procedures for assessment are unsatisfactory in art and the use of assessment information is unsatisfactory in art, science and for pupils with special educational needs. It is poor in English. In all these subjects, the monitoring of pupils' academic progress is unsatisfactory.
55. Whilst departments use information on attainment to decide on pupil groupings in Years 7 to 9 there is no evidence that it is used to plan the curriculum or to plan teaching and learning specifically. Informal assessment of pupils' needs has led to appropriate changes in GCSE syllabuses in drama, science and modern foreign languages.
56. The school's systems for monitoring and promoting pupils' personal development are largely informal and not yet satisfactory. There are too few opportunities for pupils and students to take on responsibility. Most tutors know their pupils well and recognise those who need extra attention, but tutorial time is too short to do much more than register pupils and check through their homework diaries. Time for work with tutors is to increase in the autumn term. Pupils feel less secure where there is no permanent tutor and although heads of year fill the gaps as best they can they have limited time in which to do this. Many pupils and students appreciate the help that their regular teachers give them, often in teachers' own free time. Personal, social and health education is well planned and taught. Outside agencies, such as representatives from the police and other services, make a positive contribution to all pupils' and students' knowledge and awareness of dangers and difficulties to be faced in the outside world. Work experience placements and good careers guidance are provided to prepare all for life when they leave school.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

57. The school is working hard to improve links with parents, but has had limited success because changes made since September have yet to reach all parents. Given the turbulence of the past couple of years, parents' very real concerns, particularly about pupils' behaviour and communications, and the quality of information from the school, voiced at the meeting and highlighted on the questionnaires are understandable. Although these represented only 10 per cent of parents, their opinions were expressed strongly. However, support for the school is increasing, especially amongst parents who come into close contact either by working in school or through regular visits.

58. The number of parents who attended the parents meeting was similar to what is found in other similar sized schools, but the response to the questionnaire was very low. Both the questionnaire and the meeting had a number of negative responses that were not totally supported by the pupils or other parents that inspectors spoke to during the inspection. Many older pupils were incensed that the school's reputation in the community was low and felt that this did not reflect their experiences.
59. Seventy-six per cent of parents have signed and returned the home-school agreements showing their commitment to the school and to their children's education. This figure is low and reflects the lack of commitment of some parents to working with the school. There is also a lack of support from some parents for improving pupils' attendance or behaviour.
60. The school acknowledges that improvement is needed to establish a good partnership and working relationship with parents in order to benefit their children. This process has already begun. Attendance at the new performance review day for parents of pupils in Year 10 was very good, unlike that at other consultation evenings, when just over half of those invited come to talk about their child's progress. Parents are welcome to talk to tutors or heads of year if they are concerned, and the headteacher is always available to see parents.
61. The parent-teacher association is run by a dedicated 'few', who organise well-supported fund-raising events, such as school discos. Last year they provided over £6,500 to add to school funds. Video recorders, keyboards and CD players were just some of the equipment bought with this money. Parents whose children play competitive sport enjoy watching their matches, and all seats are filled when school productions take place. Parents make costumes, provide refreshments and run raffles at the productions, giving good support to the school and encouragement to their children.
62. Parents receive satisfactory information from the school, but inspectors agree with those who expressed the view that this could be better. The brochure, governors' annual report and regular parents' bulletins ensure that parents are aware of what is happening at the school and have dates for key events. The annual reports are too brief to give parents all the information they need to assess their child's progress. Parents are justifiably concerned about the inconsistent use of homework diaries and the fact that some homework set is not marked, and on some days none is set.
63. Parents whose children have statements for their special education needs receive satisfactory information on their progress and are invited to the reviews, although some choose not to attend. Parents of children between Stages 2 and 4 on the register are not sufficiently informed or involved. Those who speak English as an additional language understand any communication sent to them and are appropriately involved with their children's education.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

64. The new principal, who started in September 2000, has been extremely energetic in preparing the school for a period of rapid and sustained improvement. He has worked closely with the school governors and the local education authority to develop a clear strategy for addressing the school's present problems. In order to improve the school, he has restructured the senior management team within a tight time scale, including the planned appointment of five new senior staff. However, there has not been sufficient improvement in the day-to-day management of the school. Managers have

to spend too much time trying to make sure that there are enough teachers to teach on a daily basis and, therefore, have not ensured that school policies and procedures were implemented effectively. In consequence, middle managers have been required to implement a range of procedures, but have not yet effectively addressed the key issues of teaching quality and lack of progress by pupils.

65. Heads of department and heads of year have clearly defined roles, but their effectiveness in securing improved standards has been limited. Recent staffing problems have reduced the amount of time available to undertake essential monitoring of standards of teaching and learning. The large number of temporary and supply staff, many of whom would have benefited from more support from the school, has compounded this. Heads of department have chosen to focus teaching expertise on those pupils following external examination courses. As a result, there is often a significant mismatch between teaching expertise and curriculum needs in Years 7 to 9.
66. The newly reorganised governing body is strongly committed to the current plans for school improvement. Aware of the challenges faced by the school, governors increasingly understand and accept their strategic role in securing improvements. They support the headteacher well and are working hard to develop more effective contacts with parents and pupils. A system where governors are linked to subjects is being developed so that governors are more directly involved in working with staff and, therefore, knowing about standards and the management of the curriculum. Governors are very well informed about the school's budget situation and staffing problems. The most recent annual report to parents is well written and clearly tells parents what the governors are doing. However, it does not accurately portray the limitations on access for the disabled. There is not enough information about the effectiveness of the special educational needs policy and there was an error in reporting GCSE examination results in English.
67. A wide range of information on how well pupils are achieving is available. It is not used enough to plan the curriculum or to make sure that teachers are teaching the groups that would most benefit from their expertise. Whilst this is made considerably more difficult when the school has so many temporary teachers, the two-week timetable itself does not make it easy to organise teaching so that pupils have the same teacher for all their lessons. There has been work done on setting improvement targets for pupils. This is undermined when so many temporary teachers have to be employed.
68. The use of learning support staff in lessons is not well planned and a valuable resource is often wasted. The school is just beginning to recognise the needs of pupils who should be at Stage 1 of the Code of Practice. Individual education plans do not provide enough detail on pupils' specific learning needs or performance targets. This results in ineffective planning between support staff and subject teachers. The special educational needs co-ordinator spends too much time on direct teaching and not enough time on managing the provision within the school. The governors have not been sufficiently involved in monitoring the arrangements to support pupils with special educational needs.
69. Financial planning and management are good and the school is systematically tackling a deficit budget, caused by spending on supply staff, whilst beginning to make the necessary improvements. Grants and other funding are obtained and used effectively. The headteacher and the bursar have worked hard to secure additional funding for the school and are pro-active in securing contract terms advantageous to

the school. Governors are provided with excellent guidance on complex budget issues, enabling them to see clearly how resources are being used. There is helpful consultation with staff and governors during the budget setting process and spending approval is directly linked to the strategic plan approved by governors. Pupils have opportunities to comment on whole school matters through the school council. The school compares its performance with other schools and knows that it has the potential to be much better. The new headteacher is concerned to make the best use of partnerships with the local college and is seeking innovative ways of improving what is provided for pupils and students after the age of 14. The new management of the school is effectively applying the principles of best value.

70. The major difficulties in recruiting staff in many areas of the school are having a serious and adverse effect on the experiences that pupils have and the standards they reach. The school has been innovative in the ways that it has used to attract staff, but because of the high cost of living in the area there are few applications, if any, for posts, some of which are key management posts. The main departments affected by this situation are modern foreign languages, art, design and technology, information and communication technology and religious education. There are not enough qualified and experienced teachers and there are not enough support staff for pupils with special educational needs. The school has a satisfactory induction programme, but the sheer numbers and frequency of temporary staff joining the school makes it impossible to implement it for all of them. The school is an effective provider of initial teacher training in partnership with three higher educational establishments. This provides teachers with opportunities to develop their practice and is also a valuable source for recruiting much needed new permanent staff.
71. Accommodation has suffered from lack of investment over several years. Although satisfactory overall, there are some leaking roofs and some electrical under-capacity. There are also considerable differences from one subject to another. For example, music and modern foreign languages are housed in good, purpose built accommodation while art is in need of refurbishment.
72. Learning resources are generally sufficient but, despite investment in computers since the previous inspection, there are still not enough for the numbers of pupils in the school. The use of computers for departmental management is generally under-developed.
73. The appointment of a new headteacher is the key to improvement in a school that has suffered a steady deterioration. However, he cannot do it alone and needs energetic and effective senior and middle managers to support him in making sure that the day-to-day management is crisp and that school policies and procedures are followed. Despite staffing difficulties and a budget deficit, the school has maintained test results at the end of Year 9 close to the national average, even though attainment is below average when pupils join the school. Standards in the sixth form are also broadly in line with the national average. Attendance has been a major issue in Years 10 and 11 and GCSE results are below the national average. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

74. The school is at a key point in its development. The most important priority is to make sure that there are enough qualified and permanent staff, but this is not something that the school can do alone. With new senior appointments in place in the near future, the governors and the headteacher should make sure that whilst long term planning is addressed the immediate requirements of the school must be rigorously pursued by other senior and middle managers. The school needs to:-
- (1) Improve attainment by the age of 16 by:-
 - making better arrangements for the development and use of pupils' literacy skills;
 - ensuring that planning in all subjects meets the range of pupils' needs;
 - improving teaching in English;
 - planning lessons so that pupils have to be more involved in their learning and work hard;
 - making better use of homework to extend pupils' learning;
 - reviewing the two-week timetable.(Paragraphs 9, 10, 12, 13, 24, 26, 27, 28, 30, 34, 36, 67, 80, 81, 82, 92, 96, 108, 143, 154, 164 and 181)
 - (2) Improve the behaviour and attitudes of a small, but significant, number of pupils by:-
 - making sure that all staff consistently follow school policies and procedures;
 - identifying how the personal and social education programme can contribute to the development of pupils' social skills.(Paragraphs 44, 51 and 68)
 - (3) Improve punctuality and attendance by:-
 - improving procedures for monitoring attendance so that information is accurate;
 - involving parents more quickly when attendance begins to be a problem;
 - improving teaching so that pupils are more involved in their learning and want to come to school.(Paragraphs 17, 18, 47, 48 and 49)
 - (4) Improve the curriculum in Years 10 and 11 by:-
 - providing sufficient opportunities for pupils to use information and communication technology in subject lessons;
 - extending the provision for vocational education.(Paragraphs 32, 72, 109, 116, 134, 156, 158, 163 and 164)
 - (5) Improve the experiences provided for pupils on the special educational needs register by:-
 - recognising and providing for pupils who are at Stage 1 by making sure that all subjects plan to meet the needs of these pupils;
 - ensuring that there is an appropriate range of experiences provided to meet individual needs;
 - monitoring the progress and experiences of these pupils to ensure that their needs are being met.(Paragraphs 9, 20, 28, 35, 50, 68 and 95)

- (6) Improve the way senior staff take responsibility for making sure that agreed policies and procedures are followed by:-
- having regular supervision meetings that check on aspects of each manager's role;
 - introducing a series of reviews that look at practice in key areas, such as attendance and behaviour;
 - giving senior staff greater responsibility for reporting to and involving governors in their areas of work.
- (Paragraphs 64, 65 and 66)

In addition the school needs to:-

- Do all it can to make sure that it has enough qualified and permanent teachers.
(Paragraphs 15, 24, 70, 98, 118, 130 and 164)
- Improve the quality of information in pupils' reports to parents.
(Paragraph 62)
- Find ways of providing for a daily act of collective worship.
(Paragraph 42)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	167
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	57

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
4	12	40	34	10	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	1104	139
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	70	0

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	33	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	239	0

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	27

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	43
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	49

Attendance

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
	%		%
School data	8.5	School data	1.1
National comparative data	7.7	National comparative data	1.1

Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	131	103	234

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 5 and above	Boys	63	89	74
	Girls	66	56	45
	Total	129	145	119
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	School	54 (67)	62 (72)	51 (55)
	National	63 (63)	65 (62)	59 (55)
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 6 or above	School	14 (29)	33 (47)	19 (20)
	National	28 (28)	42 (38)	30 (23)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 5 and above	Boys	81	84	60
	Girls	75	56	43
	Total	156	145	119
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	School	67 (72)	60 (75)	43 (56)
	National	64 (64)	66 (64)	63 (60)
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 6 or above	School	32 (29)	30 (33)	17 (28)
	National	31 (31)	39 (37)	29 (28)

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year	2000	103	95	198

GCSE results		5 or more grades A*- C	5 or more grades A*- G	1 or more grades A*- G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	23	92	94
	Girls	39	87	92
	Total	62	179	186
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	31 (32)	90 (86)	94 (95)
	National	47.4 (46.6)	90.6 (90.9)	95.6 (95.8)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	33 (32.6)
	National	38.4 (38)

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

Vocational qualifications		Number	% success rate
Number studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	15	60
	National		na

Attainment at the end of the sixth form

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A-level or AS-level examinations	2000	31	27	58

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	14.0	17.2	15.5 (14.2)	1.1	0.7	0.9 (0.8)
National	17.7	18.6	18.2 (17.9)	2.6	2.9	2.7 (2.8)

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

Vocational qualifications		Number	% success rate
Number in their final year of studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	15	100
	National		76.5

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	5
Black – other	2
Indian	2
Pakistani	4
Bangladeshi	1
Chinese	6
White	1184
Any other minority ethnic group	39

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	179	7
Other minority ethnic groups	10	1

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	69.47
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	17.9

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y7 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	15
Total aggregate hours worked per week	335

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	77.7
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y13

Key Stage 3	25.3
Key Stage 4	22.9
Sixth form	13.2

Financial information

Financial year	1999/2000
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	£
Total income	3,179,861
Total expenditure	3,211,577
Expenditure per pupil	2563
Balance brought forward from previous year	83,580
Balance carried forward to next year	51,864

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

8.6%

Number of questionnaires sent out

1192

Number of questionnaires returned

103

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	17	60	15	7	1
My child is making good progress in school.	17	56	19	5	3
Behaviour in the school is good.	8	25	35	27	5
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	9	36	29	24	2
The teaching is good.	9	56	20	7	8
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	8	43	29	16	4
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	31	47	15	6	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	26	60	8	3	3
The school works closely with parents.	10	42	36	8	4
The school is well led and managed.	6	40	27	8	19
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	5	57	23	9	6
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	13	50	17	5	15

Other issues raised by parents

Parents were concerned about the large number of temporary staff in the school. They also gave examples of situations where the basic administration at the school had been lacking; for example, inaccurate attendance data being used and parents' addresses not being kept up-to-date. A number expressed concern that the bad press the school receives locally is affecting the morale of both staff and pupils.

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

ENGLISH

75. Standards in English of pupils aged 11 to 16 have fallen since the previous inspection. In the 2000 national tests for pupils aged 14, the proportion who achieved the expected standards for their age was below average and the percentage achieving higher grades was well below average. This reflects the range of pupils' attainment on entry to the school. At 16, performance in the GCSE English examination is well below average. Attainment in English Literature is better, although still below average. However, it is a strength of the department's work that all pupils who attend are entered for both examinations.
76. Pupils' achievement in English is unsatisfactory, particularly in Year 7. Attainment in reading and in speaking and listening, although below average, is higher than in writing. Most pupils enter the school able to read straightforward texts, but only more able pupils develop the skills needed to read texts for different layers of meaning. Most pupils are able to talk fluently about themselves or about familiar events, but few learn to use talk to explore ideas or are able to justify their opinions. They are allowed to give up too easily and become dependent on their teachers to explain for them. Pupils currently in Year 7 have made little progress with their writing skills. Even more able pupils are not achieving high enough standards and their books show that some have slipped backwards since they entered the school. One of the main reasons for this is the instability of staffing and the number of temporary and non-specialist teachers, who are employed mainly in Years 7 to 9. One class in Year 7 with a high proportion of pupils with special educational needs has four different teachers for English during the two-week timetable. This has a marked effect on the continuity of their learning and on their behaviour in lessons.
77. Year 9 pupils are achieving better standards in their writing when compared to their attainment on entry to the school. Higher attaining pupils write some entertaining stories that show an understanding of the ways in which authors can interest and engage the reader. All pupils write in a range of styles and average and less able pupils can use simple persuasive language in their work. Most demonstrate a basic understanding of the plot and characters in *Macbeth* and some able and average pupils are able to use some of the features of Shakespearean language in their own imaginative writing linked to the play. More able pupils are beginning to extend their reading and speaking skills. In one Year 9 lesson, pupils read a scene of the play aloud with reasonable confidence and then explored the theme of kingship through structured group discussion.
78. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 who attend regularly are currently making better progress because there is more specialist teaching and more classes have one, or at the most, two teachers. There are, however, still some problems related to the high number of supply teachers and pupils who have had a number of different teachers recognise that they are falling behind their friends in other groups. More able pupils can read below the surface to identify the different layers of meaning and most can recognise the main ideas in a text. Some pupils, when given the opportunity, take a role in a group discussion, contributing ideas and building on what others say to reach conclusions. For instance, a group of Year 11 pupils discussed the witnesses' statements from a famous trial and came to conclusions about the reliability of each witness. They entered this debate with enthusiasm, paid close attention to what was said and took account of different views.

79. Sixth form students make rapid progress to reach levels in line with course expectations. One group of students was able to display their knowledge and understanding of some quite demanding materials about the cultural ideas and literary background of 1930s writing. They went on to relate these ideas to Forster's novel *A Passage to India*, demonstrating a clear understanding of imperialism and how it affected people's actions and attitudes.
80. The low levels of literacy that many pupils have on entry to the school affect the standards they attain across all their subjects. More capable pupils can read the materials they are presented with in lessons, identifying the main features and recognising different layers of meaning. Other pupils read accurately, but do not understand fully what they read nor are they able to look below the surface at what the author is really saying. Writing skills are weaker than reading skills. Many pupils have difficulty with spelling and punctuating their writing and do not develop their work with detail to ensure that it is interesting to the reader. Most pupils try to write in an appropriate style, but only higher attaining pupils do this with flair. The school is developing a literacy policy to improve literacy across the curriculum. There are already some instances of good practice. For instance, in drama and mathematics pupils are expected to use the specific language of the subject. Geography teachers follow the school's marking policy and use it to show pupils how to improve their work. Many classrooms have displays of key words and in a few lessons these are used effectively. These examples of good practice have not yet spread into all subjects.
81. Pupils' attitudes vary considerably. In those lessons where their teacher knows them well and where the work is interesting and engages their attention, behaviour and attitudes are good. They are attentive, willing to work and take an active part in their learning. In some lessons, where teaching is satisfactory but not inspiring, pupils are compliant, generally do the work expected of them but show little enthusiasm or interest. In other lessons, usually but not always taught by temporary or non-specialist teachers, pupils display very negative attitudes. They take too long to settle down, sometimes because their books have to be collected from the last teacher to teach them, but often because the work is not matched to their needs. In one Year 7 class, there was a very wide range of attainment, but all pupils were expected to do the same work. Some pupils found this too easy so did not have to work hard, while some found the reading materials too difficult and so lost interest. The methods used required them to listen to the teacher for a long period of time. This also meant that the support assistant could not work with pupils who had special educational needs. Instead, she spent most of her time controlling pupils who were behaving poorly.
82. The quality of teaching in English is unsatisfactory, particularly in Year 7 where too many classes are taught by more than one teacher. The teachers' heavy reliance on isolated exercises and short pieces of writing does not enable pupils to achieve higher standards. Work fails to build on earlier learning, because the teacher does not know what the pupils have achieved in previous lessons. In these unsatisfactory lessons, there is too much teacher talk and insufficient emphasis on the teaching of basic skills. Even in some Years 10 and 11 lessons, teachers do not have high enough expectations of what pupils can do. For instance, in one Year 11 class of average and more able pupils, the questions they were given on the examination text were far too easy for them. This resulted in many finishing the work very quickly while others were bored and did not focus on the work. This was compounded by the fact that many of the boys in the class were reading the novel for the first time, knowing that the work would not demand a good previous knowledge of the text. This poor match of work leads to pupils who do not have to make any real intellectual or creative effort. There is, on the other hand, some teaching of high quality where teachers and pupils work together to raise standards. In these lessons, teachers have high expectations

of their pupils. They share with them what they are to learn and check at the end of the lesson that good learning has taken place. The teaching emphasises language development and pupils are given opportunities to discuss their work in pairs and small groups. Pupils are encouraged to become independent; they use dictionaries and other research activities, including accessing the Internet, to find things out for themselves.

83. The leadership of the department is unsatisfactory and most of the issues raised in the last inspection report have not been addressed. This is largely because of the instability arising from having temporary appointments for the head of department and the deputy. They both work hard at keeping the department running as smoothly as possible from day to day to support temporary teachers, but this leads to their own lessons being interrupted for resources and for help in dealing with poorly behaved pupils. The department has made a good start on rewriting schemes of work to fulfil the new requirements for English, but these are not yet having the desired effect because there are too few specialist English teachers. In spite of all these problems, the English department is supportive, hard working, and committed to improving attainment and the classroom experience offered to its pupils.

MATHEMATICS

84. When pupils join the school their standards in mathematics are below average. By the end of Year 9 their attainment in the national tests is just below the national average. GCSE examination results in mathematics are close to the national average and are better than in other subjects. GCE A-level results are also close to the national average.
85. Pupils' attainment in tests at the end of Year 9 in 2000 is just below the national average. Results are better in mathematics than in English or science. The trend in mathematics results is erratic, in line with the variations in levels of attainment in each year as they enter the school. There is little difference in the results achieved by boys and girls. Boys performed better in 2000, but girls did so in 1999.
86. Observation of lessons and scrutiny of pupils' work shows that attainment by the end of Year 9 is in line with what is expected for pupils aged 14. Pupils in the top set in Year 9 reach a standard above the national average while those in other sets are at correspondingly lower levels, closely matching pupils nationally. Higher attaining pupils in Year 9 are beginning to use algebraic and graphical methods, with some success, to solve simultaneous equations. Good teaching that builds effectively on these pupils' own ideas enables them to make steady gains in knowledge and understanding. Average attaining pupils measure and draw angles accurately and construct triangles using a ruler and pair of compasses. Lower attaining pupils lack confidence in their mental skills.
87. The percentage of pupils attaining GCSE grades A*-C in 2000 in mathematics is close to the national average and for grades A*-G it is very close. There is a gradually rising trend in results, peaking for A*-C grades in 1999 when attainment was just above the national average. A positive feature of the 2000 results is the increased percentage of pupils gaining A* and A grades. Pupils' GCSE results are better in mathematics than they are in other subjects. Girls' mathematics results in 2000 were slightly better than those of boys.
88. Pupils make significant progress in their work in mathematics in Years 10 and 11 because teaching is of high quality. For example, in a Year 11 lesson on cumulative frequency, the teacher's very good relationship with the pupils generated a confident

and positive atmosphere. Pupils were keen to learn and made considerable headway. By the end of Year 11 more able pupils reach a standard that is well above average. They can add and subtract algebraic fractions, use graphical calculators confidently and sketch the graphs of a range of linear and quadratic functions. Average attaining pupils have sound mental skills, can convert fractions, decimals and percentages and understand and use geometrical transformations. They are not always able to indicate lines of reflection or centres of rotation accurately. Lower attaining pupils use written methods to add and subtract decimal numbers with some success, but make occasional careless errors

89. GCE A-level results are near the national average overall, with a high percentage of students attaining grade A. Mathematics is a popular and successful GCE A-level subject. In 1999, five out of eight candidates, and in 2000 six out of 20, attained a grade A; well above the performance in other subjects.
90. Students' attainment by the end of Year 13 is in line with the national average. They have a sound knowledge and understanding of appropriate topics in algebra, calculus, statistics and mechanics for the GCE A-level course. For example, in a well-organised Year 13 revision lesson, students came to the front of the class to explain their solutions to questions on conservation of energy and motion of projectiles. The feedback to students was enhanced by the teacher's very good grasp of the subject matter so that they gained greater insight into ways of answering the GCE A-level questions.
91. Teaching and learning are satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and are good in Years 10 and 11 and the sixth form. Teaching and learning are at their best in Years 10 and 11 where half of lessons are very good or excellent. There are weaknesses in Years 7 to 9 when staffing shortages mean that some lessons are taken by temporary or supply staff.
92. Teachers have a good knowledge and understanding of mathematics enabling pupils to make steady progress. The basic skills of numeracy are taught effectively, often using ideas gleaned from the National Numeracy Strategy. Pupils frequently sharpen their mental and investigational skills through crisp number activities at the beginning of a lesson. Teachers do not generally incorporate literacy or information and communication skills sufficiently in mathematics lessons, although in the best lessons attention is given to key words such as *congruent*, *discrete* and *continuous*.
93. Teachers plan lessons thoroughly with clear objectives often shared with pupils at the start of the session and, in the best lessons, reviewed at the end. In Years 10 and 11 and in the sixth form, teachers have a high expectation of what pupils of all abilities should know, understand and be able to do. For example, in a very good lower set Year 10 lesson on interpreting grouped data, the teacher skilfully steered pupils through the basic principles. The pupils then readily tackled an interesting and challenging task on comparing sentence lengths in adults' books and children's books. Pupils' levels of interest and concentration were raised considerably.
94. The methods used by teachers are generally effective, often using the three-stage approach of starter, main activity and the whole-class reporting back together. The best lessons incorporate authoritative and clear presentations by the teacher that fully involve pupils and end with a session that draws together what has been learnt. For example, in an excellent Year 11 lesson on solving non-linear equations using graphical methods, the teacher enhanced the lesson still further by expert use of a graphical calculator display on an overhead projector and astute questioning of pupils to draw out their ideas. In some less successful lessons, pupils are not given

sufficient opportunity to give more than one word answers.

95. Teachers manage pupils' behaviour effectively in nearly all lessons in Years 10 and 11 and in all lessons in the sixth form. In too many lessons in Years 7 to 9 teachers struggle to control the unsatisfactory behaviour of a significant small number of pupils so that the progress of the whole class is curtailed. Lessons move at a good pace in most other cases and resources are used effectively. The use of support staff for pupils with special educational needs is patchy and lacks consistency. Teachers often complete planning sheets to indicate the assistance required by pupils with special educational needs. They find it difficult to give sufficient attention to these needs in large classes that do not have extra staffing support. The progress made by pupils with special educational needs in these cases is unsatisfactory.
96. The permanent mathematics staff mark pupils' work regularly and monitor pupils' progress. They also set homework on a weekly basis. Other teachers are less consistent so that considerable sections of pupils' work in exercise books remain unmarked and homework is not set.
97. Pupils' attitude to their work varies considerably. The best pupils listen attentively to the teacher and to other pupils when they are responding to a question. These pupils are interested in mathematics and are keen to make progress. A small but significant number of pupils, notably in Years 7 to 9, lack interest in the subject and are easily distracted by others. They take any opportunity to misbehave, talking while the teacher is talking and working too slowly on tasks that are set.
98. The department is well managed and it shares a commitment to high achievements for its pupils. There are major difficulties in attracting sufficient well-qualified and experienced mathematics teachers to the Bracknell area so that the department has to make do with a stream of temporary and supply staff. The dedication and professionalism of the established team of mathematics teachers enable pupils' levels of attainment to be maintained year on year. There has been satisfactory progress since the previous inspection. Teaching is of a higher quality, although weaknesses remain in Years 7 to 9. Mathematics classrooms are now much closer together, but do require refurbishment. There are still too many classes taken by more than one teacher. Support for pupils with special educational needs remains unsatisfactory.

SCIENCE

99. Over the past few years pupils in Years 7 to 9 have made satisfactory progress. However, there has been a decline in the attainment of pupils in their GCSE examinations. Positive steps have been taken to stop this decline and to increase the attainment of all pupils.
100. The attainment of students by the age of 14 in the National Curriculum tests last year was just below the national level. This has not changed significantly from that reported at the time of the previous inspection in 1998. Boys do better than girls. The number of pupils who gained a higher Level 6³ or above was lower than the national figure. Of the three core subjects, pupils' test results are lower than those in English and mathematics.

³ The National Curriculum has been written on the basis that pupils, by the end of Year 9, are expected to reach Level 5. If a pupil is attaining Level 6 or 7 then he or she is reaching standards above that expected for a pupil of his or her age.

101. The department has set a target of reaching the national level in these tests this year. Pupils have a sound enough knowledge in topics such as chemical reactions and electricity and magnetism to suggest that this target is a reasonable prediction. Pupils in Year 7 are following a new course that has been introduced to raise standards and attitudes; it is having some success. The pupils in Years 8 and 9 are still following the original scheme of work and do not show the same improvements as Year 7.
102. The number of pupils gaining a GCSE grade A*-C in the double certification course is well below the national figure. The trend has been downwards since 1994. When the performance of boys is compared to girls, at GCSE, the pattern seen is the opposite to that seen in the National Curriculum tests at age 14, with girls achieving slightly more grades A*-C than boys.
103. Attainment by the age of 16 is unsatisfactory. To combat this the department has introduced a new modular GCSE double certification course along with a new coursework monitoring system. The standard of work seen is satisfactory and when this standard of work is considered, together with the coursework and modular examination results already obtained, then the departmental target of 35 per cent grades A*-C for this year looks realistic and would show good improvement.
104. Pupils in Year 11 show that there are gaps in their knowledge of science. For example, they could describe the atomic structure of group 7 elements but could not name the group. This is something they should have learnt earlier in the course to ensure full coverage of the subject in order to raise attainment in the future. One reason for the apparent lack of basic scientific knowledge is that some groups have had many changes in teachers over the past few years. In addition, the department has not been able to ensure that the most suitable staff can be allocated to each group. The other major reason for the gaps in basic knowledge and low level in attainment is the high incidence of absence of pupils in Years 10 and 11. In a Year 11 group specifically formed to concentrate on those pupils predicted a grade C or D at GCSE, there was only 15 students present out of a total of 26 on roll. The results obtained in the sixth form are below the national figure. The number of students following science subjects at A- or A/S-level is low.
105. There is a good relationship between pupils and students and their teachers. Most pupils and students, especially those that are the higher attainers, behave well and work hard. Girls, regardless of their level of attainment, produce work that is complete and well presented. Higher attaining boys have complete notes, but their standards of presentation are lower. A large number of lower attaining boys produce work that is often incomplete. The underachievement of boys in Years 10 and 11 is a major concern.
106. Teaching is well planned. In over half of the lessons the teaching was good and no unsatisfactory teaching was observed. In most lessons, registers were taken formally and helped start the lesson in an orderly manner that was then followed by the teacher describing the aims of that lesson. The most successful lessons were those where there was good lesson planning including a structure that ensured the lesson had sufficient pace linked with effective class control. Most teachers use appropriate teaching styles with an emphasis on the practical aspects of science. Pupils respond in a positive manner by working in a safe and enthusiastic manner when they do practical work. However, the motivation and behaviour of a few lower attaining boys was, at times, poor, especially in Years 7 to 9, and this affected their learning and the learning of others. This poor attitude was seen only in a few instances when classroom control was not strong.

107. Homework is structured and is an integral part of the lesson plans. It is marked according to the departmental policy, but with no mention of effort and attainment grades and often with minimal comment about what pupils and students need to do in order to improve.
108. Pupils make progress in their learning in Years 7 to 9, reaching close to national levels from a low starting point on entry in Year 7. In Years 10 and 11, the progress is unsatisfactory with boys progressing less than girls. Teaching mixed ability groups in Year 7 poses a challenge to teachers who need to plan suitable activities and resources for the wide range of attainments. In some lessons, there is effective planning for the range of needs, but this is not general practice.
109. Pupils with special educational needs are not well supported in lessons and there is little additional staffing. The learning support staff who sometimes assist are unaware of the lesson content. Teachers are aware of the needs of individual pupils, but this has not led to identifying specific pupil targets. There is a wide range of opportunities for pupils and students to use their literacy and numeracy skills both in written work and class discussions. The use of computers is not widespread in science due to a lack of either sufficient resources or access to specialist rooms. The department does not possess the necessary number of data logging units to provide for this aspect of science in a satisfactory manner. There is some use of computers for research and word-processing, which motivates pupils and students with poor handwriting to produce a higher standard of work. The limited use of computers means pupils and students do not experience the use of simulations and modelling.
110. The management of the department is good, but the use of information and communication technology is underdeveloped and the way staff are allocated to teaching groups is unsatisfactory. Currently, marking and assessment does not enable pupils to recognise their progress and in doing so motivate them to do better. It is not used to identify the effectiveness of the curriculum, especially in Years 10 and 11. The head of department was appointed seven months ago and has been responsible for the introduction or supervision of new courses in Years 7,10,11 and 12. These new courses have increased the range of teaching styles and activities and have also helped raise the standard and range of teaching and learning in the department.
111. The department has also ensured that the majority of issues raised in the previous inspection have been successfully addressed. There is less unsatisfactory teaching, the attitudes and behaviour of pupils have improved and there is less use of non-specialist teachers. The major issue of raising attainment is being addressed and there is evidence of some success.
112. The accommodation for the science department is good. Each member of staff has his or her own laboratory and this helps in preparing resources. The department has sufficient resources and a team of effective technicians.

ART AND DESIGN

113. Pupils' attainment in art and design is well below the standards expected at age 14. Standards have fallen since the previous inspection. By Year 9 pupils have a limited knowledge of techniques and materials. They have a satisfactory range of experiences of drawing and developing pencil sketches of things they see. Achievement is sometimes limited because their work in sketchbooks is not developed enough. Their drawn images are not adequately analysed or progressively developed. Shading techniques, which would develop form and style, are not sufficiently taught. Pupils use various types of paint and pastel. There are too few opportunities for them to explore techniques influenced through their studies of a range of artists' styles. Pupils have too few opportunities to research and record written and visual information. This adversely affects their attainment.
114. By age 16, standards remain well below average. GCSE results for the year 2000 for A*-C grades were very low and have fallen since the previous inspection. Fewer able pupils now take art because in the option choices it competes with more popular subjects. Some of the present GCSE pupils demonstrate abilities that are satisfactory for their age. However, since the head of department has been off sick, the acting head of department has been timetabled with the art and design class predicted to achieve lower levels of attainment in order to try to improve their results. The more able Year 11 pupils have not received much specialist teaching for at least two months. This is holding back their learning and achievements just before they take their GCSE examinations.
115. During the inspection, the work of the higher attaining Year 11 examination group showed a number of pupils who, with concentrated good teaching, could achieve at least an average or above average grade. For example, pupils have learnt to evaluate and to develop their existing drawings, influenced by the works of chosen artists. Most, however, have still not developed their own style. Pupils have a limited use and understanding of an art vocabulary. The other Year 11 group shows limited evidence of this understanding of an art vocabulary. However, because they have received more specialist teaching, pupils were able to describe successfully how they have been influenced by artists such as René Magritte and Andy Warhol.
116. There is limited evidence of computer-designed work across the school. There is far too much reliance on pupils using their own skills and computers they might have at home. The department has too few computers and does not use what it has effectively. The result is that pupils do not learn how to use them as part of their design process.
117. The small number of pupils in Year 13 who study the subject at A-level overall achieve average levels of attainment. Samples of their work show a use of a good range of media, with satisfactory understanding of their application and development. The students present a style of art that is both personal, but also satisfactorily influenced by an interpretation of a range of artists they have studied.
118. Across the school, girls learn better than boys and attain higher standards. Pupils' learning in art and design is seriously affected by severe staffing difficulties. The full complement for the art and design department is three qualified and experienced art and design teachers. Currently there is one full-time art teacher who, after four years' teaching, is now acting as the head of department. There is one other teacher qualified to teach art who is on a temporary contract until May 2001, when there will be a new full-time art and design teacher. The department is short of at least one full-time teacher. The shortfall is met by using temporary supply teachers, some of whom

are not qualified to teach art and design. During the week of the inspection, the one unsatisfactory lesson seen was taught by a supply teacher not qualified in art and design. Because good planning, overseen by the acting head of department, supports the teaching across the department the quality of teaching overall is satisfactory. There is a satisfactory scheme of work that has not yet been developed to match the new curriculum requirements for Years 7 to 9 and the examination board requirements. Procedures for assessment, and the use of it to inform what is to be taught, are underdeveloped. Pupils are not encouraged to complete their tasks. Marking does not sufficiently inform pupils about what they should do next. Pupils' literacy skills are satisfactorily developed, but insufficient attention is given to the use and development of numeracy skills.

119. The severe staffing difficulties lead pupils to lose their enthusiasm and motivation for the subject. Pupils want to learn, but quickly lose interest if they realise that they are not receiving the help they deserve. These problems are the reason why the achievements and progress of pupils across the school, including pupils who have special educational needs and English as an additional language, are unsatisfactory. In the effective lessons, teachers quickly and effectively deal with any difficult behaviour that sometimes occurs at the beginning and end of lessons, caused by pupils being unsure about what they are going to do or do next. When the teaching is satisfactory or better, and pupils realise they are being taught by a teacher who knows the subject, they quickly become motivated, concentrating and working in an industrious manner throughout the lesson. Students in the sixth form, due to their abilities and high levels of motivation, achieve satisfactorily.
120. In very difficult circumstances, the acting head of department has made excellent efforts to keep the work of the department going. These include teaching different classes, preparing work for temporary teachers and offering pupils extra opportunities to attend after school for further help with their work. Because of this she has had little time to monitor and evaluate the subject's performance or to develop a plan to maintain and improve standards. Due to staffing difficulties in the senior management team of the school, she has been left for far too long to try to resolve all the problems herself.
121. Accommodation is not well used; for example, a good pottery room is only rarely used by a visiting art lecturer from a local college. Not enough attention is given to display and the celebration of pupils' work. The range of opportunities for three-dimensional and design work is too limited.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

122. Design and technology has improved since the previous inspection. The range of course options has increased for pupils in Years 10 and 11 with courses that lead to GCSE or GNVQ accreditation. In Year 12, the AS-level courses have been successfully introduced in food and nutrition and resistant materials. Standards in graphic products and resistant materials that were drastically affected by staffing changes are improving. The department now has a suitable range of subject specialists. The management of the department is very good in making sure that the best use is made of expertise and that successful practice is shared. In Year 11 food technology, standards have risen significantly and in textiles the number of pupils entered for GCSE has doubled and standards have been maintained.
123. Teacher assessments for 2000 show the percentage of pupils achieving Level 5 and above in design and technology by age 14 is in line with the national average. This represents very good progress for all pupils, including those with special educational

needs. However, a higher percentage of girls than boys achieve the higher levels.

124. Progress is not maintained in Years 10 and 11 and GCSE results in the different areas vary considerably. Food technology results show good achievement, especially at the higher A*-B grades, and are significantly above the national average. Textile results are below average, and results in resistant materials and graphic products are well below the national average. To a large extent this is due to staff leaving at short notice and frequent changes in supply staff.
125. Attainment at A-level is in line with expectation and achievement in the sixth form is good. In the 2000 examination, all candidates were successful in home economics. Students taking A-level design and technology had a total of four different teachers during the course and there were also timetabling problems. The results showed the hard work that was invested by students and teachers with six out of seven candidates gaining grades B to E.
126. Standards of work seen during the inspection are in line with national expectations. By the age of 14 most pupils use computers to design objects and produce drawings of the 3D items they design. They design and make using a range of materials and can evaluate their work objectively. In textiles, they can use the sewing machine to join fabrics accurately and apply materials and techniques to create designs and finishes. Across all areas the standard of finished work is satisfactory, with some examples of very good work. Technical graphics is satisfactory and design drawings show technical and functional detail. However, pupils' working knowledge of materials is too limited for them to make informed decisions for themselves about how their work is to proceed. Many pupils use technical vocabulary appropriately and can identify the tools and materials used, but their practical skills in the workshop activities are underdeveloped.
127. Standards by the end of Year 11 vary considerably across all aspects of design and technology. They are average in textiles and graphic products, where the work represents a full range from grade A* to E. However, in graphic products the standard of girls' work is much higher quality than that of boys and at the higher grades girls are performing above the grades predicted for them. Some pupils produce quality projects, developing and using some very innovative ideas, sometimes from other cultures.
128. Graphics does not use information communication technology enough, especially for designing and manufacture. In resistant materials, standards are below average and drawing skills are very basic. The development of ideas through drawings is weak, especially at the lower grades. There are some examples of above average standards in the use of construction skills, but skills of research and development, overall, are unsatisfactory. Standards in food technology are above average. Pupils can research sources of nutrients and link information to product development to meet consumers' needs. They can manage and organise materials, equipment and resources and work to deadlines.
129. Standards in Year 13 are average. Practical skills are established, but the students' confidence and independence working practically varies. Study skills are underdeveloped; students are too dependent on the teachers to give them the information and the answers. They obtain information from a wide range of sources, including the Internet, but they cannot classify the information and use it selectively to inform their studies. Completed work shows that students are very committed and produce some good work.

130. Since the previous inspection there has been a lack of consistency in teaching, learning and standards across the different aspects of the subject. There have been some major staffing changes with the loss of subject expertise and experience in graphic products, resistant materials and textiles. New appointments have been made, but the department is still one teacher short and this affects all material areas. Despite the head of department's best efforts there is a lack of continuity of experience for pupils and this affects both learning and standards. Department leadership is very good. There is careful monitoring of teaching, learning and the progress that all pupils are making. However, the teacher with responsibility for the workshops cannot carry out her monitoring responsibilities. Due to staff shortage, she is based in the main school, away from the workshops, teaching outside her subject specialism.
131. Teaching is good in Years 7 to 9. When lessons are well planned by subject experts pupils are clear what to do. Pupils are encouraged to learn and work at their best with concentrated effort. There are clear routines and high expectations for behaviour, with opportunities for pupils to take responsibility. When the teaching is less inspiring and there are not enough opportunities for practical work, pupils lose interest, become restless, the pace of learning slows down and boys especially go off task.
132. Teaching is satisfactory overall in Years 10 and 11, but ranges from very good to poor. When teaching is very good so is the progress. The range of styles and activities used motivate and encourage pupils to use their initiative and to do well. As they learn, their confidence with new vocabulary grows and their standards of literacy improve. They recall previous learning and use it to inform their design work. They are very clear about the tasks set and work hard with direction. There is a real sense of achievement at the end of the lesson. However, at the other extreme the teaching does not hold the pupils' attention. The lessons are well planned with clear objectives for learning, but the styles used are limited and lack urgency. The teacher does not have a rapport with the class. Instructions given do not hold the pupils' attention, are frequently too basic and sometimes unnecessary. The pupils do not value the learning opportunities and this is reflected in the unsatisfactory standards of behaviour in these lessons. The pace is slow, pupils are not challenged nor given the range of opportunities they need to make progress.
133. In the sixth form teaching is good. Students are very clear about what they are learning. They are encouraged to make decisions and to try out their own ideas. Teachers know the students' strengths and areas for development because of the careful marking. Drafting and re-drafting of written work are encouraged to raise standards, but teachers frequently give students too much information that they could research for themselves. Attitudes to learning are satisfactory.
134. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is good and enables them to make good progress. Skills of numeracy are satisfactory for accurate measurements and for estimating. When classes are large there is a shortage of small specialist equipment. There is no Internet access in the workshops and this affects the development of pupils' research skills. Access is good in the food and textiles areas and the digital camera is used for assessment and to record progress. There is a strong sense of commitment to the pupils and students from all the staff, including the technicians.

GEOGRAPHY

135. Overall, standards are close to the national expectation in Years 7 to 11. Attainment in the sixth form is below the national average. Standards have systematically

improved in Years 7 to 9 since the previous inspection. In Years 10 and 11, standards have improved considerably over the last year. Girls' attainment is on target to achieve the national average this year, with boys attaining standards close to it.

136. Although the number of pupils reaching Level 5 by the age of 14 is in line with the national average, the number achieving the higher levels is lower. However, this represents satisfactory progress, since attainment on entry to the school is below the national average. Pupils of all abilities acquire mapping skills at a good rate. They are able to use these skills to good effect in subsequent years. By the end of Year 9, all pupils know about the typical features of less economically developed countries. The highest attaining pupils can make detailed comparisons between these countries and their own.
137. The number of pupils achieving A-G grades in the 2000 GCSE examinations was in line with the national average. The number achieving A*-C grades was well below. Girls achieved higher standards than boys. Their results were close to the national average.
138. Work seen during the inspection shows an improvement in standards. Year 11 pupils are on target to achieve results close to the national average this year. However, if pupils continue to be absent from school their results will not reflect their potential. The new head of department has carefully analysed the reasons for pupils' underachievement in the past. Improved coursework guidance, more informative assessments of pupils' work, frequent opportunities to practise past examination questions and revision classes after school and during the holidays, are all improving pupils' learning.
139. Pupils have a sound factual knowledge about all the topics covered, because teachers are secure in their subject knowledge and provide clear explanations. Pupils' enquiry and analytical skills are less well developed. The new scheme of work is ensuring they have more opportunities to use these skills. In a good lesson during the inspection, pupils analysed tourist information on Swanage. They then carefully planned an environmentally friendly tourist attraction, which would fill a gap in the current provision. They had some excellent original ideas and competently used ordnance survey maps to decide upon an appropriate location. The task showed that pupils could work well together in groups, taking responsibility and debating sensibly.
140. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress due to the extra help they receive from teachers, classroom assistants or specially designed worksheets. Pupils with English as an additional language receive the help they need to make satisfactory progress. More able pupils are often given additional work, but are not encouraged to take responsibility for asking their own questions about the topics being studied.
141. GCE A-level results were well below the national average in 2000. A high absence rate was a significant factor in this. Pupils miss a lot of vital information and their coursework lacks the necessary depth. Those pupils who attend regularly are achieving satisfactory standards. A carefully structured revision course is preparing them well for their examination. They demonstrated a good understanding of climate during the inspection. Their ability to carry out their own research is sound, but their use of information technology is limited.
142. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall. All teachers have a secure understanding of the subject. They explain new concepts clearly and answer

unexpected questions with confidence. Lessons are planned very thoroughly and the intended learning is always explained to pupils, so they know what is expected of them. Teachers mark pupils' work carefully and suggest how it could be improved. They ensure the key words in each topic are identified, understood and used. Frequent opportunities to develop numeracy skills are planned; for example, using temperature and rainfall graphs and calculating distances on maps. In the best lessons, there is a brisk pace and full involvement of the pupils. Teachers frame questions carefully, so that pupils of all abilities are able to answer successfully. They use a range of teaching strategies, such as group work, debates, presentations and individual research. Good use is made of videos, television programmes or newspaper articles to stimulate initial interest. Teachers are quick to spot opportunities where their intervention will help to move pupils on. They have high expectations of behaviour and the quantity and quality of work. Pupils respond well to this.

143. Where lessons are unsatisfactory, it is generally because teachers are unable to manage groups of disaffected pupils who are determined to be uncooperative and disruptive. Even when the tasks planned are interesting and well resourced, a significant number of pupils prevent others from learning. Sometimes, teachers do not take the ability of the pupils sufficiently into account and problems arise because the work is too difficult or too easy. Homework is set regularly and is always relevant.
144. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory, although much still needs to be done. The new head of department has correctly identified the strengths and weaknesses of the department by effectively monitoring pupils' work. She has worked with other members of the team on rewriting schemes of work, taking into account recent national guidance. The quality of teaching has improved, but there is still work to be done on matching work to pupils' different abilities. The quality of assessment has improved considerably and is now good. This could be better used to improve the quality of reports to parents.

HISTORY

145. By the end of Year 9, teacher assessments indicate that good progress has been made and that standards are above the national expectations. The GCSE results for 2000 show that 49 per cent of pupils achieved A*-C grades. This was in line with the school's performance in the previous two years, but was below the national average. However, 100 per cent of pupils achieved A*-G grades and this was above the national average. The three A-level candidates in 2000 represented an unusually low entry figure for the department. All of them achieved grades A-E. This percentage was above the national average. In general, there are no significant differences between the performance of boys and girls.
146. Standards seen during the inspection are at the expected levels by the age of 14. Standards of those pupils who attend lessons regularly in Years 10 and 11 are also at expected levels, but those who are regularly absent reduce the overall A*-C grades in GCSE to below the national average. Standards in the sixth form are above the national average.
147. In Years 7 to 9, pupils grow increasingly confident in the use of a range of source materials to solve problems. One Year 7 class used information on Norman battle tactics to choose a suitable location for building a castle. Higher attaining pupils combined information from maps and diagrams with a detailed understanding of military siege tactics. They were able to explain clearly the basis of their decisions, using appropriate technical vocabulary. Lower attaining pupils were unable to ignore

their knowledge of modern weapons. Year 8 pupils combined information from pictures, contemporary records and town maps to prepare a fact file on aspects of working class life in early industrial England. Many went beyond enthusiastic descriptions of poor living conditions to consider why these had arisen and why the poor were powerless to improve matters. One Year 9 pupil had used a computer at home to import text and pictures from a variety of carefully selected sources, incorporating appropriate comments and additional imagined elements. The resulting work was substantial, carefully structured and showed confident application of knowledge and understanding. Effective use is made of 'mind maps' that encourage pupils to recognise and explore the way in which major events have a wider impact through chains of consequences. A departmental visit to the Imperial War Museum encouraged empathy with the experience of Londoners in the 'blitz' and focused discussion on the impact on civilians.

148. In Years 10 and 11, lessons are closely structured to meet GCSE course requirements. A number of pupils had recently visited the Somme battlefield and conveyed their increased feeling for the conditions in the trenches. In a Year 11 lesson, pupils undertook a searching analysis of the developing Civil Rights movement before mapping their conclusions on a frame that combined chronology with an evaluation of the degree of the impact on American political outlook after the Second World War. Careful selection and use of a range of sources encourage pupils to recognise the wider context of events, as in a lesson on the USA in the 1960's that considered the social implications of the lyrics of a Bob Dylan song. Attainment of sixth form students is good. Freedom to choose way of answering questions is encouraged by teachers.
149. All teaching observed was satisfactory or better. In response to staffing shortages, specialist staff are concentrating on sixth form and GCSE groups and all teaching observed in these lessons was good or better. Lessons have clear aims, develop logically and end with effective summaries. These often lead directly to well-designed homework tasks. Pupils' work, including homework, is regularly marked with additional teacher comments providing greater understanding of the improvements needed. In all the lessons observed, the pupils were enthusiastic about the history being studied. They were able to talk clearly about their work, what they understood and what they enjoyed most. Lessons in Years 10 and 11 and the sixth form were characterised by well-behaved pupils and students committed to working hard. Late arrival at lessons and an unacceptable level of general absence is preventing some pupils from benefiting from the effective teaching. Teachers work very hard and in the most successful lessons the pupils take responsibility for their learning.
150. The department uses information about the reading comprehension of pupils to try to select suitable texts. There is usually a good match between the ability of pupils and the reading required of them, but some lower attaining pupils in mixed ability groups found information too hard to read without help. This was especially true in the relatively few cases where the additional materials had been hand-written.
151. A Year 7 unit on a medieval village uses a detailed computer database, but in other years planned access to computers is limited. In Years 7 to 9, pupils regularly use graphs and tables to record numbers and time-scales. Statistics are used less in Years 10 and 11 because the GCSE syllabus does not require working with statistics.
152. A particular strength of the department is the good teaching materials. These have been carefully selected, are well designed and are professionally printed. They

contribute significantly to the quality of learning in all year groups. Classroom displays reinforce this support by providing examples of good work and indicating how each meets examination requirements. Pupils understand the assessment system and greatly value the 'Top Banana' certificates awarded for sustained progress. The tight teaching structure and extremely good subject knowledge of the specialist teachers guide pupils towards the development of examination skills. However, there are relatively few opportunities for pupils to develop independent study techniques or to engage in the wider reading activities that provide a foundation for the highest levels of performance.

153. Since the previous inspection, there have been many improvements. A wider variety of tasks is provided for pupils and effective use is made of computers in Year 7 and in pupils' projects. A consistently applied policy has produced great improvements in the quality of presentation. The department's Achievements' Board publicly celebrates success and reinforces key messages about standards and progress. The amount of numeracy related work in Years 10 and 11 is limited by the focus on social and political aspects in the GCSE syllabus.
154. Less progress has been made towards effective planning for lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs. Some teachers were unsure when to expect support staff in their lessons and there was no evidence of joint planning for those lessons involving the learning support assistants. As a result, the extra help available in some lessons was not effectively used. A few pupils in mixed ability groups found it hard to read the information provided. This was especially true in the relatively few cases where the additional materials had been hand-written.
155. The department is well led and managed and there is a strong sense of identity among its members. Increase in teaching time has recently limited the opportunities for the head of department to visit classrooms and work with less experienced teachers. The checking of books and monitoring of teaching encourage a united approach to departmental policies.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

156. Significant progress has been made since the previous inspection. All pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 have timetabled lessons and examination courses have been established in Years 10 and 11 and the sixth form. However, the school has not yet made adequate provision for all pupils in Years 10 and 11 to be taught all elements of information and communication technology. The use of information and communication technology within other subjects is not developed.
157. Pupils' attainment at the age of 14 is below national expectations. Some elements of handling and communicating information, for example combining text and graphics for a particular audience, are in line with what would be expected, but there is little evidence of work at higher levels. Teacher assessments for 2000 show a similar picture, with some slightly higher-level work, but assessment is unreliable as some elements of the programme of study are not taken into account. There is little evidence of modelling; for example, using spreadsheets to work out different scenarios relating to costings of a project. There is some appropriate use of computers for design related to computer control in design and technology. Some pupils have opportunities to use computers for measurement and recording of data in science, but no system is in place to ensure that all pupils have this experience.
158. Pupils' attainment at the age of 16 is well below expectations, as those not following the GCSE course do not receive their entitlement to the whole information and

communication technology curriculum. There is some provision within personal and social education, but this only leads to the development of relatively low-level skills and not in all the areas required. Statutory requirements are not met in Years 10 and 11. The attainment of pupils following the GCSE course is below that expected at the age of 16. This is the first year that pupils will take this examination so no previous data is available for comparison. Access to the Internet motivates pupils well, enabling the use of current information; for example, when working on a comparison between mobile telephone tariffs. Pupils have an understanding of the moral issues associated with data protection.

159. The work of pupils following the A-level course in Year 13 is below average. In the vocational course, work meets requirements and pupils' attainment is in line with expectations. Work seen in Year 12 is about average. Pupils on all courses in the sixth form have achieved well considering that they had no formal provision for information and communication technology when in Years 10 and 11.
160. Pupils' learning is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9. When teaching is effective and pupils have very good levels of interest this leads to very good use of time, which has a positive impact on their learning. Learning is better when pupils co-operate well and share their knowledge. Where work is not challenging, as in a Year 7 lesson using a graphics program, some pupils behave badly and have poor attitudes to their learning. Course planning and the lack of specialist knowledge of some teachers lead to tasks that do not offer work at higher levels, and therefore, limit the progress of some pupils.
161. In Years 10 and 11, pupils make satisfactory progress with their learning in the optional information technology course, but because they do not have an opportunity to develop their computer skills the progress of a number of pupils is unsatisfactory. The use of information and communication technology in French in Year 10 is effective in motivating disaffected pupils. There are not enough resources to support learning; for example, when the teacher was talking about different kinds of switches used for controlling devices, none was available for pupils to see. There is no modification of teaching to accommodate pupils with special educational needs, although teachers work hard in lessons to enable these pupils to make progress similar to others. Pupils make very good use of facilities, including those in the library, for work outside of lessons.
162. Teaching is satisfactory or better in nearly all lessons. Teaching is mostly good or very good in Years 10 and 11 and in the sixth form because specialist teachers who have very good subject knowledge lead lessons. In Years 7 to 9, the variable level of teachers' knowledge affects expectations of what pupils can achieve and restricts progress. Where teaching is most effective good relationships between teachers and pupils lead to good levels of discussion. Question and answer sessions are used well to reinforce what pupils have learned. In one lesson in Year 10, taken by a temporary teacher, only the knowledgeable intervention of the technician prevented teaching here from being very poor.
163. The co-ordination of the use of information and communication technology in other subjects is unsatisfactory. This issue was raised in the previous inspection report. A number of departments, including geography, modern foreign languages and design and technology, identify the use of information and communication technology as an area for development of the subjects. There has not been enough work done for information and communication technology to be taught through departments in Years 7 and 8 by September 2001.
164. Appropriate planning is in place for the next phase of development, which also takes

account of staff training needs. However, there is not enough emphasis given to meeting the needs of all pupils in Years 10 and 11 or of the co-ordination of the work of departments. Significant progress has been made since the previous inspection, with the provision of a third specialist room, establishment of courses and provision of resources. However, resources are still inadequate as the number of computers is still well below the national average. The addition of a further specialist room, planned for September, will still not meet needs. Students identified the lack of computing facilities in the sixth form area as a concern. There is some equipment for collecting data and measurement, but not enough for a school of this size. There is not enough specialist equipment to support pupils with special educational needs. Assessment in Year 9 is unsatisfactory because not all aspects are assessed. No use is made of assessment or knowledge of pupils' prior attainment when planning future work. For example, in a Year 8 lesson based on controlling an on-screen device, the teacher did not establish if any pupils had covered similar work previously. Reports to parents are inadequate as they do not indicate what pupils know, understand or can do, and no reports in information and communication technology are provided for pupils who do not follow examination courses in Years 10 and 11.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

165. The modern languages department has suffered from a period of high staff turnover over the last few years, and at present one post remains unfilled. There is no head of faculty, the management being divided between the head of French and the head of German. At present teachers are grappling to combat a history of poor pupil attitude to languages, which continue to have an adverse effect on pupils' progress.
166. Standards achieved by pupils at age 14, as reported in teachers' assessments in 2000, were below the national expectation. During the inspection, standards seen in Years 7 to 9 were satisfactory in half of lessons observed and unsatisfactory in the other half, with reading and listening skills more developed than writing and speaking. In lessons, there is no significant difference between the attainment of girls and boys. However, the more able pupils are not sufficiently challenged, since teachers' planning does not always make allowances for individual learning needs. Pupils' understanding of spoken language is sometimes enhanced by teachers' use of the target language in the classroom, although this practice is not consistent. Indeed, pupils' pronunciation is often inaccurate and not corrected by teachers.
167. GCSE results at the higher grades A*-C in French in 2000 were well below the national average for comprehensive schools, and have declined considerably over the last three years. Boys performed less well than girls, but this reflects the national picture. GCSE results in German, although an improvement on the previous year, were also below the national average. Attainment observed in lessons in Years 10 and 11 was satisfactory overall, and achievement good in one Year 10 French lesson where lower attainers used computers to consolidate vocabulary. When pupils are given the opportunity in lessons to speak French or German, many lack the confidence to do so.
168. In the sixth form, standards of attainment observed were always at least satisfactory and in one lesson observed they were good. At A-level in 2000, students in both German and French achieved a 100 per cent pass rate.
169. Pupils' attitudes to languages, particularly in Years 7 to 9, do not always match the quality of the teaching they are receiving. Most pupils come to lessons prepared to work, but generally show little enthusiasm, and their learning and progress are slow. Although there are some indications that teachers are developing strategies to

minimise the effect of disruptive behaviour, which was a concern at the time of the previous inspection, sixth formers complain of high noise levels in other classrooms. The attitudes of some younger pupils are unsatisfactory and are having a detrimental effect on the learning of others. These pupils arrive late to lessons, chatter constantly, speak rudely to teachers and chew gum. Pupils do not use willingly French or German very much in the classroom, except in the sixth form, where attitudes to their work are good.

170. The quality of teaching observed in Years 7 to 9 varies. It is generally satisfactory, occasionally unsatisfactory, and in one third of lessons good or very good. In the very good lesson, the teacher used French consistently throughout, had planned a variety of tasks which she made enjoyable for the class, showed a sensitive understanding of pupils' capabilities and weaknesses, and demanded high levels of concentration, work and behaviour. In lessons which were only satisfactory or less than satisfactory, the noise levels from a small number of pupils had an adverse effect on the ability of others to concentrate, and too little was demanded of pupils. In particular, there was very little evidence of French or German being used by pupils to communicate in the classroom.
171. In Years 10 and 11, all of the teaching observed was at least satisfactory, and in one lesson teaching was good. In this lesson for lower attainers in French, the teacher had prepared floppy disks for individual pupils, which enabled them to work independently for long periods on a variety of language tasks. These pupils had previously been poorly motivated in this subject, but the use of computers rekindled their interest and improved their attitude and work-rate. There is now widespread and sometimes creative use of reading comprehension tasks. In the previous inspection, it was reported that none of these were used in languages lessons
172. Teaching in all sixth form lessons observed was good or very good. All teachers make very good use of the target language and have high expectations of pupil performance. There are well-planned sequences of activities and relationships between teachers and pupils are good.
173. Accommodation is good, with languages rooms that are bright and contain attractive displays of pupils' work and cue cards containing useful phrases. Resources are of good quality. Teachers are well qualified, hard working and committed to doing a good job. They often plan lessons well and have the potential to raise standards in the faculty. There is no overall head of modern languages, but the two heads of department have maintained good schemes of work and organised the language area in a way that assists individual teachers, although there is no policy for the use of the target language in the classroom. Staff give up their own time in the Easter holidays to prepare pupils for examinations. The heads of department carry out a detailed analysis of results and examine strategies for improvement. For example, the decision for higher attainers to do the written coursework option at GCSE is a commendable example of the co-ordinators' efforts to improve attainment.
174. All of this good work has been undermined by years of staffing difficulties. At present one teaching post in languages remains unfilled and this places a strain on the faculty. Some classes at present have their work set by the head of French and receive non-specialist teaching. This creates behavioural problems and noise, adversely affecting standards and attitudes, and damaging morale. In this situation it is difficult for the staff to bring about overall improvement. There is a history of poor pupil attitudes towards foreign languages, which have been both a cause and a result of high staff turnover. A consequence of all this for the current staff is that expectations of pupil performance have been lowered. Lessons are characterised by

hard-working teachers and pupils who just about do the minimum required. When asked to work, pupils show little initiative or independence. Their speaking skills are weak and there has been little improvement in this area since the previous inspection. There are no trips organised to France or Germany.

MUSIC

175. In the summer following the previous inspection, the two full-time teachers left. Two newly qualified music teachers started teaching in 1999 and the department was without a head of department for a year. The current head of department has been in post since September 2000 and has made a good start in improving the work of the department so as to raise the standards pupils achieve.
176. Attainment in music in the 2000 teacher assessments at the age of 14 was well below national averages. However, these are unreliable because examples of work and assessments designed to show teachers what work at different levels looked like were not used. In the GCSE examinations in 2000, the proportion of pupils achieving the higher grades A*-C was below national averages. In 1999, results were above average, but as the number of candidates was small comparison with national averages is statistically unreliable. The small number of students taking A-level music over the last two years has achieved better grades than those following the A-level music technology course. Since the previous inspection results have fluctuated at GCSE and A-level as a result of the prior attainment of pupils and changes of teachers.
177. By the age of 14 pupils' attainment in music is below national expectations. Pupils in Year 9 can combine musical elements appropriately to compose music for an advertisement or pop song. However, they do not know how to develop or to extend their ideas and very few pupils show understanding of how melody and chords fit together. Some pupils sing expressively, but instrumental and singing skills are generally underdeveloped. In lessons, pupils show good knowledge and understanding of technical vocabulary specific to the module of work, such as *concerto* and *cadenza*, but tend not to use music vocabulary when writing about music. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress in lessons.
178. By the age of 16 pupils' attainment is broadly in line with national averages. In Year 11, pupils compose well-structured and coherent pieces and can notate them by hand or using music notation software on a computer. Pupils' improvisations have a clear structure, include contrasting ideas and are clearly linked to the original stimulus. The wide range of attainment in the group is reflected in their performing, with some confident performances of a high standard. A number of pupils receive or have received instrumental tuition and this has a very positive impact on all aspects of their work. However, pupils' late arrival to lessons and the frequent absence of a few pupils may affect their results at the end of the course.
179. In Year 13, the attainment of students following the A-level music or AS-level music technology course is broadly in line with national averages. A-level students are making good progress with their dissertations and the AS-level music technology student has a very good understanding of music sequencing.
180. The quality of teaching is good overall. Teachers are enthusiastic and there is a good pace to lessons. They are consistent in their expectations of behaviour and use well established routines effectively for pupils to follow. As a result pupils stay on task most of the time and behave very well. They work sensibly together in the practice rooms and treat instruments with care. Teachers make good use of questioning

techniques to check out pupils' knowledge and understanding and to reinforce previous learning. This worked very effectively in a Year 11 lesson where pupils' increased knowledge and understanding were successfully demonstrated in their improvisations. Teachers go round the class giving good support to pupils as they are working. In a Year 8 lesson on Indian music, this led to pupils gaining a better understanding of the main features, which they were then able to combine more successfully in a group composing task.

181. Teachers make good use of the instrumental resources available and the space in the music block, with the result that pupils work more effectively together in small groups because they can hear what they are playing. Homework is regularly set and is clearly linked to classwork. In a Year 10 lesson, the teacher used keyboard diagrams effectively to enable lower attaining pupils to learn to play riffs (repetitive musical phrases) more easily. However, tasks and materials are not always sufficiently adapted to challenge and meet the needs of higher attaining pupils, including those who play musical instruments. Consequently, these pupils do not always make sufficient progress by the end of the lesson. In some lessons, the teachers' learning objectives are unclear and this results in pupils making less progress.
182. The department is well led by an enthusiastic head of department who has made a very good start to moving the department forward. Schemes of work are developing well and include opportunities for pupils to use information and communication technology. Although resources have improved since the previous inspection, the department does not have sufficient pitched instruments or music technology to meet the requirements of the National Curriculum and GCSE and to enable pupils to improve their attainment in performing and composing. Arrangements for assessing pupils' attainment are satisfactory, but procedures do not yet show how assessments will be linked to National Curriculum levels of attainment. Curriculum time in Year 9 has improved since the previous inspection, but there are some classes taught by two teachers, which creates difficulties in maintaining the continuity of their learning. A wide range of extra-curricular activities takes place during lunch times or after school, including saxophone quartet, junior and senior choirs, GCSE and A-level support groups. However, the number of pupils involved is still low. Pupils also have opportunities to perform in concerts and in productions such as *Godspell* and *Dracula Spectacular*. The number of pupils receiving instrumental lessons has more than trebled in the last 18 months.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

183. In the most recent GCSE physical education examination, the number of pupils gaining grades A*-G are in line with the national average, but the number gaining A*-C grades was below the average. The levels of pass grades the same pupils achieved in their other subjects compared very favourably. The pupils currently involved in the course are making good progress. Work folders are generally well produced and detailed. All but one student taking the A-level in the subject gained pass grades and two have gone on to university to study sports science.
184. Pupils arrive at the school with varying levels of physical skill, which are generally below that expected of 11-year-olds. They quickly respond to the good teaching and make good progress. By the time they are 14 years old their levels of attainment are in line with national expectations, with some achieving even higher levels. This judgement is in line with teachers' assessments. Pupils perform well in a wide range of physical activities. In gymnastics, body management skills are developing and most pupils are able to demonstrate effective planning in their positioning, anticipation and structure of movement sequences. In games activities, pupils have an emerging

knowledge of rules and conventions and they are developing skills to enable them to compete successfully.

185. The attainment of most pupils by the time they are 16 years old is also in line with national expectations, with a significant number of them, particularly those in the examination groups, doing even better. Good levels of skill development are clearly evident in a wide variety of activities. They use these skills to undertake a range of roles including performing, officiating and coaching. Pupils have a good understanding of tactics and strategies and apply skills that have been practised in full game situations. In health related education, pupils are attaining an understanding of fitness issues and practices and many devise their own fitness programmes. Pupils in the examination groups are developing understanding and expertise in both theoretical and practical aspects of the subject. Higher attaining pupils present work that is well structured with careful analysis, with some accessing information from the Internet. They have a good understanding of the syllabus requirements and link practical and theoretical concepts effectively. The standard of work of students studying for the A-level examination is in line with course expectations and they are progressing well. They are confident in the use of technical language in their written work and contribute to lively informed debate in lessons.
186. Pupils with special educational needs are well integrated and are given much support by both teaching staff and fellow pupils and reach levels of attainment that are commendable for them.
187. Many school teams take part in a large number of inter-school games and gain much success. The present boys' Year 10 soccer team is the current Berkshire champions. Many pupils have represented the county in a variety of sports and a few have gained international representation.
188. The overall quality of teaching is at least satisfactory, and in many lessons observed it was good or very good. All lessons begin and end in an orderly manner with objectives clearly stated and understood by the pupils. Lessons are well organised and are conducted at a brisk, demanding pace, achieving an appropriate balance of activities and offering the pupils a range of appropriate challenges. The subject planning is well structured with a choice of tasks that promotes a high level of interest and effort. Almost all lessons are reinforced with question and answer sessions to consolidate knowledge and provoke thought. There is an expectancy that pupils will work hard and behave well and generally these expectations are met. The standard of kit is usually good but, in spite of efforts by staff, in a few lessons there are an unacceptably high number of pupils who do not co-operate and do not take an active part in lessons. Teachers show a care and concern for the pupils whilst encouraging the best in fair play, co-operation and competitive experiences. Most pupils respond very positively to the enthusiastic approach of their teachers. They behave well and are prepared to work hard. The enjoyment of their work is very evident.
189. Since the previous inspection a review of the curriculum has resulted in the amount of time allocated to modules of work being increased so that pupils can take part in a wider variety of activities. However there is still an over-dependence on games activities. The procedures for assessing and recording pupils' attainment have been revised and comprehensive records are kept. Many staff give very freely of their time to provide a wide range of extra-curricular activities and after-school competitions, which are supported by large and enthusiastic groups of pupils. Teachers organise trips to enable pupils to attend national sporting events.
190. The good indoor accommodation and on-site playing fields, combined with the

occasional use of the local leisure centre facilities, have a positive effect on the attainment on the pupils. However, the playing fields are still poorly drained and are in need of attention. The time allocated to the subject remains below the national average and the double lessons, which some classes have, are too long.

191. The head of the department was appointed two years ago and already has had a significantly positive effect on the work and organisation of the subject. Strong leadership and a positive atmosphere characterises the management of the department. The staff who teach physical education work well together, support each other and show a very strong commitment to their pupils.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

192. The standards attained by the end of Year 9 are below the level expected in the locally agreed syllabus; standards by the end of Year 11 are also below the expected level. However, the standards attained by the group of pupils in Year 11 who are taking the full GCSE examination are in line with or above the standards expected nationally; the introduction of this full course is an improvement since the last inspection. The results achieved in the short GCSE course have declined over the last three years as more and more pupils have been entered for the examination; standards in this examination are lower than they were at the time of the previous inspection. At present, almost all pupils follow the short GCSE course in Years 10 and 11. In the sixth form, religious education forms a unit of study in the General Studies course and consists largely of an in-depth study of ethical issues. The standards obtained by sixth form pupils are generally sound.
193. Pupils achieve at a satisfactory level throughout the school bearing in mind the below average standards of literacy when they join the school. In Years 7 to 9, the pupils learn about the festivals of Christianity and other world faiths; they explore the nature of faith and prayer; and they acquire a good deal of factual knowledge about Buddhism, Hinduism, Sikhism and Judaism. They tend to learn more about religions than from religions, but the knowledge they acquire about the customs and practices of the various religions helps to prepare them for life in today's multi-faith and multi-cultural society. At this stage, the pupils produce a reasonable volume of writing, a good deal of it copied or derivative. More able pupils sometimes produce good quality extended pieces of their own writing; the writing of less able pupils tends to be meagre in volume and marred by frequent misspellings and punctuation errors.
194. The introduction of the short GCSE course in Years 10 and 11 just before the previous inspection has proved to be of considerable benefit to the subject, providing good content and structure for the teaching in these years. In these years, the pupils learn to define and think with precision about such topics as racial stereotyping, ageism and prejudice and discrimination. They learn about the work of hospices and charities and the role of religion in shaping the life and work of some outstanding personalities. Pupils produce writing of reasonable quality, though in general terms they are better at listing facts than at shaping arguments or offering interpretations of events or religious practices. The writing of the group of pupils taking the full GCSE examination is of a better standard overall and shows a greater capacity to grasp symbolic meaning and to argue a position based on evidence and reasons.
195. The subject has recently undergone a comprehensive change of teaching staff. The two experienced teachers of religious education left over the summer and at the time of the inspection the subject was mostly taught by a recently recruited full-time specialist and another specialist on a temporary contract. A new head of department had been appointed, but had not yet taken up post. In addition to the two specialists,

six non-specialist teachers teach the equivalent of 11 periods a week. There were also nine classes shared between two teachers, eight of these being GCSE classes. The amount of non-specialist teaching and, in particular, the splitting of classes between two teachers detracted from the quality of teaching and learning and impacted negatively on standards.

196. The general quality of teaching is satisfactory in Years 7 to 11; no teaching was seen in the sixth form. There is some good teaching and some that is unsatisfactory. The specialist teachers have good knowledge and understanding and all teachers plan lessons with care; resources are to hand and there is good use on occasion of religious artefacts, such as Muslim prayer mats and 'compasses', which help to attract pupils' attention and arouse their curiosity. Pupils vary in their responses. On most occasions, they show respect for the religious symbols and practices they study, are interested and work at a good rate. On occasions, they behave immaturely, making snide and disrespectful comments and, especially in the case of lower attaining boys, seek to win peer group approval through weak attempts at amusing other pupils.
197. At times the behaviour of a handful of such pupils undermines the work atmosphere in the lesson and leads to a loss of productivity and pace. The best teaching occurred when teachers combined a vigorous classroom presence, using good eye contact and targeting pupils by name, with tasks that involved the pupils actively. In one lesson, for example, the non-specialist teacher helped pupils grasp the nature of prejudice by carrying out an experiment in which three pupils had to grade the quality of three types of crisps. The activity held the attention of the whole class and helped the lesson achieve its objective by impacting positively on pupils' understanding.
198. Some of the teaching, however, is too bland and fails to challenge pupils sufficiently to find out answers for themselves or to improve their understanding by means of discussion and the sharing of ideas. In one lesson with lower attaining Year 8 pupils, for example, the pupils had to do little more than fill in the blanks in a passage, drawing from the bank of words provided at the bottom of the page. Pupils became bored and an increasing undercurrent of chattering and muttering gradually caused the lesson to lose direction and purpose. On the several occasions when the teacher employed the school discipline practice of writing names on the board, it had little impact on the behaviour of those who were misbehaving.
199. The subject is supported by a clearly set out scheme of work and the locally agreed syllabus. Assessments are carried out at the end of each unit of work. There are some inconsistencies in the implementation of the department's policies on assessment and the setting of homework, caused to some extent by the complicated staffing situation. The head of humanities monitors teaching and learning by means of lesson observation and gives feedback to teachers, but the implementation of homework policy, for example, is not rigorously checked. There is an adequate range of textbooks and bibles, some useful religious artefacts and a bank of video films, some of which are dated. There are some obsolete books and resources and the department's stockroom is untidy and not organised to support teaching and learning. There are good links with some local churches and members of a local Youth Fellowship group, which make a positive and valued contribution to the work of the department and to the spiritual, moral and social development of the pupils.

VOCATIONAL COURSES

200. In 2000, the attainment of students entered for GCSE business studies at age 16 was below the national average. However, the overall trend has been that results have been improving. Work seen during the inspection indicates that results are likely to be

better in 2001. Very small numbers of students take GNVQ courses in Years 10 and 11 and this makes national comparisons difficult. Of those students taking GNVQ health and social care and GNVQ leisure and tourism, 60 per cent complete the course successfully with an equal balance of pass and merit awards. This has improved from the last inspection when only 44 per cent completed the course.

201. Attainment in A-level business studies is in line with national average, with higher attainers achieving the appropriate higher grades A and B. Results have been broadly in line with national expectations over the past three years. Attainment in advanced GNVQ business studies is consistently above the national average and in 2000, 38 per cent of candidates obtained distinctions with the remainder obtaining merits. In 2000, all students taking intermediate GNVQ leisure and tourism completed the course successfully, with 28 per cent obtaining merit awards.
202. Achievement during Key Stage 4 is satisfactory in both GCSE business studies and GNVQ health and social care. All students following the business studies course can identify the main features of a business and can compare the various forms of business organisation. Higher attainers do not use their extended writing skills to incorporate deeper analysis of problems. Computers are well used to assist presentation and aid learning, but the lack of a centralised teaching area, readily available resources and more modern computers limit what can be achieved in lessons. Mostly lower attaining pupils are attracted to the course in health and social care and they make good progress. They can carry out simple research and produce action plans related to changing peoples' attitudes to alcohol and dietary problems.
203. Learning is good in the sixth form for students following courses in A-level and advanced GNVQ business studies. The understanding of the economics of the business world is well understood by Year 13 students. The main weakness is that most students do not go into enough depth when analysing their research work and are content with short superficial conclusions. Year 12 students taking intermediate GNVQ leisure and tourism learn at a satisfactory rate and all students have a good understanding of what makes good customer service. Learning is further enhanced with the use of role-play that builds understanding and confidence. The recently introduced intermediate GNVQ course in information and communication technology enables students to make good progress in this area so that they are competent in the use of spreadsheets and databases. Students on GNVQ courses have good numeracy and computing skills and although their literacy skills are quite good a small number are inclined to restate factual information rather produce reasoned arguments for conclusions.
204. In Years 10 and 11, the quality of teaching of health and social care is satisfactory and the teaching of business studies is good. In the sixth form, teaching of A-level business studies and all GNVQs is good. This represents an improvement from the previous inspection. Sixth form lessons are well planned, students are managed well and teachers use a range of different ways to fully involve students in their own learning and assessment. Students are rarely given answers and have to think and reason for themselves, which clearly enhances learning. On the rare occasions where teaching is less effective, it is usually because the teacher does most of the work and the students are content to do the minimum. Teaching of GNVQ health and social care in Key Stage 4 is satisfactory, but could be improved by having more teachers who are qualified and experienced. The main teachers are supply teachers and although they are very well supported, lack of subject skills and control allows a minority of students to drift off task and detract from the learning of others. Assessment techniques are generally good, but not all examples of evidence meet the stipulated evidence requirements of the course. Work placements and the

extensive use of visiting speakers greatly contribute to the curriculum and learning in vocational subjects.

DRAMA

205. In recent years, pupils aged 16 have achieved very variable results in their GCSE examinations and in 2000 these results were very low compared to the national average. However, the prompt action taken by the head of department since her appointment in September 2000 has resulted in a quite remarkable improvement of standards. Year 11 pupils currently preparing for their final assessments in drama are attaining standards in line with the national average. They are able to devise, improvise and present their work with conviction and absorption. A particularly strong feature of their work is the very good use made of drama diaries in which they record their experiences, assess their strengths and identify areas for improvement. They have also produced some sensitive and perceptive evaluations of live theatre performances.
206. By the age of 14, the standards that pupils reach match those attained by pupils nationally in all aspects of the subject. Pupils with special educational needs make particularly good progress and achieve high standards through working in mixed ability groups. All pupils use their imagination in devising dramatic presentations, have a sound knowledge of the range of dramatic techniques and are developing a good understanding of the relationship between performers and audience. They are able to assess their own and others' work and use this evaluation to improve their work.
207. Students in the sixth form attain standards in line with course expectations. In a Year 13 lesson, students enhanced their understanding of the theatricality of Caliban in *The Tempest* through skilful improvisation of a series of events spiralling out of control. They took responsibility for initiating, developing and polishing their ideas and presented within a few minutes a short, original and highly creative piece of movement. This improvisation demonstrated how attainment in the sixth form has improved since the previous inspection.
208. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour in their drama lessons are very good. They follow the established routines, are enthusiastic but controlled, and work productively. They collaborate well, including in mixed gender groups, and take responsibility for their work. This is because teachers ensure that the work is well matched to pupils' needs and make sure that all pupils are included in the lesson so that they are able to experience success and recognise their own achievements.
209. The quality of teaching is excellent. Teachers have high expectations of pupils' behaviour, commitment and standards of work. They share with pupils what they are expected to learn and achieve in each lesson and use assessment to demonstrate to pupils how they can improve their work. Lessons are conducted at a good pace with periods of reflection, which encourage pupils to take the subject seriously. This leads to pupils who are completely involved in their own learning. They know what standards they are attaining and what they have to do to make progress. By Year 9, pupils have the capacity to create and sustain characters and to explore ideas through movement. Their understanding of the work they are doing in English on *Macbeth* is enhanced by the exploration of characters they undertake in drama lessons. In one Year 9 lesson, small groups of pupils learned about the sub-text through exploring what characters said and comparing this with what they were thinking.

210. The leadership and management of drama are very good. Since September, new schemes of work, revised procedures of assessment and a steady focus on raising standards have all contributed to a very good improvement in pupils' learning and achievement.